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CHAPTER VI

BUILDING TROPHIES TO GRIEF

1792 Aetat.21

These years though interesting because they stabilized his character were distressing ones to Brown. He suffered acutely in the process; at least if the portraits of him speak truly his life was far from easy or happy. What the young man,now come of age,had learned and seen of human life held few pleasures or hopes for him,he was thoroughly disillusioned and despondency and prolonged brooding over his honest motives and independent conduct lead him to consider desperate means of ending his struggle. His patience was only three years stronger than Chatterton's. From reading Goethe's Werther he absorbed too much of the poison of "playing heroics". He also read Rousseau and on Jean Jacques' ideas of suicide he put the worst construction. The opinions sxpressed in the Nouvelle Héloïse so greatly impressed him that thirteen years later in his Literary Magazine review,[1] of Samuel Miller's pamphlet on suicide published by Brown's publishers the Swords',he violently attacked Rousseau's work in a note thus:

> "The moral of that detestable novel,the Nouvelle Heloise, by Rousseau,is,on this subject,extremely questionable. For, though the author argues eloquently on both sides of the question,concerning the lawfulness of suicide,yet some have supposed that his arguments in favor of that crime are calculated,and were intended by him,to make a deeper impression than those offered against it."

1 Vol.III,p.310 ff.

To Brown and his friends suicide became an appropriate subject for speculation so that the "Society for the Attainment of Useful Knowledge" of which they were members, heard much about it, Wilkins and others debating the question, ~~"Is suicide justifiable?"~~ stet Wilkins' side, ~~was~~ the negative, ~~and he~~ made short work of the arguments of his opponents.. From the statement that Brown had this year read an essay on the subject which lead to the debate it ~~seems reasonable to conclude~~ may be he was among the defeated ~~debaters~~, ~~His letters to Bringhurst show he argued suicide justifiable.~~

~~1 Bringhurst's memoir in Elijah Brown's quarto copy-book of 1796.~~

No friends appeared ~~to his friends~~ 5

~~In~~ Brown's ~~case, however,~~ the matter ~~was~~ of more importance than it was.
~~his friends probably realized~~. When we have read the letters to

Bringhurst we cannot ~~fail to~~ believe that he was then seriously pondering

the carrying out of his opinions. That he did not commit suicide when he
lost his wife he does not ~~explain~~ make clear but suggests
~~suggested as~~ affection
was ~~possibly~~ due mostly to the ~~newest~~ of his friends, that he did

not again seriously ponder it is ~~probably~~ due to his new ~~the same~~ friend, so that
to Bringhurst, ~~to whom~~ we really owe a debt of gratitude for guiding him over

these melancholy years. Another of the things that saved him was

a dream about himself and Bringhurst, in which the strongest element

was the effect he thought might his voluntary death ~~would~~ have on his mother. Brown,
like most young men in his position naturally do,
seems to have been unable to appreciate her position and she and

never having had an author
others in the family, ~~seemed~~ (were of course) blind to his need of sympathy.

The reasons for his thinking of the deed will be gradually unfolded in the letters that follow. In general it appears that, ~~he~~ ~~had found his old home unbearable.~~ His desertion of the profession which the family thought he should follow and his love affairs ~~undoubtedly~~ aroused a ~~his irresistible~~ determination to love whom he wished to, to conduct his ~~love~~ affairs as he saw fit and to follow the impulse for literature that was in him. From the family's point of view they were right in objecting to his singular night

hours, his friendship for women outside the pale of the Quaker faith, his lack of religious observance and his incomprehensible desire to become an author. Because of their misunderstanding the same old story was repeated; namely, that the author who felt the want of encouragement, was driven to seek ~~sympathy~~ it elsewhere, ~~than~~ at home.

Just what means he intended to use in the act of suicide is not to be found in these letters. There is no mention of his ever having firearms at hand or of his having purposely ~~purchased~~ secured any. ~~them.~~ The figure of speech he uses suggests he may have intended to throw himself off a cliff. Possibly the dagger that afterward makes a mysterious appearance in his novels was prompted by his having ~~had~~ the necessity of a pen knife on the table while he wrote with a quill. However these are only conjectures and the fact that they have to be made throws a shadow of doubt over the whole matter.

When the danger was passed ~~Brown~~ he was just so much the stronger in argument against the act. To the Weekly Magazine[1] we shall find him contributing a story of suicide that seems to have as great a justification as any case could have, but it is mercilessly stripped of its fallacies and concluded by a wholesome condemnation of the crime.

1 Vol. II, p. 3 ff.

Brown's letters to Bringhurst are especially interesting ~~to~~ ~~read~~ because they are so full and clear. In most cases the ~~editor's~~ ~~task is confined to~~ only need a slight connecting framework of explanatory comments.

Some of the language and many of the ideas ~~are~~ sedulously ~~aped~~ follow ~~after~~ the fashion set by the Nouvelle Héloïse, and at times the ~~full and~~ ponderous narrative tires and the discussion wanders far afield; but curiously it is when we are almost bored that ~~some of the best things he wrote~~ make their appearance. In many instances ~~Brown~~ he shows his lack of a ~~developed~~ consummate taste. Had Bringhurst been a man of the kind to easily take offence he would have found many an instance to have warranted ~~not only~~ a severer condemnation ~~but~~ not a breaking of the friendship altogether much earlier ~~than actually occured~~. But Bringhurst was not only very patient with Brown's worst whims but in many other ways he was no common man.

That Brown transferred his friendship from Wilkins ~~a man whose influence on him could not have been bad but surely was not too good,~~ two years his junior but to Bringhurst four years his elder is worthy of more than passing notice.

Joseph Bringhurst was the son of James Bringhurst and his wife Anne Pole and was born at Philadelphia, 6 October 1767 and died at Wilmington, Delaware, 26 July 1834. After a liberal education

he studied and practised medicine. He is generally spoken of as Doctor but his taking an M.D. is not positively known. (However it is quite likely. ~~Probably~~ he was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania where he would have met Elihu Hubbard Smith whom he apparently introduced to Brown. On 6 June 1788 with twenty-one others he signed the Quaker petition to the General Assembly to refuse a license for a theatre to be operated by Hallam and Henry.[x]

~~Brainbridge~~ to Ella, originally published in the U S Gazette where they were signed Birtha and reprinted in Smith's American Poems Litchfield (1793 pp. 240-6 and 292-6) ~~Pages 240-45 are reprints of other verses of his similarly published and signed~~. Another of the Birtha poems was a Sonnet to Reflection in Carey's Museum (Vol IX, p. 46-first appendix). As we shall see in the 9 May letter he was something of a poet; his Ode to Time and a series addressed ~~(1792)~~

x American Museum Vol. V, pp. 185-7.

~~he studied and practised medicine and although he is designated as Doctor his taking of an M.D. is not~~ Bacon (H.C.) Bringhurst mentioned. ~~He~~ removed from Philadelphia to Wilmington In 1793 and established a drug business in connection with his profession, having his store, office and home at what is now 317 Market street, ~~Wilmington.~~ In 1799 he was made clerk to the borough of Wilmington; in 1802 was appointed postmaster ~~to that place~~ by Jefferson, reappointed by Madison and Monroe, ~~and~~ serving until 1820. He was acquainted with John Dickinson, the author of the ~~Farmer's~~ Letters, ~~and~~ naming his daughter Mary Dickinson Bringhurst in honor of Mrs. Dickinson. In his professional capacity he attended ~~Dickinson~~ during his last illness ~~and has~~ of which he left an important account, ~~of it.~~ ~~His~~ friend ~~the~~ famous Robert Fulton, who painted the portrait of him reproduced ~~in this work.~~ for our illustration.[X] His correspondence and acquaintance was with many the great men, ~~of the day,~~ among others being Washington and Clay. To Cowper the poet he addressed a letter published in Chester, England in 1800 under the title "Copy of a letter from a Young Man, a Quaker, in Pennsylvania, to the late William Cowper, Poet." It was reprinted in the British Friend. He married at Wilmington 11 July 1799, Deborah, daughter of Ziba Ferris, of that place, by his wife Edith, a daughter of Benjamin Sharpless of Chester

[X] This is the most appropriate place to insert the fine portrait of Bringhurst. The photograph of the painting was kindly furnished by one of the descendants of the subject. It was the first portrait in oil painted in (1786.

county, Pennsylvania. She was born 2 March 1773 and died 20 August 1844. They had four sons and one daughter.[1]

The geneology of the Sharpless family[2] speaks of Bringhurst thus:

> "He was gifted with an intellect of no common order, he had cultivated and improved it by extensive reading, and nature had supplied him with an easy elocution, which enabled him to communicate with clearness and facility, and rendered his conversation a source of instruction and pleasure."

Often in Brown's letters to Bringhurst there are repetitions of as many as four words, showing that Brown wrote in great haste without revision. Some of the sentences are not properly connected or separated and the punctuation is often fantastic. Save for the correction of obvious faults, the letters are here printed just as they were written. While in many biographies the omission of some passages is perhaps supported on the ground of good taste, in Brown's there is nothing to be gained. All the characters mentioned are dead and their descendants long ago built praiseworthy reputations in spite of any action of their ancestors that can possibly be distorted into offences.

The earliest letter to Bringhurst now extant is the following unaddressed one. In its opening we find Brown still dealing in

1 The foregoing account is derived principally from the History of the Bringhurst Family by J.G.Leach, Philadelphia 1901.
2 Gilbert Cope; Philadelphia 1887.

add to note 3

Translation: Both young
Arcadians; both alike ~~equal in the song~~ inspired / To sing, and answer ~~in the response~~. as the song requir'd.— Dryden.

couplets;however its verse is more welcome than if it were composed in classic purity.

(Philadelphia,Tuesday,20 March 1792.)[1]

It is certain that in genral the excellence of the workmanship depends upon the nature of the tools which are employed in executing it but I know not whether the quill of a crow is better than that of the goose,or whether it is plucked from a nobler animal. I once was guilty of a Peter-Pindarical performance[2] in which those creatures were converted into orators and were suffered to plead,each his own cause,in presence of a critical judicature. And what decision do you think? As I have not now the piece I cannot certainly inform you,but there is reason to imagine that

By all the rules of Equity below
A sentence was pronounced against the crow..
That all the shouts were heard of all the wise
And Mr.Goose applauded to the Skies.
As one whose silken plumes supplied the pen
Best suited to the purposes of men.
A pen most friendly to the ease of those
Who teach the stream to flow of Cawless prose
And those who blasted by Apollo's curse
Adore the mad divinity of verse.

You see,my friend,how rapidly and inevitably I catch the poetical contagion,and slide into verse as an overloaded promonotory sinks into the ocean: as naturally as a storm-uprooted cedar falls to the ground. You shall not want a splendid Simile--nor an apt quotation,for may it not be said of us

Ambo florentes aetatibus. Arcades ambo
Et cantare pares,et respondere parati.[3]

I will not indeed appropriate the Second line, nor imagine that though we may be "Arcades ambo" and "respondere parati", we are "Cantare pares".

Is it not preposterous to be very a(n)xious of propriety and method in a familiar letter? A stanza of a celebrated composition has this moment occured to my memory,which I find an irresistible inclination to honor with a place in this epistle,but for what reason I should introduce it, or how to excuse the impropriety of its insertion!--were you ever in so whimsical a predicament? This it is. I will give it to you and will afterward apologise for the awkwardness and worthlessness of the gift.

In 'Delphy town
There lives a Clown
That formerly was wise
But now the fool
Is all men's tool
And all do him despise.

1 The letter is not addressed and is not signed or dated. The date is assumed from that given in the body of the letter.
2 This has not been found.
3 Virgil,Eclogue,VII,ll.4-5.

London, March 20, 1792. 1

I have been sauntering in the park this morning. I purpose after Breakfast to visit the Shakespeare Gallery. 2 Strangers I suppose are indiscriminately admitted. I was put on shore last evening at the Parliament Stairs, and spent an hour at the "Queen's Arms" 3 with a Templar. A stupid wretch. An enthusiast in Law. He soars to nothing lower than a new edition of the Statutes with half a league of commentary foisted into every page. The English lawyers seem to think that some laborious compilation is absolutely necessary to the completion of a Barrister. He told me he intended to pull Bearcraft or (as he denominated him,) the crafty bear, by the nose the first time he should meet him. Because (said he) "he yesterday asserted at Westminster that the writings of Ld. Coke were singular compounds of folly and wisdom, but that in his opinion, the folly predominated." I pretended to be scared to death at this audacious assertion, and told my companion that I thought it incumbent upon every legitimate Son of the British Themis to stand forth the champion of the learned Judge and venerable Commentator. He told me that my sentiment had his hearty approbation and insinuated that his appearance at the bar would be the Aera of a Juridical Revolution, and that he intended when the natural course of events should raise him to the bench, to be distinguished by his veneration for ancient maxims, and his adherence to the pure and genuine language of the law. I ventured to enquire whether, in his opinion, the language of the law had suffered corruption in those latter ages. Yes. (he replied) he, for his part, had almost entirely confined his studies to the legal Classics: had made himself a thorough master of the Roman and Latin dialects, and had studied, with unexampled diligence, the writers on the feudal system, the year books, the Statute-antique, the Bacon annalists and legal antiquarians. I highly appauded the wisdom of his conduct, lamented the degeneracy of the age, the fascinations of Novelty, and the fatal substitution of sense for sound, of reasoning for precedent, and of the eloquence of Murray for the subtlety of Plowden. I deplored the contempt which began visibly to prevail with regard to the common Law, and the fashionable preferance of Roman oratory and Jurisprudence. I solicited him to propose me as a Candidate to a numerous Society, of which (he told me) he was a member, and, at that time, occupied the post of president. Though I was born in America, I had always been (I said) a determined adversary of Rebellion and had done essential services to the British government, to the great and irreparable detriment of my fortune. In short I so successfully counterfeited the Character of Littleton junior that I speedily procured, with my friend, the reputation of a man of sense and

1 This is of course entirely fanciful. So far as we know Brown never was in London.

2 Compare Traveller's Letters, Literary Magazine, Vol. VII, p. 191.

3 Brown probably got the idea from Boswell's Johnson.

The playful bequest to Abraham Bennet is when searched out remarkable. The standard reference works[1] ~~do not~~ contain ~~any~~ no account of his life, though distinguished as an electrician and scientific inventor born 1750 and died 1799.[2] His gold-leaf electroscope was introduced 1789 and described with others of his inventions in the Philosophical Transactions of 1787 by which Brown probably read. ~~became acquainted with his life and work.~~ Making him a lawyer of the Middle Temple, ~~may be~~ could possibly inspired by Brown's recollection that Blackstone and Burke had been members, ~~This instance~~ of the play of Brown's fancy is a curious illustration characteristically mingling fable with reality to fascinate his victim.

1 The Encyclopaedia 11th. edition refers to his inventions, Vol.IX, 176d and 239b. ~~The D.N.B. has no account of him.~~

2 His work ~~may be~~ found listed in the Catalogue of the Wheeler Gift, American Institute of Electrical Engineers, New York 1909, Vol.I, Nos.519a, 552, 618, Vol.II, Nos.2483-4-5 and 2492.

In the letter which follows we shall find Brown reading Rousseau. Because there has been some suspicion that he took up some of the revolutionary ~~ideas~~ philosophy of France, especially in his ~~ideas of~~ religion, it should be explained that what he read could very well have ~~helped~~ strengthened rather than injured any Christian ideas to which he had been bred. The ~~Emile~~ Héloïse of Rousseau gives the highest credit to the Bible for its inspiration, for its sublimity, for its excellence over any other life known. It was an excellent model for Brown and could only have taught him a very high regard for the life of Christ, though its arguments on suicide were, as he knew ~~and~~ later, condemned as possibly insincere but positively dangerous.

x Literary Magazine III, p. 310 ff.

penetration,and he very formally invited me to sup to-morrow at his chambers,with a party of his choice friends.

But first finding me so intelligent on legal Subjects, he inquired whether I was one of that profession. I told him that I had always been invincably attched to the study but that I had no motive for practising the law. That this study could not be prosecuted with the same success in my native country as in England,and that one purpose for which I left America,was the collection of an extensive legal library;in which I purposed to consume the remainder of my days. "Every man"(continued I)"will be distinguished by some or other whimsical peculiarity. You must know Sir that I have made my will, and directed that as soon as I am dead all my volumes shall be burnt,the ashes carefully collected,and,after some Anatomical operator has skillfully extracted all the contents of the cranium,under whatever denomination it may pass,cerebrum,cerebellum or Medulla oblongata, inter and inner,corticles and medullaris,I have ordered that a certain quantity of those ashes shall,by any means least injurious to the occiputal Aeconomy,be conveyed into the cavity. This strange procedure,Sir (earnestly and significantly fixing my eyes upon him,) was, to speak the truth,dictated by the despair of finding any person worthy of inheriting so inestimable a treasure,"and, therefore,as this despair would be now unreasonable,I believe I shall change my will in this respect." As soon as I uttered this,I trembled lest he should discover that I was jesting,but luckily he continued to think me serious,and we parted,after mutual professions of esteem and regard,at a very late hour. After the invitation to supper was offered and accepted,I happily discovered that among those who are to be his visitants on that occasion there is one to whom I am well known. I therefore thought it best to write him a letter this morning, apologizing for the accident which has rendered it impossible for me to attend him,and enclosing a copy of my will,with which,I tell him,I have just executed, in which I have prohibited the conflagration of my library,and the filling of my brain-pan with the ashes and,instead thereof, I have devised it to my learned friend,Abraham Bennet of the Middle temple Esquire-----"

There we see Brown as no mean satirist. Having suffered so much because of his renouncing the law he does not let slip an opportunity to take a fling at the profession. And in so doing he has very cleverly impaled those who would have had him stuff his head with the "rubbish of law."

As ~~is to~~ might be expected from "the cheerless hours of night", the tragic and supernatural.

~~next~~ letter is ~~of quite different a~~ highly dramatic in character, It is the first of three ~~letters~~ written on the same day--(1) Two o'clock,A.M.,(2) during the day and (3) In the evening.

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst,Junr.Front street.)

(Philadelphia,May 5,1792)Saturday morning

Two o'clock.

I have been conversing with Rousseau. I have, since ten o'clock,been flying with a rapturous attention through his illumined and impassioned pages. Notwithstanding the obscurities and difficulties of a foreign 1 tongue of which my knowledge is extremely imperfect I can easily perceive the transcendant excellence of this performance. What a model of pathetic eloquence! Thus it must always be when the sentiments are the genuine offspring of the heart: when we speak with the voice of truth and nature. Love has been said to be the most prevalent and universal of human passions. And yet what numbers have never felt its influence? How much idle declamation has it occasioned? I have always been of opinion that it is impossible for any one to judge of the truth and accuracy of representation of the progress and effects of love, who has not personally experienced its violent and impetuous sensations. It will,at least,be confessed that experience only can enable any one justly and forcibly, to describe it. It might with equal propriety be exacted from a painter to delineate the countenance of a man whom he had never seen,as from one that he never loved, to describe the lover.

I will take an opportunity to shew you the specimen of an amorous correspondence 2 founded on truth and nature, in which the parties were,indeed,less polished and refined,less enlightened by education and less the victims of adversity,but not less ardent and sincere and virtuous and delicate than St.Preux and Heloise. A correspondence which I have often been delighted in comparing with the vivid fictions of Rousseau,and this comparison has furnished a stronger proof of the genius of that invincible writer,than could be afforded by the application of any other test of beauty or propriety.

But this subject has taken my attention from your last valuable and copious Epistle. I will now return to it,and endeavor to afford you higher satisfaction than appears to have been received from the perusal of my last. "Distressed (do you say?) harassed,tortured--"is it possible? Are you really serious? "Reproof! Ridicule!" Friendship and Civility forbid! What would

1 As we shall see in the 19 May letter Brown probably read a translation,despite his statement here.

2 This cannot refer to the incomplete work to which the title of Jessica has been given because it is too short. Sky Walk cannot be referred to because that work was not epistolary. Probably Julius,of which we shall later have an outline was ~~the work Brown had~~ in mind.

I give that the letter,1 which has occasioned your uneasiness had never been written? But surely you have mistaken my intention. I would not have designed either reproof or ridicule. There was nothing in your letter that could justify it,and had it been ever so ridiculous and censurable,my affection for the writer would have blinded my discernment,or prevented me from using those detestable weapons;the use of which is incompatible with friendship and from which I ought with greater caution to abstain because the wounds which they inflict upon my sensibility, are absolutely incurable.

Alas! Where has the delicacy of exalted friendship vanished! That friendship,whose ear is accustomed only to the murmurs of unspeakable tenderness,before whose inchanting influence the haggard forms of langor and impatience and inquietude are fled,who heightens the luxury of silence,and the Sanctity of melancholy:who startles at the bursts of empty laughter and the vociferations of boisterous wit,2 who binds,in holy sympathy,the passions of conversing friends,and blends their souls in the calm exstatic intercourse of pure and spiritual intelligences. My sceptre is broken! Thy reign is finished! Thou art gone forever! forever!forever

Hah! What is the matter with me? Surely I am haunted by some malignant demon,who wrests from me the dominion of my pen and makes it utter sentiments,which it is my interest and my duty to conceal. Let me die if I can help it. I cannot but be sometimes impatient under an intolerable load of disappointment and vexation. When alone I weep and laugh alternately. I am,at no time,by the force of Imagination exalted into gayety,but her pinions are less vigorous than formerly;she closes them too soon,and sinks at once to an immeasurable depth. You have read Milton. See here a description of my situation.

> Her sail-broad vans (Fancy's)
> She spreads for flight and by her native force
> Uplifted spurns the ground;thence many a league
> As in a cloudy chair,ascending rides
> Audacious but that seat soon failing meets
> A vast vacuity:All unawares
> Fluttering her pinions vain,plumb down she drops
> Ten thousand fathoms deep---3

But what is my condition to you? What my disease? Can you cure it? Yes. But I will not tell you how. The antidote must be voluntarily administered--

"What art thou about,O Uniter? Incorrigible fool! Unpitiable wretch! Wilt thou still continue to act in contradiction to thy maxims? When wilt thou be wise,and learn to act in consequence of reason?"

1 The letter referred to has not been found. It may have been destroyed by Bringhurst or by Brown.

2 Thus as time went on Brown came more and more to dislike this principal characteristic of Wilkins. Undoubtedly Bringhurst was supplanting Wilkins in the affections of our author.

3 Paradise Lost II,line 927 ff. Evidently the situation was so discovered by reading Milton. Cf.Traveller's Letters,Literary Magazine,Vol. VII,p.264 for Brown's opinion of the excellence of Milton's representation of distance.

Pity me my friend:--or laugh at me,just as you think proper.1 But your pity will be most acceptable: I am proud.Do you know that I am proud? And that this pride is the source of consolation? Ye beings that were born to weep! I look down upon you! But is my elevation real or imaginary? No matter. I believe it to be real,and that connection is sufficient. You see me,my dear friend, uncovered to your view; and standing before you in all the nakedness of sincerity. I wish thou wast a living eye,and that all my soul were visible to thy discernment. But why should I attempt to conceal any of my foibles from thee? Those are too glaring to escape detection; Thy penetration can easily divest my failings of their masks and snatch the stolen laurel from my brow. What makes me write thus strangely? Is it this gloomy and unpropitious hour? Midnight is the season of insanity. It borders upon three. Tick! Tick! Tick! How rapidly fly the moments! Whether talking or writing,I cannot get rid of myself. I leave my papers. Throw my pen upon the floor and crush it with my heel. I walk irregularly and with unequal steps,to and fro. How I rave! Sad and joyous in the same comprehensive moment,and uttering vehement soliloquies,of which the abruptness renders them intelligible only to myself.

"Angel of destruction! I feel the pressure of thy rod. Thou overwhelmest me with darkness. What coldness in thy touch!--Thy brow how pale! How livid! My blood curdles at the sight of thee. How dreadful, how desirable thy presence! What mingled terror and delight accompany thy steps! Forbear to push me further. I have (faltered) I tell thee,on the very edge. I overlook the precipice. What a turbulent and stormy sea! Darkness sits upon it. Shall I leap? Of my own accord? No. I will stay till I am irresistably impelled.2 Yes--I will see you on your way to-morrow. Leave me for the present. I will spend the night upon the verge of this jutting promonotory. I know not how I came hither,but I am determined to remain, and listen to the noises of the winds and waves, the voice of ocean and the music of the elements.

Hah! why am I startled at thy presence? How earnestly have I besought thee to reveal thyself,and shall I now be overwhelmed with speechless terror at thy appearance? I will not tremble. What hast thou to tell me? Shall I live forever?3Is my being finite or immortal? Let my ear be ravished with the joyful tidings of eternity! Ah! How quickly,how unseasonably dost thou vanish! Horrible delusion! Beloved spirit!thou existest not, or surely thou couldst easily illumine my benighted

1 Another allusion to Wilkins. In fact the two sentences here contain the whole of Brown's position related to Wilkins.

2 Brown went as far toward suicide as most who do not commit it. Those who are "irresistably impelled" have passed the bounds of argument and seldom live to tell the tale.

3 Brown's interest in immortality can also be seen in the Weekly Magazine Vol.II,pp 232-3,query No.7.

soul and intellectually intimate the certainty of thy existence. Heaven befriend me! I am sick--sick at heart. But still reason is my own. I am master of my pen. I will finish my epistle. Hah! I am lost--the confusion has subsided--1 O take me to thyself thou best of friends! My Bringhurst! Suffer me to call thee by the tenderest appelations. My heart is open to divine and softening impressions. I am soul all over. This moment is as bright as the former was gloomy. And what, thinkest thou occasioned this delightful revelation. I caught a momentary glimpse of my Correspondent. I saw him buried in profound and tranquil sleep. The serenity of virtue sat upon his countenance. Here (thought I) is one whose esteem is honorable; whose affection is to be praised beyond the Mine of Golconda or the diadems of Britain. He looks upon me with regard. He dreams of me. His lips inarticulately and involuntarily utters my name. My idea flew across his fancy and he smiled. My soul is not, indeed, the Inhabitant of his sensorium. I am not a witness to the operations of his fancy. But I am not-- I will not be mistaken. It is I of whom he is this moment dreaming. I talk with him. He converses with me. Heavenly sympathy! I feel thy influence! As, in the deserts of Arabia, the cool spring is grateful to the scorched and famished soul, to me, thy influence is pleasing and acceptable. Let me cherish thee and find in the sacred rapture which thou breathest a refuge from despair, a cure for madness and an antidote to grief. 2

I cannot reason. To-morrow I will talk to you of suicide and necessity. At this time I am violently agitated by different emotions. I see nothing but myself and thee.

You have discovered inconsistencies in my letter. Very probably you think I talk absurdly, and do not comprehend the argument which I use. Is that surprising or singular? Am I not a mass of absurdities and inconsistencies? Am I not uniform in contradictions, and invariable in vicissitude? Would you imagine that all the parts of the letter which lies before you, were the production of the same hand, written within the same hours?

I must now sleep, unless I mean to spend the night in watchfulness. These indefatigible vigils are ruinous to the eyes and destructive of the constitution and yet I will persevere in the same unwholesome trait. But perhaps habit has inured me to them. I have often been in

1 ~~When we have read thus far.~~ Is it any wonder to the reader that Brown wrote novels of the character he did?

2 All of which he actually did.

a grave yard at twelve o'clock,carried thither merely by the love of solitude and contemplation,1 four miles from my lodging. To slumber during day and wake at night was ever the invariable tenor of my conduct. Farewell. Excuse the faults and esteem,as they deserve,the virtues of him, who in calling thee his friend,will receive as much pleasure,as it is possible for heaven to confer on

Brown.

I will take another opportunity to analyse your letter. Yet why should we perplex ourselves with these inquiries? I have formed my opinion. It is built on a basis too firm to be shaken. Argument and feeling were its Architects. Neither of us can hope to change the opinion of the other. Neither of us can hope to change--Ah! I have written that before. Now,indeed,it is time to leave off--Farewell and possibly2 forever! Who knows but before the return of morning I shall be no more. Death may seize me ere3 I sleep!! I dread him not. Let him come. His presence will be pleasing. I shall then be certain,and,if I resist,I make thee, my friend,a solemn promise,and seal it with the most tremendious sanctions,that my spirit shall reveal itself to thine and tell thee all that may lawfully be told,or that thou art desirious of knowing. O that the veil of futurity were pervious to mortal sight! Dost thou not join me in the wish! Alas! thou hearest me not. Thou slumberest:art dead. May thy slumbers be serene! May the dreams of paradise amuse thy sleep! And angels on each hand conduct thee safe through tempest and obscurity,to light and peace! So supplicates through tempest and obscurity--again! Not another letter--

There we have Brown in the worst state of his melancholy, in danger of a suicide's end. There is no doubt it would have taken an event of trifling importance to have cast him over the promonotory on which he poetically says he rested. Had Bringhurst seen fit to write a second letter of condemnation and had it

1 Again do we wonder at Brown's life and work?
2 In large letters.
3 Ere in the sense of while.
4 Of a compact of the kind made by an American author this is probably the earliest.

arrived by messenger in the early hours of that May day it is more than probable that Brown would not have lived to see the dawn. Fortunate it was that Bringhurst was the confidant and not a person of the type of Wilkins, for Bringhurst knew his man and did not take chances with a too vivid imagination.

Undoubtedly Brown was correct when he said he was sick. He was indeed so. If he had been compelled to work hard physically, to keep away from graveyards, to stop his watching of the clock by getting rid of it, to go to bed early, and to do his chosen work at the times when all the world was doing theirs he probably would never have had cause to do other than correct his conduct rather than to study it and brood over it until life seemed almost unbearable.

As we shall see presently he was unable to sleep and so he wrote another letter but after three hours more he was exhausted and slept for five hours.

After the crisis had been passed Brown probably wrote the following letter.

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst, Junr. Union St.[1])

1 The change of the address from Front to Union street means Brown knew he would not find Bringhurst at his home during the day. The evening letter of the same day was for the same reason addressed to Bringhurst's home.

(Philadelphia, Saturday, May 7, 1792.)[1]

[14] partial

"Consolation" didst thou say? Ah! It is much higher, gratification: it is the felicity after which I languish: it constitutes the only happiness of which I can be sensible.

Is it possible? "He left me to conceal his emotions." How distressful and yet how delightful is this intelligence. My Friend, thou hast now accomplished thy benevolent design. Thou hast performed all that thou art able: Thou hast gone as far as thy power extends. Thou hast made me as happy as it is possible for me to be, or at least as it is in thy power to make me. No one could more effectively have contributed to the alleviation of my sorrows and the restoration of tranquillity.

How is this? Let me pause a moment and consider--What have I written in my former letter? It was the production of a direful moment. I wrote at the stillness and solemnity of midnight.[2] When imagination was awakened by the recollection of the past and furnished by officious memory, (Traitoress! I thought she had been powerless and dead) with a pencil, with which she employed herself in decorating with hideous attributes: with the monstrous graces of deformity, of haggard ugliness, the frightful image of the present. What a night was that! How fertile of despair and rapture: How was my mind alternately plunged into agonizing dreams and delicious reveries! Surely such opposite emotions were occasioned by the agency of Spirits, counterworking each other, and alternately attaining the superiority, That night was dreadful and delightful. I never closed my eyes till the sun had risen; my soul was never more alive, more active. To sleep was impossible. After closing the epistle which you received, I spent the rapid hours from three to six, in traversing my chamber, muttering as wildly as a maniac, or in writing a second letter to you, and pouring all my soul upon the paper. At six friendly and propitious slumbers hovered over me. I threw myself upon the bed, and enjoyed the benefits of sleep till eleven. I then arose, healthful and serene in mind and body till with all my stormy passions hushed---

I dare not send you the second letter.[3] It is rendered illegible by hurry. It is full of the incoherencies of moonstruck Fancy and ungoverned passions. It would appear too much like the ravings of a Lunatic. It would afflict your sensibility with mortal pangs. I myself shudder on the perusal of it. I have already too much distressed you. But why, my friend, should I afflict you?

[missing]

1 The date if taken from the note by Bringhurst "Rec'd 7th. May in the Evening 1792." might be the 7th. but from a later letter dated by Brown as Saturday evening the date would seem to be the 5th. The matter is not important only it is necessary to notice that the two following letters should be the same date whether it is the 5th. or 7th.

2 From 10 P.M. to about 3 A.M.

3 It undoubtedly was destroyed.

Your happiness is founded on the stable and immutable basis of conscious virtue and pure devotion. Thou lookest down from the heaven to which thou art already raised,with the pity of an angel. Thou compassionatest the frailties of thy friend,and holding out thy hand to lift him from the gulph in which his cruel destiny has plunged him---What a shameful weakness is this. I am no longer master of myself--I weep involuntarily. I am again conflicting with a sea of sorrows. Stretch out thy hand,again,my guardian angel! Lest the proud waves overbear me and I perish!--I can no more--I must relinquish my pen and fly from myself. This letter shall quickly be succeeded by another in which I will make thee the physician of my soul,and will explain with all possible minuteness and fidelity the nature of my disease. I see the sculptured monument ascend. Let us draw near and read the Inscription. Read it,my friend,if thy tears permit thee. I can not.

"Here lies,who was born to prove the extremes of joy and woe."

May health on golden pinions visit thee,and body harmonize with peaceful mind! So wishes,so devoutly wishes

C.B.B.

That inscription on the imagined monument has been selected as the briefest quotation that summarizes Brown's life. It should be on his monument to-day. It is a peculiarly intelligent selection for it is an accurate confession made in an honest endeavor to know himself. If any one ever passed the depths of hell and the heights of rhapsodical ecstacy it was Brown!

The letter which he wrote as a substitute for the second one reads:

Dost thou wish me to become a convert to your doctrine? Implicitly to believe my own immortality. And to gaze at self-destruction with abhorrence, to believe it execrable and flagitious? How easily may your wishes be accomplished? You have need only to assure me of your friendship, and whithersoever you lead I shall inevitably follow. My heart is worthy to be known to thee my friend. Thou art yet but superficially acquainted with it. As thou knowest it better thou wilt find it more deserving of an union with thy own. There may not be an exact conformity of dispositions between us, but make me be convinced that thou art certainly my friend, and thy temper and opinions and pursuits will instantly become my own. Know me better I beseech thee.

Ye pages that my fertile pen has filled, with the jarring details of excursive fancy, elevated reason or ungoverned passions. Ye scenes in which I have arduously though obscurely acted; And thou O fairest and most excellent! Thou angel of my destiny! Whose mind is purity, whose form is grace! With whom, at whatever distance there may be, my soul converses! It is you only to whom he who wishes to survey the mind which governs this pen, must have recourse.

What is wanting but the melody of varied numbers, to confer upon your letter all the attributes of Lyric poetry? What a truly heavenly vision hast thou described, and how infinitely more delightful than the most eloquent or subtle Rationation, and how exquisitely suited to produce conviction in a soul like mine!

"Peace thou man of words! Thou unseasonable prater! Thou Advocate of uncomfortable Scepticism! Thou babblest to no purpose. In spite of all thy efforts to seduce me I will still believe. My being is imperishable. This belief is pleasing and useful: A contrary opinion is painful and pernicious. Why then should I adopt it? Is misery a proof of wisdom? By what other motive ought the conduct of human creatures to be governed than the desire of happiness? Without felicity existence is of no value, and it is impossible for me to be happy without the assurance of immortality. Argument is useless: demonstration is impertinent and ineffectual. My belief shall be the dictates only of inclination, and now I am as happy as the belief of an endless existence, in a state better than the present, can render me."

I am extremely sorry for your ill health, but it ought not to be forgotten by my friend that Sanity of mind, which he must be allowed to enjoy, is of infinitely greater value than that of the body, and that therefore, as the enjoyment of perfect and unmingled happiness on earth is inconsistent with the great design of providence, he has reason to congratulate himself on the felicity of his lot. With how much pleasure should I contribute my endeavors to alleviate the pangs of an incurable sickness, by the tenderness or sprightliness of oral or epistolary converse! I will not differ from you even in

temper and opinion. That indeed is impossible. How clearly do I perceive the exquisite relation between Love and friendship! The emotions which each produces in the bosom of her votary are,of the same kind,and differ only in degrees of violence. It is equally impossible to reject the dictates of the friend or mistress;at least,such is the knowledge which I have gathered from experience. How many resolutions have I unscrupulously broken. How many vows have I forfeited in compliance with the inclination of my friends. How many hours have I,in concurrence with my friends,devoted to amusements which,without their concurrence,would have appeared to me insupportably insipid and disgusting!

"Come. It is your deal and my SAY SO.

No--yes--no--his?--yes. It is his. That is true. Deal quickly there,I pray you.

There--There--

You have not shuffled them,nor cut.

Well. Now it is done. There-There--There--There--There--There--There--There--There--There.

What are trumps? Hearts? That is right. Fiddle Riddle de piddlede. Tiddle de--

Do you stand? Merciful Fathers! What a hand have I!

No, I run.

Oh! Hang thee for a Coward. Why didst not stand?

I had not a single trump. But to comfort you the same card may come again.

There.

There--There--There. Clubs are trumps. Let me see? Slap dash for gingerbread! I stand.

What say you Mr. B---n?

Stand.

I shall loo you both. It is your play Mr. B---n.

Is it? I am sorry for that. Well--There goes. What say you to that?

It is mine Sir.

We shall both be looed Charles.

I fear it indeed.

You <u>are</u> both of you looed. Huzza for victory. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Come hither ye dearly won.(taking the stake.) I shall be rich presently. It gives me the highest pleasure to win your coppers."

What think you,my friend,of this instructive and delightful scene? Angels flock from all the corners of the universe to gaze at our exploits;to be witnesses of our valor in the combats of exalted <u>loo</u>. Shall I write a Mock heroic,and dignify it with this splendid title? Surely <u>loo</u> of all employemnts is most worthy of a rational being. How favorable it is to the progress of the understanding? What opportunities does it afford for the display of wit and eloquence? For the indulgence of celestial sympathy,and for the exercise of all those passions which raise humanity above itself? How do I congratulate myself on the extinction of my ancient prejudices. I was formerly of opinion (how stupid was I to harbor it?) that

the converse of a friend was the most delightful Recreation. How have I pitied the man who would withdraw his attention from the eye of a beloved companion, the eye, that organ of Intelligence and Sensibility! to fix them on unmeaning pieces of discolored paper. How reverently have I deemed him of the name of friend! But experience is the mother and time the nurse of Wisdom. I can now, without insupportable disgust or weariness, sit whole hours at the banquet so insipid or distasteful. And dost thou know the reason of this change of sentiment? I cannot dislike that of which my friends are fond. In their company I am sensible of felicity, which no employment can diminish, Even the idea of loo, by being theirs, generally accompanied with that of beloved Will and Joe, becomes agreable to me. They make me happy by suffering me only to see them and I change their conversation, incumbered as it is with the impediments of Loo or Chess or Checkers, for that of Shakespeare or Rousseau or Richardson with regret and despondency. Permit me to enjoy this happiness more frequently. My chamber and my arms shall always be open to receive you. I will unlock my cabinet of Secrets or I will give you the possession of the key. I will make you, with my other friend, the partners of my bosom: and will open to your critical and curious inspection all my Literary stores. My friend, I know, does not honor me with an equal degree of confidence. He assiduously hides from view the tracks which he has trodden; and decorates, in secrecy, the scene with epic and dramatic splendor of which I am not yet worthy of becoming a spectator. But no matter. I will set an example of fidelity and confidence which he may imitate, or not as he thinks proper. My chamber wants, indeed, external decoration. It is unadorned with carpet or with Tapestry. But may I not hope that my friends will overlook the humility of my dwelling, and will be satisfied with the assurance that their visits will be ever convenient and acceptable and that their presence will give almost as much satisfaction to my family as to myself. I can furnish my apartment with a pack and table if that be necessary, and the company of my friends will reconcile me to the artifice and manoeuvres of Piquet, Basset, Ombre, and Quadrelle. Loo is puerile and insipid when compared to them, at least variety is necessary to render Cards agreable. All austerity is banished from this house. All observance of Religious peculiarity. Every man may go and come and act when and how he thinks proper. The ears of its Inhabitants are not offended at or unused to the voice of music or of gayety, nor at the manners of a midnight conversation. Come then whenever you think proper, for your coming cannot be otherwise than convenient and acceptable to the tenants of this mansion and particularly, to

C.B.B.

You promise to reply to the remaining part of my last letter. I am not unmindful of this promise.
Saturday Evening nine o'clock.

After having written this letter ~~Brown~~ he took it to Bringhurst's home in Front street. What there happened is disclosed by the note added to the outside of the letter. It reads:

> I called only to leave this letter, to receive one in return, and to ask you whether you were worse or better than when last I saw you. I have stolen a wafer.

We have just seen Brown in the new light of an ~~adept~~ amateur at cards. Evidently he disliked the game ~~and always~~ preferred ing to talk rather than to play. ~~Wanting to play for money~~ His companions ~~probably~~ tried all the games ~~of the day~~ they knew hoping to find one he liked well enough to play without complaint. The picture shows Brown as ~~being~~ and Bringhurst a loser. With his home ~~a place~~ full of the ideas of the Quakers it is little wonder that it was ~~unbearable to~~ no place for him and his musical and card-playing ~~nightly friends.~~ companions. Apparently he was living alone in the ~~wine street house~~ where his friends visited him at night when they were free from their days' work.

In his next letter we shall find him writing the ~~M~~ock-heroic ~~h.c.~~ on loo which he suggested in the former letter. It should be ~~especially~~ noticed that he acknowledges ~~his~~ indebtedness to Pope and Vida. In the case of the latter there is the radical difference that Vida's verses on chess are serious while Brown's on loo are satirical.

(Not signed and not addressed.)1 and other games

(Philadelphia, Wednesday, May 9, 1792.) 2

1 Probably delivered in person.

2 Dated from Bringhurst's docket of its receipt.

Having tried his hand at the prose version he now turns ~~to~~ to ~~apply~~ at some iambic pentameters.

[15]

Tarry a little, my good friend. I want only to furnish myself, at this Bookseller's shop, with a Rhyming dictionary, and to rob yonder Crow of a quill or two, and then I will attend you on your journey to the paradise of poets. I will contribute my endeavors to unsphere the soul of VIDA and compell the presence of the jest-provoking, wit-dissecting, Eight-syllabled Thalia. Alas! my friend, these are only my wishes. Neither my leisure nor abilities will suffer me to prosecute my undertaking. To write indeed like Peter Pindar would not, I believe be very difficult, but were I to undertake the enterprise I should scorn to talk in such a barbarous dialect, but should endeavor to emulate the polished and classical purity of Pope and Vida. Writers, whose celebrated performances I should wish attentively to read before I wrote a line, and, if possible, by deep and frequent meditation, to imbibe the spirit by which they were animated. You do not seem to be fully aware of the difficulty of the task, and yet I must, at the same time, acknowledge that the genius of my friend appears to be exquisitely and peculiarly adopted to performances of this kind. There is, in the little specimen with which you have furnished me, a surprising copiousness of imagery. You seem to have a thousand allusions and comparisons always at hand. But, tell me, do not you think that in proportion to the insignificance or meaness of the subject, on these occasions, ought always to be the studied energy and elaborate beauty of the language and versification? You write my friend, with too much facility; and are careless of the nicer and minuter qualities of style and cadence, which must be owned to be essential to perfection, and of which, as they are, for the most part, attainable by labor and attention, the omission may justly be accounted inexcusable. Ah! What temerity is this? What an adventurous critic have I become? An Usurper of the chair of Aristarchus?[2] It is but just that I should afford you an opportunity for retaliation. Let me then consider--what may be said by way of Introduction to an Heroi-comic poem upon Loo? "Muses and ministers of Rhyme befriend me!"

Attend. Ye sisters of celestial birth!
Forsake your starry homes and post to earth
With laughter under each expanded wing;
Of harmony and wit untwine the string.
Be near while I, than Hercules more strong,
Unloose the fettered hands of drooping song;
Retread the tract that Homer trod before
And spread the muses praise from shore to shore.
For, lo! the phrenzy of my soul constrains
On Fancy's sparkling neck to throw the reins
In numbers to imbalm a lofty theme
And pour, of various verse, the copious stream,

1 This may refer to Bringhurst Ode to Time ~~though the late seems the lady for it~~. or any one of the Birtha series.

~~1 The couplet-mania evidently was not alone Brown's.~~

2 The most celebrated Alexandrian grammarian and critic.

And (to) cut short my tale) in Cantos two,
To sound the triumphs of heroic Loo.
Ye powers of heroic song descend
Each in his car of light effectual aid to lend!
Your poet shall uplift the voice of praise
To time-destroying Loo in time-surviving lays
For oft I stand amidst the sportive crew
That give to Loo their days, their nights to Loo
Oft, in my dreams, I watch the dealer's hand
And throw down in despair, or bravely stand
Oft, approaching, view the nect'rous treat
And gather consolation from defeat.
At long depending rows, attentive gape,
Of various dyes and equi-sided shape
Behold, with joy depicted in my face
Of trumps the royal pair, or knave or ace;
At sight of trumpless hand, proclaim a truce
Or scowl, with rolling eyes, on worthless duce
At ace succeeding ace astonished gaze
Or of collected spoils a trophy raise.
Or see around, the mighty ruin strewed
And, wait, in speechless terror to be looed.
So! to my sight the polished board appears
That, decently disposed, has borne for years,
Unstunned, the rage of combat, and between
Yet stainless has escaped the topers spleen,
Has seen the laboring mind elude distress
At care-dispelling, thought-convoking chess1
Has seen the foe his scattered forces bring
And meditate the fall of helpless king,
With high exploits to decorate the scene
Prepare, and lead in chains the captive queen,
(Her fall her friends lament, her foes deride
In striving to defend her lord she died)
Or spite of martial strength, in cautions spite,
Intangles in his net the active knight,
Ah! naught, by numbers and by skill assailed,
The mitred brow or ample stride availed
To rescue from his fate the cloistered sage
Who dared in warlike combats to engage.
Or see the rook, from his asylum drawn
To fight and fall before a powerless pawn.
The polished board has viewed a different scene
A witness to amusing draughts has been
Has laughed to see dexterity enthrall
Brute force. Thrones sink, crowns topple, legions fall
Before him and the boaster cease to sound
His triumphs prostrate on th' ensanguined ground.
Has seen gigantic war whole armies crush
And nations to the dread encounter rush.
Seen subjects "wade through slaughter to the throne"2
And vanquish hosts unaided and alone.
Here harmless whist has often found a field
Here Ombre and Quadrille their raptures yield

2 Gray's Elegy, stz.17 a throne not the.

1 Brown made frequent mention of the game but here we have the most he ever presented of his knowledge of it. He played cards instead because he and his friends never got beyond the beginner's stage of chess.

And meek Piquet to humble minds so dear
Has often exercised dominion here.
Here in the long illusive mazy dance
The voice is often heard of hood-winked chance
And many hope-seduced or urged by care,
To pits of death she leads,and black despair.
And here each virtues foe,the nurse of vice,
Are heard the sounds of beggar-making dice.
And here sweet indolence her joys shall strew
And hasten to the fights of pleasing Loo.

What think you, my friend,of this introduction. Tell me whether you approve it. I would delineate the whole plan of the poem had I formed it. I have opposite pursuits and inclinations,and must resign the task of celebrating this delightful!!! game to some time-improved inclination-aided bard.

I devote almost all my leisure to the transcription of those letters 1 of which I have already shown you a specimen. I think I have already assured you that those letters are genuine,and I suppose you easily perceive that one of the parties in this correspondence is myself. Consider then my friend,what felicity I must have heretofore enjoyed,and whether one to whom recollection is at once a source of happiness and misery unspeakable can take much delight in playing,or poetizing upon,Loo.

I am,indeed incapable of tasting any but melancholy pleasure. How much,my friend,am I indebted to you? I have rarely felt more corporeally or mentally disordered than yesterday evening when I first saw you but,never was more severely happy,than when I left you. To the magic of your presence or conversation only can I ascribe this pleasing revolution.

I have formerly intimated that I thought you happy and that your happiness was the daughter of benevolence and piety. Had I wanted any proof of this,than that which resulted from my own observation it would have been furnished by the letter which you wrote in order (as you say) to undeceive me.

The following letter opens with the writer fancifully in a London club. So far as we have been able to learn Brown never left his native land,but at the same time it is possible that he did. With his brothers so vitally interested in shipping it would seem quite possible that he made a voyage. The fallow years of 1790 and 1791 could easily have supplied the time. On the other hand it seems

1 This probably refers to the story which he gives in a later letter. It was called Julius Brownlow from its hero.

improbable that he could have done so, and not ever have mentioned the fact, for Brown was a man who made use of all he learned. A Jaunt to Rockaway says he never saw the ocean until 1796. A trip to England about 1792 was hardly the comfortable and luxurious jaunt that it is now, and it is inconceivable that it would not have made an everlasting impression on him. In all his work there is not one trace of an actual sea experience; indeed he probably never read sea voyages for he never even used actual details in any of his fiction. In truth when he throws off the assumed character and closes his letter as from Vine street he acknowledges the scene is a painting of his fancy.

The Cocoa Tree was a famous chocolate house in St. James street Pall Mall. Before 1746 it was a headquarters of the Parliamentarian Jacobite party. Walpole, in his letter to Bentley 10 June 1755 tells of a gunpowder plot brewing there. Walpole, Chatham and Gibbon have given various accounts of it. In later days Byron was a member. It is probable Brown learned of it through his acquaintance with Richardson's Grandison for Sir Charles met Captain Anderson there.

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst,Junr. Union St.)

. The Cocoa Tree. Pall Mall, London.

Sunday morning.(13 May 1792.)1

I very much regret that my last letter 2 was so perfect and inexplicable an Enigma. I do not,my dearest friend, recollect that anything was contained in it which would render it absolutely unintelligible a moment. My ingenious Correspondent in answering it by a riddle which to me is solutionless and incomprehensible,unless it were the abruptness of the conclusion;but this I hope will,be forgiven when you are told that just as I had finished the concluding sentence,a messenger informed me that all letters which were (to) go to America by the Harmony must be sent immediately to Deptford,and that a single moment's delay would prevent their passing the Atlantic in that

1 The Sunday morning appears to be real as well as a part of the pretense and the date will have to be the 13th. Bringhurst docketed its receipt as on the 15th. If this letter were actually written at London Brown would hardly have been satisfied with the day of the week as a date. Its receipt two days later makes the London artifice defective.

2 This letter "stuffed with a legal disquisition" has not been found.

Ship. There was, therefore, my friend a necessity for finishing my letter instantly, and to this cause you will be so good as to ascribe the obscurities or inaccuracies of my letter.

I must acknowledge that I acted somewhat incautiously in stuffing my letter with a legal disquisition, and that I was not sufficiently aware that my friend was wholly ignorant of that delightful Science the law and therefore that legal intelligence must be, in the highest degree, frivolous and unamusing. But I must at the same time, in justice to myself observe, that I thought whatever tended to display the state of this illustrious nation would, for that reason, have been acceptable, and I am certain that, in similar circumstances, medical intelligence of the same kind would have afforded me uncommon pleasure. I also reflected that among those whom you honored with your particular regard there were two of this profession W.W.W. and C.B.B. by whom my intelligence would doubtlessly be understood, and to whom it would probably afford Entertainment. Does the friendship which formerly subsisted between those two young men and yourself still continue? Are not my predictions with regard to Wilkins fully verified? Does not his character comprise all the qualities which excite love and admiration. Is he not distinguished by an innate generosity of disposition equally remote from cringing, parasitical adulation, and a supercilious and morose disdain? In short has he not all those accomplishments which qualify him for acting an illustrious part on the theatre of nations, for shining in the forum and the Senate house, united with the milder and perhaps more valuable qualifications of candor and politeness of sagacity and sensibility which place him in the rank of friends and lovers. What is wanting to complete his character? Shall I venture to say that an indefatigible and well directed application, an unquenchable thirst for various knowledge, of which the importance in that profession to which he is donated, is far greater than is generally imagined, a towering ambition which aims at the highest things which is the natural concomitant of great abilities and which is founded on a consciousness of our own worth--appear to be wanting in this excellent and amiable youth?

I have always regarded it as a mark either of inexperience or incapacity to donate ourselves entirely to one pursuit, to imagine it criminal to divert our attention from it for a moment, and I know not whether the most consummate skill in one pursuit will compensate for a total ignorance of all other branches of literature, and, indeed am doubtful whether it be possible to become an adept in any single branch, without a general acquaintance with the rest. True genius is never intimadated by slight or chimerical obstacles. It is conscious of the force of its own faculties, and easily distinguishes between a profound or a superficial knowledge. It finds no difficulty in conceiving that a knowledge of the elements of every Science is easily attainable, though the

acquisition of profound skill in any one, is undoubtedly the business of an age, and that this knowledge is absolutely requisite to the pupil of any Scientifical profession.

With regard to your other friend, of whom if I remember right you said something in your last letter, I am so imperfectly acquainted with him that I shall not venture to delineate his character. But is he not a grave formal wretch difficult to please and easily offended, whom a sneer will sink into despondency, and a word of deceitful approbation or a smile of artful complaisance, will raise into confidence? Though he is buried in the contemplation of his own importance, he has not yet learned that there (are) some whose contempt is an argument of merit and whose scorn is more desirable than their applause. He is not content with the approbation of his own heart, and to tell you the truth, his modesty appears to me to be merely affectation, and I think I discover amidst all his diffidences and reserves, the most insufferable vanity. I am confident that he thinks himself superior to all his contemporaries in literary accomplishments. He once very ingeniously owned to me that he thought the English language had reached the highest degree of perfection of which it is susceptible in his hands and that he did not doubt of being hereafter universally esteemed the finest writer that G. Britain or America ever produced. But to do him justice I must own that the manner in which this Intelligence was conveyed, rendered it doubtful whether he was serious or in jest. Certain it is however that he is exorbitantly vain of his own acquirements, and yet it is a circumstance not less true than extraordinary, that this exalted opinion of himself is accompanied with a certain diffidence in his own judgment, which leaves him sometimes in doubt whether he be not, in reality, as despicable, as he, at other times, imagines himself exalted. In short his character is in the highest degree singular and inexplicable and contradictory. That his vanity is exorbitant and yet that his modesty is equal to his vanity. That he is an hero and a dastard, sincere and hypocritical, amiable and delectable, admirable and contemptible. No one but himself knows his own character and this at least may be mentioned in his favor that he has spared no pains nor time in the study of it, and in conclusion notwithstanding all his weaknesses, he is worthy to be called your friend.

His life has been full of turpitude, but he has enjoyed one advantage superior to any other, and which is a sufficient compensation for a thousand evils and disasters. And that is the love and confidence of a woman of exalted talent and virtues, in whom was realized the picture of female excellence which his juvenile Imagination had conceived, to whom he is indebted for all the moral or intellectual excellences to which he has a real claim, whom he regarded with a boundless love and reverence and admiration and whose death or marriage with another nothing is more certain that he never will conceive, with whom he obstinately fosters the hope that the period of his nuptual union will arrive, whose fidelity is the prop of his existence and the bane: the Source of all his

misery and all his happiness.

To this portrait I must not omit to add, that his principal foibles are his propensity to talk about himself and the solicitude with respect to the opinion which others may have formed of his abilities. There is a third person whom you call your friend and with whom you are more intimately acquainted than with the other two, and that is Joseph Bringhurst. Will you charge yourself with my most affectionate compliments to him, and tell him that his idea never flits athwart my fancy without exciting the softest and most tender emotions. That I look up to him with that veneration to which the superiority of his age, his virtues and his talents, indisputably entitle him. That I should listen to his just and reverent reproof with exemplary submissiveness and docility, and esteem the sincerity of his remarks upon my weaknesses and failings, as proofs of the sublimest friendship. That his good opinion is one of the sources of consolation to a heart, accustomed to the keenest of unvulgar pangs, to an heart whom calamity has taught to know itself, has taught the duty of humility, and that therefore it is incumbent on him to throw aside the unworthy apprehension of giving offence and by wise and salutary admonition and reproof, to render me worthy of his good opinion. Tell him also that I should have more particularly described his character had I not reason to suspect that this letter would be shewn to him, and that his modesty induces him to regard the applause lavished on a person present, and addressed, however indirectly, to himself as an unpardonable breach of delicacy.

And now my friend let me give you some account of my present situation. I have taken decent lodgings in Oxford Street. I banquet every morning on French Rolls and coffee, but spend the time between sunrise and breakfast generally in traversing the fields around Islington and Chelsea. I spend the morning at Debrets,1 in talking with literary men, and reading new publications, or at a Coffee house, over a newspaper or in writing anonymous remarks for the London Chronicle, on the reigning topics of conversation, or in writing letters, or in disputing with a Neighbor, or in the gallery of the house of Commons. I dine, in consequence of invitation, with my friends of which the number is already extensive, and which is hourly increasing. The evening I spend for the most part in my chamber, and devote the conclusion of the day to Journalizing. My journal, which is very copious, I will reserve for your inspection on my return. The approaching summer I intend to pass in Westmorland and Durham as I passed the last in Staffordshire and Wales and the winter shall be consumed at Edinburgh in reading books and attending lectures on anatomy and Physiology and in the company of literary men. I can procure the strongest recommendatory letters to Robertson and Blair: Campbell and Beattie after which I purpose to loiter away several years in Switzerland and Italy, in the study of human nature and of the works

1 Probably John Debrett the publisher and compiler. See D.N.B.

of those who have best described it, and in producing original compositions of my own, that shall be worthy of the notice of Posterity----

o o o o o o o

Vine Street, Sunday morn.[1]

Hah! Hah! Hah! Bravissimo! What a most excellent and commodious plan! Could you conceive me, my friend, capable of forming one so excellent? so ingenious? Alas! your laughter is unseasonable. With what regret do I perceive that all this is the painting of my fancy only! And yet why may not imagination supply the place of reality? Why cannot the tongue and pen keep pace with the rapidity of thought! I laid aside the love-retracing pen last night at one o'clock, and throwing myself on my bed, spent an hour as delightfully, in weaving the web of pleasing and fictitious narrative, as I remember to have spent any Unimpassioned hour in my life. Ideas and incidents passed in my mind during the course of this delightful reverie, which had some magician been present to reduce them to words, and record them upon paper as they rose, would have filled a dozen volumes. But alas! sleep overtook me at the foot of the Alps and while my heart beat high with the expectation of descending, in a few hours into the plains of Lombardy, or rather of Piedmont, and reaching, ere the second rising of the sun, the gates of Turin, the scene gradually vanished. Walais[2] with all its beauties was no more. The meanders of the Drance[3] were no longer visible nor the summits of St. Bernard pervious to the sight. The vision was fled with all its train of incidents and circumstances, and I slept, not in the village of Ferrez, beneath the shadow of impending mountains and almost within hearing of the murmurs of the Rhone, and within sight of the spires of Lion, but-- alas! Alas! Alas!----

C.B.B.

There we have a picture of Brown's habit of composition that is not only interesting but pathetic. That his whole soul was wrapped up in the work he was trying to do is perfectly clear and the pity of it for the old folks rather than for him is that he was compelled to break the old home ties to follow the path on which his nature urged him..

1 This dates the letter as the 13th. and at Philadelphia.
2 Wallis or Valais, the smaller or larger, district. Imaginatively going from Switzerland south into Italy.
3 Drance

The dating of that letter from Vine street recalls that the 1791 directory gives Brown's father's address as 159 Vine street which it is probable was the location designated by Brown both here and later. Number 159 was on the north side probably between Front and Second streets, within the area which was burned in the fire of 5 July 1850. Second and Vine street at that time is picturesquely described by Townsend Ward as follows:

> "Nothing but shops, and these with such an endless variety of goods as would have sadly puzzled the Sultan, who in the story of the Arabian Nights confined each business to its respective quarter. Along this street all seemed mixed up--apothecary shops, and stove and crockery stores, blacksmiths and whitesmiths, snuff shops and coppersmiths, ironmongers, and the needful stores of grocery are lost among the vastly more numerous displays of drygoods. Tea stores, with the brilliant color which of late that trade has assumed, stand out sufficiently marked in the southern portion of the street, but as we go northward some enterprising tobacconist, or even some other dealer, assumes what for a while was thought to be an appropriate color, and at last all is dire confusion--there seems to be one endless variety store, miles in length."

Just when Elijah Brown moved from the neighborhood of Second and Vine streets to south Second street near Dock street is not accurately known. From this letter of Brown's and the one written the 16th. we may be warranted in assuming it was during this year. However in 1794 we know the home was in south Second street.

1 Penna. Mag. of Hist. & Biog., Phila., 1880, Vol. IV, pp. 174-5.

On the side folded-in of ~~the~~ that letter: ~~just given we find this~~

~~stanza:~~

Profuse and prolix is the treat
To which I call my friend
But he the joys of short and sweet
Knows better how to blend.

The metre may be considered as essentially the same as that used in the 20 March 1792 letter on the 'Delphy clown. Iambic dimeter with the third and sixth lines iambic trimeter of the former is not worth distinguishing from iambic quadrimeter with iambic trimeter in alternate lines as here. The rime helps the lilt but adds nothing to the verse. If it were not for the "he" of the third line, which should be printed in capitals so as ~~never~~ to ~~fail of proper~~ receive emphasis, this witty little quirk should be recommended as equal in grace and ability to any similar effort by better known men of his day.

The ~~reference to~~ mention of sweet ~~is~~ as, we shall see in his december letter, an ambiguous subtlety that may escape the reader. It refers to Bring hurst's playing, ~~some piece on~~ the piano.

In the next letter we find the same fanciful strain this time he includes some true details with the imagined. The form of the dialogue here used is Brown's earliest example of it found in Arthur Mervyn. When we come to the year 1798 we shall see him making another use of this rhetorical device in Edgar Huntly.

The letter was enclosed in an improvised envelope made of an extra sheet of paper.

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst, Junr. Front street.)

Cuille. Pays de Vaud.[1]

Wednesday Night.(16 May 1792.[2])

I have, my dearest friend, pretty copiously explained my present situation in a letter which I have just transmitted to W.W.W. The perusal of which will sufficiently apprise you of all the circumstances, necessary to the comprehension of that before you, and will therefore take away the necessity of repetition.

The labors of the day are finished. All the family are collected round the supper table, and enjoying the simple luxuries of this enchanting Country. Ma Petite Espouse[3] is pouring out my coffee and covering the fragrant cake with butter for her preceptor.[4] Your letter is presented to me. I dispatch my supper with the utmost expedition, and being furnished by my little spouse with the writing implements, I brush away the fragments from one part of the table and convert it into a desk, and, while the joyous circle around me are talking and laughing with infinite clamor and good humor I am preparing to compose an answer to my friends seasonable and acceptable epistle.

1 The Pays de Vaud was probably taken from the Heloise letter 136. In 1793 June we shall find him speaking of it as "the Paradise of this earth."

2 Dated from its receipt, which the calendar makes the same day as its writing. Later however we shall find Thursday morning given which seems to show that Brown did not confine himself by the calendar in this fancy.

~~3 The picture here imagined will be referred to when we come to consider the ascriptions to Brown in the Monthly Magazine of 1799-1800.~~

3 4 Later he gives her the fanciful name of Jacquillete.

4 5 Written his.

He complains of a disorder in his eyes, by which he is prevented from writing with his usual accuracy and copiousness. I cannot therefore but be penetrated by the warmest gratitude, for a letter, which, though composed in those circumstances, is so extensive and ample.

I am unable to furnish him with any anecdotes of the lives or characters of famous men, with which he is not already acquainted. London and Paris are the marts of literary Intelligence, and in this sequestered and remote retirement, we are seldom honored with the company of strangers and there is access to no other sources of information than the literary journals. I have indeed traversed, with true scientifical enthusiasm, the footsteps of Haller and Le Saussure among the mountains of Savoy, and have visited every place rendered memorable by the residences of Rousseau, but nothing can be told of those men, which is not already known to you. Edward Stanton has taken, at length, possession of his lodging, is extremely pleased with his situation and pursues his literary avocation with incredible diligence. We dispute with more vehemence and obstinacy than ever and I am certain that of whatever effects his friendship for me may be productive, it will unquestionably render him a skillful logician and disputant..

o o o o o o o

Thursday morn.[1]

The other day, in speaking of the English parties, I found that my friend was the Advocate of Pitt: I consequently became the champion of Fox, and since that time we have been principally employed in settling or rather in entangling to a greater degree of perplexity, the contradictory claims of Whig and Tory. To day, as he entered my apartment, he said to me, with a joyful countenance. "Well, my friend, I have just received intelligence from England. My family and friends are well."

Br.[2]

I am glad to hear it, but what information have you received with regard to the health of the state? I expect to hear of nothing less than change of ministry; of the deposition of that Beardless usurper, the dislodgment of that Canker worm Pitt from the bud of national prosperity. Stay a moment. I know what you are going to tell me, and I congratulate you and your countrymen on the Restoration; not more a subject of exultation to every true lover of his country than that of the Second Charles.

St.[2]

Restoration! (replied my friend) that is just as probable as the Salvation of your hero. I shall expect, that the latter will take place as quickly as the former. How near then must be the event which you mention! For who can have a better claim to the rewards of virtue than the pure and holy Charles Fox. Instead of finding him a minister I shall expect to hear of his Advancement to the Arch-

1 ~~This is~~ not true — the whole letter was probably written on Wednesday, possibly before, but hardly later.

2 The "Br" is Brown, the "St" is for Stanton, probably Wilkins=the Edward Stanton of Clara Howard.

~~3 Dialogue is only used by Brown in the cases involving political discussion, as here and in Alcuin in 1798.~~

x II — ~~A. [illegible]~~ Adolf von Haller, q.v.

bishoprick of Canterbury. Spotless man! Can any other recompense be equal to thy merit? No. No. My good friend, be assured that it is the Mitre and not the blue Ribbon that awaits him. Ha! Ha! Ha! Absolutely --another Dunstan-- another Becket--Shall we not erect churches to his honor, and constitute ,of spotless virgins and ungambling youths, a train of priests and priestesses to minister at his Altar.

Br.

Hypocrisy and priesthood are the same. I will not therefore allow you to exclude your friend Pitt,from that honorable station. No one can have a better title to it. Their characters it is true are opposite,but how often do we see the wise and benevolent deity dishonored by a selfish ignorant malignant priest! Priests it must be owned are a very useful generation,for the deformity of vice is as powerful an instrument of Reformation as the beauty of nature and the life of priests form so striking a contrast to their doctrines,and is such a complication of moral deformities,that their examples are powerful auxiliaries to those precepts,for is there any more effectual way of deterring any man from death,than by shewing him its ghastly and distorted image in another? Whence arises the efficacy of Methodistical oratory, but from the pictures of Infernal torments with which they terrify their hearers? If therefore you exalt Fox into a divinity,Pitt may justly demand to be made his priest,and I doubt not but the Votaries of Patriotism will find,in the depravity of the priest,as strong an incitement to virtue as in the perfections of the god.

St.

Fox,to say the truth,is already a deity. Do not you see how fervently he is worshipped by Prostitutes and Swindlers? How often does he reveal himself to the initiated in the hallowed recesses of Kingsplace and the groom-porters? Ha! Ha! Ha! Pure,immaculate and upright minister! How many pigeons,think you,did the commodious supplies from the treasury enable him to pluck? Poor Sir Joseph Strawbridge! Thou wast left as bare of feathers as the elbows of a spitted partridge,by the wondrous skill of this dice-throwing Minister. Thou stalked into the house of commons,in all [1] the majesty of pecuniary nakedness,and sold to him thy vote in the morning by whom thou hadst, the night before,been robbed of thy purse. But seriously, my friend,have you any thing to alledge in favor of the moral character of Fox,or against that of William Pitt?

Br.

I will answer you seriously. Charles James Fox I honor and admire. William Pitt I hate and despise."

o o o o o o

This plain decoration of my opinion gave rise to a most violent debate,in which the political characters of those two eminent men were disputed with the minutest and most anatomical exactness and all the transactions

1 There are some illegible words here so that the passage is possibly not exact.

of the ministerial reign of each a second time discussed and my friend harangued in defence of the Irish Regulations and against the celebrated India bill with elegance and energy far superior to that which was displayed by his illustrious pattern on the like occasions. This dialogue, was held[1] under a beech at the edge of the lake, and I could not fail[2] to observe that while my friend was in the midst of one of his harangues, and was employed in vehemently hurling the thunder of oratorical vengeance on the heads of the Authors of the American war and the Coalition, some rustics on the lake, suspended their oars as they passed by, and gazed with the wildest astonishment at this singular spectacle. I was leaning against the trunk of the tree silent, and in the posture of the deepest attention with my eyes fixed upon the graceful orator who stood before me, and, with the utmost vehemence of tone and gesticulation, arraigned the political Integrity of Fox and Burke.[3]

Do you think that hours thus spent are very profitably employed? What can equal the utility and pleasure of sublime and rational Conversation? Stanton possesses the liveliest sensibility and the strongest understanding. In the most critical situations he has displayed a fortitude and generosity that could not be expected from a youth like him. He appears to me to resemble, very strongly the Milord Edouard Bouraton[4] of Rousseau, and his adventures are hardly less singular or less characteristic of an elevated and heroic mind. Were I to relate them to you I should but deform the more lively and exact narrative of my Journal and yet if you insist upon it I know not whether I should not be prevailed upon to furnish you with an imperfect Sketch of his life. The hour is arrived of evening Recreation. Ma petite Epouse[5] looks at me, with looks which seem to say, "my preceptor, the hour of walking is come." I must close this letter therefore, and shall go to the lake, on whose bank I stand for hours contemplating the picturesque and romantic scenes by which I am surrounded, or, with one arm encircling the slender waist of beauteous Jacquillete with the other I point out to her the names and situations of the Constellations, I explain to her the theory of the universe and the laws of the planetary system. I familiarize to her mind the sublime maxims of the Newtonian[6] Philosophy, with as much exactness and perspecuity as is consistent with the want of Geometri-

1 At the opening we are led to believe it happened in "my apartment".
2 Brown writes here "forbear omitting". The sense demands the word fail.
3 This is the first we have heard of Burke.
4 In the sequel to the Héloïse.
5 Here we return to the house, which action Brown omits.
6 According to Newton's hypothesis space was God's boundless sensorium. His theory of color and light, his acute sense of the occult or supernatural, his interest in natural phenomena must all have been of interest to Brown. That such an intelligence as Newton's believed in God must have been a powerful argument for Brown.

cal assistance. Her capacity is equal to the comprehension of the sublimest doctrines, and how am I inspired when her eyes withdrawn for a moment from the starry firmament, dart upon me the mingled rays of love and devotion! But if I begin to talk upon this subject I shall never have finished; I must therefore conclude with beseeching you not absolutely to forget the solitary

C.B.B.

Vine street.[1] Philada.

O my friend! How miserable should I be were I not rescued from the tedious or distressful present, by the aid of an excursive imagination? A long quotation in a letter is intolerable, but there is a passage in Eloisa so expressive of my sentiments and situation that I can scarcely forbear inserting it. His purpose however is to show that the imagination is the source of human felicity. No one was ever less calculated for the drudgery of business than myself. Science and Literature are the Idols of my soul. Love and friendship constitute my existence. It is indeed to the influence of love that I am indebted for the peculiarity of my character,[2] and for the disgust with which all realities are now beheld. O that heaven would propitiously incline its ear and listen to my prayers. And what is it for which I pray? This is my supplication. "My god! my father! listen to thy supplicant! Give me leisure to traverse the world of science in pursuit of physical and moral truth; over the world of the Imagination in search of Intellectual excellence and moral beuty, give my pencil the power of portraying it when discovered, and let me live and die in the bosom of friendship, in the lap of love!"

I left Wilkins yesternight at Eleven o'clock. Instead of returning home, I hasted to the state house walks, and spent an hour in delightful meditation. Shall I give you a copy of my soliloquy? Will it not weary you? Yes, I know it will. I do nothing but fatigue my friends with self-interesting narratives. [3]I will hereafter be more sparing of them.

And yet what can be more delightful than these moral and literary communications? They constitute all the happiness that I am capable of tasting. What youth was ever more fortunate than I? Since thirteen years of age, I have enjoyed a state of perfect liberty. While others were trembling under the frown of a pedagogue, the slaves of scholastic discipline and the children of learned prejudices, conning rules and performing exercises, by which their curiosity was damped, their mind was fettered,

2 This is to be taken literally, so we find that we were not far from the truth when we suggested disappointed love as the root of all his melancholy and trouble.

3 In this connection it is interesting to note that in the memoir prepared by Bringhurst in 1796 for the "Society for the Attainment of Useful Knowledge" we find that Wilkins had written in 1786 for the Belles Lettres Society a short essay on an evening's walk in the State House yard which is given in that memoir.

1 See the descriptive text following the 13 May 1792 letter for the explanation of this location.

I, though a mere child, enjoyed the liberty of manhood and the dignity of a thinking being, suffered to go to rest and rise, to read and write what, as little and as much, as I thought proper; I who could sketch a chart of the Strait of Mozambique or Gibraltar or Babelmandeb, before my compeers had scarcely learned to number their fingers: who before I was seventeen, riotted in the delicious banquets of love and friendship, had familiarly conversed with learned and accomplished foreigners; had gathered literary political and philosophical information from their genuine sources, and had seen my own performances [1] in the publications of other countries.--

But for what end do I thus enumerate the advantages which I have heretofore enjoyed? Only as a Contrast to my present situation. How, my friend, can I describe it? How dreadful is the solitude in which I am now hopelessly immured? I am now no more than twenty one, [2] and yet, such has been my uncommon destiny, that I look back upon the past as if I were arrived at my eightieth year. I count the past not by months or years but by incidents important in their causes, concomitants and consequences and by revolutions in opinions. My Youth, my manhood is already past. Old age is come upon me and the future--how comfortless and dreary! While I had a friend I was not alone in a wilderness, but now he is gone, and amidst a concourse I experience all the horror of irremidable solitude. Fostered by gentle passions my understanding had arrived at maturity, all my intellectual faculties had attained their fullest vigor at an age when others are just emerging from childhood and since nineteen the energy of the thinking principle gradually diminishes. My faculties are, by visible degrees, losing their pristine force, the torch of fancy is extinguished, and he that, some four or five years since, wrote, as if by inspiration, spent hours of rapture at the feet of Angelic beauty, and in oral or epistolary converse with the sublimest of friends is now--where is he? I see him not. He exists only in remembrance. But perhaps his faculties suffer only a temporary suspension: perhaps it is the want of suitable objects, that occasions this cessation of their operation, and, if again enlivened by the animating beams of friendship, the mind, which we imagine to be motionless, torpid, dead, will recover its activity. Is such thy opinion, my friend? Thy wisdom, permit me to affirm, is theoretical. It wants the corroborating sanction of experience. Listen O mistaken reasoner! to her unquestionable dictates, as they flow from my lips, and learn that the loss of a <u>real</u> friend can never be supplied. Never shall thou behold C.B.B. as he appeared in the eyes of his mistress

1 What they were and where they appeared ~~have eluded our search~~ is not clear. Undoubtedly they were copied from the American publications and may have been his versifications Uzzian.

2 He had passed by three months his twenty-first birthday.

and his friend! His tongue, that was once the organ of eloquent passions, has lost its volubility, his fancy no longer paints with the force of truth, his pen no longer utters the dictates of inspiration. Thou seest before thee the ruins of a man, and yet think not that thy friendship will be either unacceptable or useless. It will make me happy (how often have I repeated it!) as it is possible for me to be. And now my friend you see the disorder and you know the remedy, or at least you are acquainted with one branch of my disease, with that which is susceptible, not of cure, but of alleviation and the other branch, O great Physician, [1] is, beyond thy reach.

C.B.B.

~~One is tempted to interrupt the latter part of that letter for comments, but how small they would appear if we had done so.~~ The picture of Brown's ~~too~~ early freedom and development needs ~~the~~ no ~~matter~~ comment ~~of no one~~, how for it speaks volumes and carries its moral with it. Parents other than Brown's have allowed the same tragedy of the prematurely-aged child to go on before them and parents ~~like them are still with the world~~.

Now that we have seen ~~the~~ Brown's earliest dialogue ~~by Brown that we have found~~ it is necessary to call attention to a few details. The matter shows us Brown the debater--setting up Stanton as taking the opposite side of the argument for argument's sake. Unfortunately, though, he has ~~hurried too much in~~ thrown in the dialogue, too hastily, mixing up his characters. It was not planned with ~~any~~ the least care so that ~~we find~~ both debaters arguing indiscriminately for and against the greatness of both Fox and Pitt. Later without any preliminaries

[1] Joseph Bringhurst was a physician.

Burke is substituted for Pitt. Another glaring fault is the place where the dialogue occured. First it is suggested as in his apartment, then we are told it is under a beech near the lake shore, and finally it shifts again to the apartment. Finally the whole artificial fabric breaks in his hands and Brown forgets the happy domestic picture he is drawing and signs himself "the solitary".

The next letter was probably written on Saturday the 19th. though it is docketed as if received the 20th.

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst, Junr. Union Street.)

(Philadelphia, 19 May 1792.)

> Proceed my friend in your career. I cannot follow you. My ambition is no more. The situation which I have just described is not my present situation; but what would I not do to facilitate the progress of my friend. What mighty effects might not be produced by the union of yourself and Wilkins and me, in the prosecution of any laudable design. How would every obstacle vanish before our united efforts? What various and cogent motives of perserverance would not be furnished by our combination?--
>
> What consolation does my vanity receive from your requiring an assurance that I will not purposely estrange myself from Wilkins in order to preserve his affection for you unimpaired. This demand gives me at the same time, pleasure and uneasiness. I am pleased on finding that you think me capable of such an act of generosity, and believe me likely to acquire the esteem of Wilkins in so great a degree as to render this act of generosity necessary, but, my dear friend, I have depicted only my own feelings with regard to Wilkins, in my former letter. I do not flatter myself that opportunity will ever be afforded me of acting thus magnanimously. My character is the strangest and most inexplicable in the world. A compound of contradictions, of humility and vanity. I am unworthy of being the friend of either yourself or Wilkins. When past scenes are excluded from my mind, when the names of my living friends (B. & W.) are continually vibrating in my ears, when I think "to day I shall see them." I am happy in the consciousness

of possessing a friend,but when busy memory retreaves her authority, and banishes the usurping present,when I recollect the scenes of former friendship,my spirits are instantly dejected,gloomy sadness,silent astonishment overwhelms me. I see,yes,I feel that I am solitary. I love my William; but Hope! delusive whisperer! forbear to sooth me with the prospect of reciprocal affection. What a woman,what a child am I? I despise myself. Wilkins pities me. He knows that his company is necessary to my happiness. In consequence he declares himself my friend. But has he not a previous attachment? Has he not already selected his friends? His bosom has already received its tenant. I cannot hope to find a place in it; but if I am admitted,the former inhabitant must be excluded. Shall I rob Bringhurst of his friend? No;never will I act so basely and atrociously. What affection can Wilkins have for me? I am never sought by him. It is I that hunt his footsteps: that weary him by my tedious,importunate and unseasonable visits. But it is time to pursue a different conduct. They are friends. Let them still continue to be so. Let me not be the means of disuniting them. No, my friend is dead. I I have never hitherto and shall never hereafter find another.

Thus have I often reasoned formerly,and,to confess the truth, I reason nearly in the same manner at present: What avail the precepts of reason? The deductions of experience? W. will never love me as I love him. Where is that exquisite conformity of souls,which constitutes the bond of friendship? Which blend two beings? His situation is that of a lady who has two lovers. She becomes acquainted with them at different times,and her affections are engaged to me,before she knows the other,who,however, is equally enamoured of her,but he sees the impossibility of supplanting his rival,and,if it were possible,his generosity would not suffer him to attempt it,but he cannot cease to love her. This,my friend,is the predicament in which I,at present,stand. Are not then the assurances which you demand superfluous? Yet I have no objection to comply with your request. All my objections have vanished at the formidable consequences with which you menace me on my refusal to comply. It would be imprudent to make use of those means in order to preserve your union,by which it would be soonest and most effectually destroyed. And yet why should I be affrighted from the performance of my duty? I will,my dear friend, give you the solemn assurance which you demand and promise that I will not by coldness or by any art whatever attempt to lessen W---'s regard for me. And why? For no other reason than because it is impossible for me,by honest means, to supplant you in his friendship, because generosity will never demand the observance of this promise. But you also require me to promise you that I will not sinistrously endeavor to raise you in the esteem of Wilkins. To give you more than your due,

1 This undoubtedly refers to John Davidson of the school-boy days.

Add to note on Davidson

His death was announced in the Columbian Magazine December 1790, p. 422.

and increase his love or admiration for you by false assertions and hypocritical pretenses. All such attempts, my friend, would necessarily be ineffectual, should I ever be induced to make them, but I hope you do not think me capable of using such unworthy and degrading artifices.

You cannot doubt that I was highly pleased with the interest which you seem to have taken in the tale of Julius, however imperfectly and uncircumstantially related. I will not despair of procuring for you the original performance. The Story of Julius naturally divides itself into two parts. The second part beginning at the sickness of my hero, at a Glamorganshire village, I have already written; but the first part, which would commence at Julius' return from the Continent, and his arrival in Cumberland, and occupy the space of nine months, is not yet composed. Whenever I shall have leisure I will complete the plan. I have already delineated a sketch of this performance. It is in the epistolary style also. I have formed a test of all the letters of which it is to consist, their dates, the parties to them, their length and the topics of which they are to treat. The first part, if written according to this plan, and nothing but time is wanting to the composition would be equal in extent to twenty duodecimo volumes. It would be a most delightful avocation, would quiet all my apprehensions, and sooth all my cares--I will show this list if you have any inclination to see it.

C.B.B.

You tell me to show to W.W.W. no letter of yours in which he is applauded. Your command shall be religiously obeyed, but I do not exact the same concealment from you. I should always write to you as I would write to him, and scorn to flatter or dissemble. Besides my praise, (which surely is never more than he deserves) is generally mingled with censure, a knowledge of which may not be unprofitable to him. Shew him all that I write if he request it or it be agreeable to yourself.

In that letter we have one of the most interesting details of Brown's friendship. With all his punctiliousness about the relation of Wilkins to Bringhurst and himself we are not in sympathy. There is no doubt that Brown's reasoning on friendship is all wrong, but it is nevertheless true of him. Evidently he was unable to divide his friendly affection between two--he preferred to shower it all on one man and that was Bringhurst. Herein we find the germ

of an estrangement between Wilkins and Brown which will develpe as we go on.

Besides the friendship ~~which is of~~ interest the greatest ~~value~~ of that letter is in the details of Brown's ~~so-called~~ sketch for his story of Julius. It shows ~~us that~~ he plotted ~~out~~ the details of all the letters such as the dates, the parties to them, their length and the topics treated in them. This is biographically important as an instance of his early methods of composition. Though we have not the letters which make up the story of Julius, the outline we shall have immediately ~~we are interested to hear of their planning.~~ When later we come to the actual letters of others ~~of Brown's~~ works ~~we shall find that~~ he neglected this careful the planning so that ~~his~~ the structure ~~was~~ of the epistolary novels was almost invariably defective. he published ~~He had no Stevenson to show him how important is the completed plan of a story~~.

The next communication with Bringhurst ~~is mostly composed of~~ opens with a flamboyant lot of mysticism on friendship that no one should take seriously, followed by some the story of Julius, which, according to the 9 May letter is ~~really~~ presented as the story of Brown himself, though he knew perfectly well no one would believe it. It was enclosed in a folio sheet of paper. meanwhile worthy of as a imitator of Rousseau but it ~~really~~ is of value and interest when it descends from the clouds to

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst,Junr.,Union Street.)

(Philadelphia,) Saturday noon,May (~~19~~ 20, 1792)1

My friend,I cannot express the pleasure with which I read your letter. The more accurately I know you the more my affection and esteem for you are heightened,and I exclaim involuntarily,"Surely in the spacious world there is no one for whom it is possible for me to feel a more sincere and ardent attachment than to this admirable correspondent? Who is more worthy of my friendship? And shall he not possess it? Yes. Whatever be his sentiments with regard to me,whether he esteem or despise me, I shall always contemplate his image with the Enthusiasm of a friend. My heart already flutters with joy at his approach. Serenity and cheerfulness accompany him. I should struggle in vain to be unhappy in his presence;but melancholy oppresses me at his departure. Let me assiduously cultivate his good opinion. Let me introduce him to the knowledge of myself,for is it not necessary that he should know me before he loves me? But,perhaps, he knows me sufficiently already, or at least that knowledge is only to be valued with which his own observation furnishes him. But how much is there, which it is impossible for him to know unless it be particularly revealed? I long to make him master of my soul:to feel a kind of uneasiness when hindered from revealing to him circumstances,which I have hitherto imagined too sacred to be revealed, and which have been buried in profoundest secrecy. I have been so accustomed to reserve: To the affectation of gayety and unconcern,at times when my bosom was agitated by the most violent emotions: to counterfeit Sentiments to which my heart was utterly a stranger and to pretend ignorance of subjects with regard to which I possessed all the knowledge which experience can confer; a mask became so habitual to me,that I scarcely remember how I was induced a lay it aside,and to appear before my friends in my native character. Mutual confidence is the test of friendship,and yet, to Bringhurst and to Wilkins I had silently sworn

1 The date given by Brown is the 20th. but that does not correspond with the calendar. It is ~~probable~~ more likely that the day was correct but the date not ~~so~~ being the 19th.

Visit to Nazareth

* St. John I, 11.

unalterable fidelity and attachment,before I had received any proofs of reciprocal affection. I am at a loss to account for my first departure from habitual reserve;But since,from whatever motive,I have thrown away disguise,I feel a childish and precipitate eagerness to be more explicit,and to set before them the life and character of their newly acquired friend,all its degrading contrasts and all its calamitous vicissitudes.

Think not,my friend,that I will be outdone in generosity. What is your opinion? Do you think that friendship can subsist between three persons? This question is of great importance. Do not you perceive what momentous consequences will flow from its decision? Never will I bereave Bringhurst of his friend. Never will I take his Wilkins from him. To Wilkins:excellent and amiable as he is,you have an unquestionably prior claim,and believe me,my friend,if his attachment for me should weaken those bonds by which he is at present united to you,I should not hesitate in totally estranging myself from him. Whatever it should cost me I would restore him to you.

I never yet doubted that love and friendship were,in reality,the same,and I do not scruple to mention my affections for Wilkins as a proof of this position. It is somewhat more than two[1] years since I first became acquainted with him. "Wilkins!(said I to Franklin[2] and Evans[3] who first mentioned him to me.) Who is he? What region had the honor or producing him? Is he not a disciple of the pitiful and despicable Tod?[4] And "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" They assured me that my prejudices were unreasonable; and that I should find him an agreable and instructive Companion,but I placed little confidence in their assurances;for I never considered the approbation of either Franklin or Evans as an unerring test of intellectual or moral excellence, but how were my prejudices annihilated by the sight of him! No sooner did I see and converse with him,than I felt myself attached to him by an inconsiderable and irresistable charm that,like the lightning of love, left me not at liberty to pause or deliberate. Davidson[3] was then living,and how often,in describing the character of Wilkins have I told him,that there was but one person in the world,whom,after Davidson I should wish to call my friend. To what cause shall I impute the origin or continuance of this attachment? Great are the effects which are produced by polished and insinuating manners like those of Wilkins,but these are certainly inadequate to the effects which were

1 This might better have been three;for we have seen that they were acquainted as early as 1788.
2 Walter Franklin the Proud schoolmate.
3 One of Brown's school fellows at Proud's.
4 Wilkins as a student entered the law office of John Todd,Jr. 6 April 1788.

skilled in penmanship and composition. Instead of going to the University of Cambridge or Oxford,(he)passed two years at Gottingen,under the tuition of a man eminent for knowledge and virtue,whom I have distinguished by the name of Mr.Sutphin. He was a native of Switzerland, but had received an English education and was both a scholar and a gentleman. While at Gottingen,my hero continued to correspond with his sister,in like manner as at Eton. His letters were extremely copious and minute,containing a relation of evry thing which respected himself,with strong and dramatic pictures of the character and manners of his friends,associates and fellow students,and written with elegance and vivacity. Having resided for two years at Gottingen,he left it with his preceptor,and,after residing for twelve months in France, Italy and Switzerland,he returned into England and retired with his mother and sister to Brownlow hall in Cumberland. Here he devoted himself to the society of his sister,to contemplation and to the study of the sublimest sciences.

At Gottingen he became acquainted with Lauder Ellen,a son of a Scottish advocate,superior in age,and equal to Julius in virtue and accomplishments. Their acquaintance soon ripens into intimacy and on Julius' return to Keswick and Lauder's to Edinburg,they commence a correspondence with each other. Julius gives his friend,an account of his present situation,of his resolutions and opinions with regard to study and to the conduct of life. He relates his daily avocations,his ramblings and musings,and draws minute pictures of the adjacent country and of the manners of the inhabitants.

With this correspondence,I at first intended to begin my work. There is no country in Great Britain,or perhaps in Europe,that abounds with more magnificent and beautiful scenery and rural grandeur and elegance than this part of Cumberland and the neighboring districts in Westmoreland,and none,in which the manners of the inhabitants are more worthy of Philosophical observation. I had read but few accounts and those slender and imperfect of either the country or of the Inhabitants. But I was then possessed of a map of the northern provinces wonderfully extensive,accurate and picturesque,amd my fancy had long brooded on the scanty materials with which my various and diffusive reading had furnished me,with the utmost ardor and intensiveness. I longed to reduce the vague but brilliant images,which had amused my visionary hours,into some form and order. I had often imagined myself wandering,by moonlight along the shining and pebbly margin of the Derwent,or hanging over the verdant and precipitous banks of the Eden,and could have described a scene that would have equalled,were it possible to equal,reality,but I was then doubtful of my skill,and began to think that before they could,with any propriety, be described,they must be actually visited.

I was also much delighted with the prospect of describing the meditations of a youth of the deepest penetration and the most vigorous imagination,(who had studied books and conversed with mankind,) on the sublimest subjects

produced in me. Our dispositions are widely dissimilar. The occupations with which each is most delighted are totally different. Scarcely any thing can be less congenial to my taste and temper than the usual tenor of his conversation and deportment,and yet, my friend,it is not easy to describe the tenderness that overflows my bosom at the sight of him: I can scarcely refrain from embracing him. Tears of affection start into my eyes,when I look upon him,that incorrigible levity,that elaborate thoughtlessness which would so much displease me in another person,does not only cease to disgust, but absolutely charms me. I cannot mingle in his mirth. Laughter and gayety,give me no pleasure at any time, and,were I to judge from former experience,I should suppose them to be most disgustful and unseasonable in the intercourse of genuine Friendship,and yet what contradictions are reconciled,what miracles are performed by the magical presence of this beloved person? I can now spend with pleasure,untedious and delightful hours at the most tasteless and insignificant amusements. If,during my intercourse with Davidson,I had dreamed that I saw us together,engaged at loo or chess,[1] how should I have been astonished at the novelty and singularity of the spectacle! How should I have ridiculed the predictions of one who should have assured (me) the dream was ominous,and that the rapture and sublimity of intellectual converse exalted by the enthusiasm of the most sacred friendship would in time, be changed for the execrable and absurd employments of cutting and dealing?

After this how is it possible for me to doubt that my attachment to Wilkins arises from an involuntary and preternatural impulse that I am absolutely enamoured of him? But of what species is my love for Bringhurst? For have I not the sincerest affection for him? Do I not hail his approach with pleasure and receive the highest satisfaction from his company? Do I not regret his departure and lament his absence? All these questions must be answered in the affirmative,and,consequently, I must esteem myself his friend,but in what does my attachment to him differ from that which I feel with regard to the other? It is not so violent:so tender,so impassioned: but it is more rational and not less permanent.

The death of my friend was the period of my intellectual progress. The catastrophe of the drama.[2] No longer do the phantoms of ambition glide before me. My eyes are shut against the beams of literary glory. My ears no longer listen to the acclamations of applauding senates:to the voice of popularity. My hands no longer weave the garland of forensic oratory. Whither has fled the lustre that formerly invested the brows of Demosthenes and Pericles? Drooping and tarnished are the laureate honors of Cicero. I am now no longer irresistably attracted to the shrines of Roman and Attic Eloquence. Ye visions,brighter than

1 Evidently Wilkins was the one who lead Brown into card playing,and,as we have seen,it was usually for stakes.
2 When the days of discouragement come to an author they always take on the semblance of Brown's lament. It is at times like this that the unfit are driven to other pursuits.

those of Paradise! Ye phantoms of Elysian felicity! At whose appearance the host of domestic solicitudes vanished! Thou ghost of Pericles!that formerly haunted my benighted footsteps,and thou,spirit of reanimated Cicero! that so often hast harangued from the rostra of my Imagination,whose presence has so often changed the naked heath into a crowded forum,whose lips have breathed anew the soul of eloquent compassion,and decked an imaginary Murray or a mimic Pitt with all the energies of argument and all the melodies of elocution! Ye are vanished from my sight! ye are gone forever! Ye accompany the images of love and friendship in their flight! They are fled and ye will not stay behind!

Social pleasures and the converse of congenial spirits, is all that remains to give me pleasure. I am enamoured of obscurity,of social and lettered obscurity. In obscurity shall I live and die,if fortune smile and fate withstand not.

But let me drop this lamentable strain. It has charms which are not easily resisted and I cannot relinquish it without difficulty. I would willingly amuse my friend, and I think he derives amusement from my imperfect narratives,of fictitious adventures. I wish that the journal to which I have alluded,were written with as much manual facility and expedition as I am able mentally to arrange and record the voluminous contents of it,for, if such were the case,I could furnish you with a moderate volume every evening,but my dilatory and laborious pen, will not keep pace [1] with the rapidity of my conceptions and I have other more interesting avocations to which my intervals of leisure must be dedicated.

I will amuse you however with a sketch of the plan of one of my performances written at a period propitious to fancy and invention,and favorable to the display of that eloquence which is dictated by truth and nature; I despair of ever having it in my power to show you this performance,on account of circumstances which I shall presently explain to you,and therefore I less scruple to describe to you the series of events,and the general texture of the fable. If,contrary to my expectation, I should hereafter attain either the original or a copy of this work,you shall immediately be presented with a transcript and I hope your friendship for the writer will induce you to read it with attention and to derive pleasure from the perusal,though the progress and catastrophe of the tale,be previously known,and it be,in some degree,therefore,divested of the charms of novelty.

It was in the summer of the year 1788,during my connection with the excellent and amiable Henrietta G---- that I first read the Eloise of Rousseau. I could never procure any more than the first and second volumes,but these I read with infinite avidity and delight. Miss G.

1 Evidently Brown had not yet taken up the study of shorthand.

had this work in the original but notwithstanding all my solicitations and intreaties, she refused to lend it to me. She declared that it was the most seductive and pernicious book that she had ever read, and that she would neither read it a second time nor suffer it to go out of her possession. This refusal and those invectives only heightened my desire to peruse it, and with some difficulty I obtained the sight of the translation 1 of the first and second parts of that celebrated and fascinating performance. On my next visit to her she quickly discovered by certain allusions which I made during the course of our conversation, that I had plucked the forbidden fruit. She, half angrily and half jocosely upbraided my contumacy and repeated her opinion that the work was dangerous. This gave rise to an animated dispute, in which I endeavored to maintain an opposite opinion but I acted the part of an Advocate with so much indiscreet vehemence as absolutely to offend this scrupulous and delicate fair one, and the only condition on which she would be persuaded to forgive me, was that I should compose a similar performance, in which different maxims should be incultivated, of which love and friendship in all their purity and sublimity should form the basis, and in which the triumph of virtue over the most lawless and impetuous passions, of duty over inclination, should be as vividly and forcibly described as I was able. She left me at liberty to make either Rousseau or Richardson my model, and to write either in the narrative or epistolary method. Nothing could be more arrogant and audacious than for one of my youth and inexperience to attempt to tread in the footsteps of those illustrious writers, and nothing but the necessity of submitting to absolute commands could induce me to engage on so arduous an undertaking. I accordingly immured myself in my chamber, placed a table opposite a window which overlooks the meeting streams of Delaware and Schuylkill and from which the eye might traverse the former river as far as Red Bank and Billingsport, and, by writing almost incessantly from sunrise to midnight for thirty days, in the finest season of the year, I performed the task which was imposed upon me, and finished a Romance, in the epistolary form and after the manner of Rousseau though somewhat more voluminous than "Julie". 2

In a work, written with so much haste, and with such little premeditation, defects must necessarily abound. I conceived a general idea of the plan as I walked homeward, one evening after visiting Miss G--- I , at that time, lived four miles and an half from the city, and never left her till ten o'clock. Next morning I adjusted my table, furnished it with writing implements, and began my work which I finished in the time which I have mentioned. I sent to Miss G--- in the evning all /e

1 As we have seen in the 5 May letter Brown had suggested that he read the French edition.

2 This would seem to indicate that Brown read the book in the original. However, the references to it are so inconsistent we cannot decide.

that I had written during the course of that day, without revision or correction, and waited on her personally once or twice a week, to hear her comments and remarks. I mention those circumstances as apologies for the defectiveness of the plan, for, with regard to the execution, the rapidity with which it was written rather added to its excellence than detracted from it, and all slighter inaccuracies of grammar, orthography and punctuation were amended by my fair critic, whose sagacity was equal to her taste.

The hero of my tale I distinguished by the name of Julius Brownlow.[1] I believe in every work of this kind, the character of the writer, such as it really is, or such as he imagines, or wishes it to be, may be found. I confess that at this time my ambition extended no farther than to act and speak like Julius.

On the amiable Julius therefore I conferred every excellence, mental and corporeal, yet mingled with certain feelings which I discovered in myself, and which reduced this exalted personage to the level of probability. I made his stature tall and majestic, his limbs graceful and exquisitely proportioned, his countenance beautiful and blooming and his eyes full of sweetness and intelligence. He was the heir of an ancient and opulent family, whose patrimonial possessions lay near Keswick in Cumberland one of the wildest and most romantic spots in Great Britain. His father died in the infancy of Julius, and left the guardianship of him and his sister Julietta, who were brought forth at a birth, to their mother; a woman of beauty and talents, but strongly addicted to the levities of fashion, of violent ambition, and full of prejudices of birth. She was passionately fond of her children, and displayed, in their education, a true maternal tenderness and prudence.

Julius and Julietta,[2] who, as I before said, were twins, so exactly resembled each other in their infancy, that one could scarcely be distinguished from the other, but as they grew up Julietta retained only those features of her brother which were consistent with the highest degree of female softness and beauty. This angelic pair passed their childhood and learned the rudiments of education in the company of each other. Julius displayed very early tokens of future excellence, and Julietta displayed a memory not less tenacious, and an understanding not less vigorous than her brother. A conformity of dispositions and pursuits, the constant habit of living, learning, and playing together gradually produced between these two, the most tender and inviolable union of which two persons, of different sexes are capable, and which does not absolutely deserve the appelation of love.

This union, my friend, formed one pillar of my performance and, in the conduct and character of Julius and Julietta, I endeavored to trace the effects of friendship of the purest and most exalted kind. I have, my dearest Bringhurst, long and deeply philosophised on love and

2 The avoidance of the form Julia may have been made because the name was reserved for Dolly Payne.

1 Did he know the Brown and Brownlow families in England were related by marriage? See J.A.E.Roundel: Cowdray London 1884, p.107.

friendship,but all my philosophy was merely the result of my own feelings. I have experienced all the effects which those passions can produce on a susceptible mind. I have not been an inattentive or unintelligent observer of my own emotions,and therefore do not want a guide in tracing all the mazes of the human heart when under the dominion of those seraphic passions.

With regard to Julius and Julietta,every cause existed from which sacred and celestial friendship naturally flows. Their personal resemblance,the conformity of tempers and pursuits,and their similarity with respect to age and their constant and domestic intercourse,are all circumstances favorable in the highest degree,to the birth and nurture of this passion of which the tenderness and delicacy must be greatly heightened by the difference of sexes;and their kindred,while it kept love (which,in the opinion of some is the only kind of friendship which can subsist between persons unrelated, and not of the same sex) at a sufficient distance,must be supposed to contribute to the strength of their attachment.

This situation was somewhat new,for Rousseau and Richardson had only described that friendship which may subsist between two men or two women,and have given us no striking pictures of sisterly or fraternal love, and of that refined and exquisite relation which must arise when the causes,producing friendship, operate in uniting two brothers or two sisters or a brother and a sister. That such causes may operate with regard to those,as well as with respect to absolute irrelatives is not to be denied,and the union,which results from those causes operating in the domestic sphere,must be proportionately more perfect,as opportunities are here offorded of more frequent converse and entire confidence than in other situations.

I have heard that Richardson,in his original plan, intended to have made Miss Howe the sister of Clarissa, but that he afterwards found it expedient to alter his plan. The alteration was doubtless proper but had it not been made,we should have seen the description of a new kind of friendship. But to return to Julius---

Having in the first place,selected all the external circumstances proper for my design,it was next my province to endow them with corresponding talents and dispositions,with souls attuned to love and sympathy, and with virtue,which,though heroic,and uncommon,I contrived to render not romantic or incredible.

Julius,at a proper age,was sent to Eton:and his mother and sister removed from Cumberland to Middlesex,to a seat,which belonged to Julius,in the neighborhood of London. The graceful student made a rapid progress in knowledge, and at fifteen was qualified for his entrance into the University. During his stay at Eton,Julius maintained a constant correspondence with his sister,and spent every interval of leisure at his mother's house. Both Sister and Brother had acquired an exquisite taste for poetry,were adepts in English Literature,and were highly

skilled in penmanship and composition. Instead of going to the University of Cambridge or Oxford,(he)passed two years at Gottingen,under the tuition of a man eminent for knowledge and virtue,whom I have distinguished by the name of Mr.Sutphin. He was a native of Switzerland, but had received an English education and was both a scholar and a gentleman. While at Gottingen,my hero continued to correspond with his sister,in like manner as at Eton. His letters were extremely copious and minute,containing a relation of every thing which respected himself,with strong and dramatic pictures of the character and manners of his friends,associates and fellow students,and written with elegance and vivacity. Having resided for two years at Gottingen,he left it with his preceptor,and,after residing for twelve months in France, Italy and Switzerland,he returned into England and retired with his mother and sister to Brownlow hall in Cumberland. Here he devoted himself to the society of his sister,to contemplation and to the study of the sublimest sciences.

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that can engage the human faculties,on the uses bounds and relations of the sciences and on the nature and capacity of the soul. I easily foresaw that this would furnish opportunity for forming explaining and digesting my own opinions,and that I could,at all events,perform this part of my work by making judicious extracts from "The Journal of a Visionary,"1 which I had written the year before,but I was quickly sensible that this would lead me too far from my principal design. That it would render my work too voluminous,and my plan too complicated.

I therefore still postponed the opening of my work. Julius by his indefatigible application to his pen and his book,in a short time almost irreparably injured his constitution: which was naturally delicate and feeble. He was under a necessity of relinquishing his studies, and for the sake of restoring his health,made an excursion into Wales and Cornwall. This indisposition increases and he becomes dangerously sick in an obscure Inn at the village of Margam near the Severn Sea,in Glamorganshire. There then my performance opened and began with a letter from Julius written at Margam when he supposed his death to be near at hand,and expected to be carried from this apartment only to his grave,and addressed to the lovely Julietta,his sister and friend. He however happily escapes the death which he imagined to be inevitably impending and,in his subsequent letters informs his sister,that Mr.Wentworth the Rector of the parish,hearing of his situation,visited him and prevailed upon him to suffer himself to be removed to his house,where by the benevolent and hospitable care of Mr. Wentworth and his daughter---

Ah! my friend! That daughter! Sophia Wentworth!2 With what a pen of passion did I describe her beauties! How liberally did I shower perfection on her mind and person! The image of my Henrietta rose before me. Then did I,indeed, assume the person of my hero. How quickly did the studious philosophical and contemplative Julius undergo a transformation,and become a tender,passionate,romantic lover, like myself!--

Julius quickly recovered and continuing his correspondence with his sister,relates the origin and progress of his passion for Miss Wentworth. The invitation which her father offers and he accepts to pass the summer at his house:describes the country and its inhabitants, the manner in which he employs his time,and his long and interesting conversations with Sophia,and a variety of remarkable incidents which I,at this time,do not exactly recollect . I make the conduct of Sophia a pattern of prudence and delicacy,and though she is equally enamoured with Julius it is with the utmost difficulty the confession is extorted from her. At length however he prevails upon her to declare her sentiments:He then formally proposes

1 This work probably never appeared in print. No record of it is known.

2 The name of Sophia is afterward used by Brown in the work entitled Jessica. Wentworth is used in Ormond and Arthur Mervyn.

himself to Sophia's father and solicits her hand in marriage. The father after the discovery of his daughter's inclination scruples not to comply with the proposal provided he can obtain the concurrence of Mrs. Brownlow. Julius addresses himself by letter to his mother, acquainting her with all those circumstances and soliciting her consent [1] to his union with Sophia. I have already described Mrs. Brownlow to be a woman of ambition. She doats on Julius, but regards his marriage not as the means of domestic felicity but as an instrument of advancement in his rank and fortunes. To make himself richer than he is at present and to ally himself to nobility she considers as the only purpose of his being, and as she herself never felt the inchantments of love, she imagines that they have no reality, and believes that every man is governed in the choice of his wife by motives of interest. She has therefore been for some time past, busily employed in searching for a lady, who shall possess the requisite qualifications of youth, beauty and wealth, and whom she shall think worthy to be presented to her Julius as his wife.

In the neighborhood of Keswick there resided a venerable nobleman whom I have denominated Lord Monthievers. His only daughter and the heiress of all his possessions was Caroline Monthievers: of the same age with Julietta, and as lovely and accomplished as her friend; for Caroline and Judietta, living within a small distance from each other are friends and visitants. Julius, on his return from Gottingen, was introduced to Caroline, and made an impression on her tender and susceptable heart, which gradually grew stronger. She frequently visited Julietta, and on these visits was treated by Julius with the utmost politeness and respect, but he felt no particular attachment to her, and was utterly a stranger to those emotions which his presence always excited in the bosom of Caroline. Her delicacy would not suffer her to make the first advances. Her condition, therefore, was hopeless, and her grief preying on her health and spirits, reduced her at length to a state of so much weakness, as greatly to alarm her father, whose life and happiness depended on those of his daughter. Many fruitless efforts were made to discover the cause of her malady. At length however the drooping Caroline was prevailed upon to disclose. Parental fondness was superior to every other passion in the breast of Lord Monthievers, and the consideration of his daughter's life, which could not be otherwise preserved, induced him to acquaint the mother of Julius with Caroline's situation and to declare his readiness to negociate a marriage between their children. This offer was highly acceptable to that ambition, she acknowledged the honor which his lordship intended her family in terms of unlimited gratitude, and imagining it impossible that her son should have the least objection to so advantageous an offer, the marriage was immediately determined upon. At this period Mrs. Brownlow was seized with a severe sickness, which disabled her from communicating the intelligence of those proceedings to Julius,

1 This consent of the parent is a theme afterward used by Brown in his Jane Talbot.

under her own hand,and,while she was directing Julietta to write to her brother and inform him of those particulars,that letter from Julius was presented to her in which he explains his situation with respect to Sophia,mentions his intentions to make her his wife,and intreats her to approve of them. The effect of this unseasonable letter on Mrs.Brownlow may easily be conceived,she directs Julietta to acquaint her brother with her total disapprobation of his conduct;her utter and irreconcilable aversion to his union with Sophia. She commands him instantly to return home,to break off all connection with Miss Wentworth,and to prepare for the celebration of his nuptials with Caroline. She tells him also that she finds herself rapidly approaching her end,beseeches him to hasten his return that she may see him before she dies,bestows upon him her last blessing and charge(s) him with her last command. Julius is agitated with grief and despair at the reception of the Letter,explains to Mr.Wentworth the condition of his mother,and,after taking an affecting leave of Sophia,who acts on this, as on every other occasion,with heroic fortitude and magnanimity,he prepares for his departure from Glamorganshire. Mrs.Brownlow finding her death nearer than was expected,and hopeless of ever seeing her son,writes down,with difficulty,her sentiments with respect to Caroline and Sophia,solemny adjuring him,by all the sacred obligations of filial piety to forsake the one and wed the other. Julius arrives immediately after her decease. He is affected with the deepest sorrow,is determined after many conflicts,which are copiously and minutely described in his letters to Sophia,he is determined to obey the dying injunctions of his mother. He writes to Caroline,informing her of all those circumstances,and offering himself to her acceptance. In this resolution Sophia generously endeavors to confirm him though at the expence of her own happiness. Caroline in answer (refuses) his proferred hand,since his heart is devoted to another. Caroline justifies and explains her refusal in letters to Julietta and Julietta in answer describes the behaviour of Julius,her conversations with him,and her endeavors to persuade him to marry Sophia,in opposition to his mother's exhortations. Julius is immoveable in his resolution to obey his mother so far as obedience is in his power and is torn by all the violence of conflicting passions. He spends his hours in writing to Sophia,and in describing in strong colors his desperate condition. He wishes to die but will not hasten his death. His health,however,rapidly decays,and,in compliance with the importunities of his sister and of Caroline,he passes over to the continent,intending to reside for the rest of his life,of which he knows the period is near,in Provence or Dauphinè . He is taken sick in an unfrequented Road in Picardy,is obliged to stop at a peasant's hut, and after writing pathetic letters to Julietta,Sophia and Caroline--dies--

Such,my friend,was the plan of my performance,in writing which I had like to have undergone the fate of Julius,so violent were my emotions and so thoroughly did I feel all

that I imputed to Julius:towards the conclusion,indeed, I grew absolutely sick with weeping and was scarcely able to proceed to the Catastrophe. All the incidents which I have there related,their circumstances and effects are described with the utmost minuteness,in letters between the four principal personages,written,as it were, to the very moment. Those events which happened previously to Julius' Journey into Wales,at which period my performance opened,are occasionally and more particularly related in the Correspondence of which my Romance consists. From the arrival of Julius at Margam till his death in Picardy. I have supposed the busy and important interval to be no more than three months and ten days,and therefore though it be more voluminous than Clarissa,it occupies scarcely a fourth part of the time.

So strong is the impression which the woes of Julius produced on my Imagination,that,to this hour,in lamenting the evils which have befallen myself,I frequently confound them with those which my invention heaped upon the head of Julius. As this work was written for the entertainment of Miss G--- to her it was,piece meal, delivered and subsequent accidents have I fear rendered it irrecoverable. O my friend how often were her bright eyes suffused with tears,at the perusal of it! how many sighs did it draw from the bottom of her heart! And how did I rejoice at such affecting testimonials of its merit! The last Sheet was accompanied with an epistolary dedication to Henrietta,which (shall I venture to say it?) is a Masterpiece,if it be considered as the production of Youth and Inexperience. This I will shew to you,my friend,in due time.

Did you ever observe the extraordinary influence of Imagination over the actions and sentiments of men? In assuming the persons or placing ourselves in the situations of others,we enjoy a new kind of existence, and think and act in the manner wonderfully befitting our characters. I have often sat upon the rocks of Schuylkill,and shutting my eyes imagined myself to be the identical Julius,to be transported to the vale of Keswick or the banks of the Eden,to be sitting within sight and hearing of the torrent,to have torn away from a rugged stone the moss with which it was covered,and to be employed in writing a letter to Lauder Ellen:that young man so worthy to be called my friend;so remarkable for elevated ambition and towering genius,who is pursuing his studies at the temple and treading in the steps of Murray and of Erskine---

What! have I reached the bottom of the second sheet?1 I have put your patience to the test. I am almost ashamed of my prolixity. I have hitherto acted Julius,but next week must personate my good friend Ellen,and apply myself indefatigably for eight or ten days,to law,after which I will again metamorphose myself into Julius,and enjoy as much happiness as heaven permits.

Farewell. "Philtate 'andron de philon"2farewell

C.B.B.

1 The second sheet refers to the full sized sheet of the paper as Brown bought it. He folded it twice and made eight pages to each sheet. This letter runs to the top of 17 pages,thus taking two sheets and a single one.

2 The feminine philtate should be philtatos,masculine.

Brown derived the idea of the relations of the brother and sister from the original plan of Clarissa which Richardson's superior judgment, upon second thought, discarded. There is no originality in the plot; it is a jumble of commonplaces--betrothal, forced marriage and fatal despair with all the trimmings--of English prose fiction; a theme worn threadbare in every form of literature; an example of the sentimental novel at its meanest. The catastrophe brought about by the spineless hero and derived from Richardson is maudlin and childish.

The outline of the story of Julius as we have it is indeed of interest mostly, if not entirely, in its relation to Brown's life. As a literary work it is of too little value to be studied in detail because it is not presented as the actual attempt of our author though it contains the germ of some ideas and situations of works which he wrote later. If the copy which Brown says he gave to "Henrietta G." is ever found it will deserve more attention; ~~than we have given to~~ but it probably never will be because it existed no where but in the tricksy spirit ~~the outline~~ of our magician.

After the Julius outline ~~this~~ two ~~one~~ of the ~~two~~ closing paragraphs are of biographical value and interest; the first with its picture of the dreaming author on the bank of the beautiful Schuylkill, raft in his secret studies, living the life of the creatures he summoned from cloud land as the only anodyne to the painful of the world; and the second with its ~~suggestion that he intended~~ to represent Lauder Ellen as a slave dominated by ~~was not free from~~ the incubus of the law such as he had found it in ~~though he was no longer the slave~~ ~~of~~ the ~~daily~~ routine of Wilcocks's office.

Clark[x] claims Henrietta G. was a real Connecticut girl whom Brown courted and that the correspondence with her made another story which is apparently not Julius, though Clark gives only the barest outline of it in this abstract.

[x] C.H. Clark: C.B.B. New York 1923, p.21.

Though it may be the Journal of a Visionary

The next letter is

(addressed Jos.Bringhurst,Junr. Front street.)

(Philadelphia,Wednesday) May,30.1792--

I am extremely pleased with your vision,and you cannot easily conceive how highly I am gratified in finding that the poor neglected and desponding Julius is sometimes present in the airy portion of slumbering fancy. That in sleep,as well as in wakefulness,I am not forgotten. Surely it is impossible to solicit heaven to confer greater felicity upon you,than that which arises from a continual succession of dreams like those. I wish I were so fortunate a visionary,and that,during sleep,my soul could mingle at will with the beings that people the world of Allegory,but the privilege of dreaming to any agreeable or useful purpose is denied me and I am forced to be contented with insipid realities or at least with those shadowy and fleeting images which the wand of wakeful Imagination can call into existence.

The morality of this Allegory is undoubtedly sublime, and in the conduct of it,all the graces of poetry are exhibited. Prose and poetry are very far from being terms of opposite signification,according to the common, but erroneous opinion,and a performance may justly be esteemed a poem,though not distributed into lines or resolvable into metre,if it be pregnant with "music, image,sentiment and thought." and that any of those requisite(s) are wanting in this allegorical production, I shall not be easily convinced.

to. fourious page

1 Cf. the Julius and Eliza verses,Literary Magazine,Vol.VI,p.397; wherein Julius sends a dove as representative of her beauty--and she returns a goose!

Allegory appears to be the native region of the poet, and notwithstanding the severity of critical prohibition, it has hitherto and ever will continue to find a place in the most exalted species of poetical composition. That allegory is inconsistent with the nature of an Epopee has, by many critics, been obstinately asserted though, in defence of a contrary opinion, it may be observed that of the poems of this class, one of the most celebrated is merely allegorical, and that allegory is, in some degree, interwoven with the texture of all the rest. There is no performance of this kind from the Iliad to the Henriade from which it is totally excluded. With what indignation have I heard it asserted that the Paradise Lost would be more perfect, if the episode of Sin and death and the relation of Satan's chaotic journey were omitted or retrenched.

Are you, my friend, of a different opinion? If you are, beware of attempting to defend it, until you have forgotten that Tasso[1] ever had a being.

The earnest desire which you express to translate the introduction to the Encyclopaedia,[2] affords me the highest satisfaction. Formerly when I (have) been engaged in meditating on the scope and aim of true Ambition, on the miracles which juvenile perserverance is able to perform, on the just and rational employment of our time and on the value of knowledge and the blandishments of literary glory, I have looked around me, and observed, with astonishment, the general insensibility and indifference with which those sublime objects are regarded. Youth, the season of reflection and experience, of study and ambition, I have observed to be so constantly wasted in useless or pernicious avocations that to meet with a young man burning with divine enthusiasm for the acquisition of knowledge, the cultivation and exertion of his powers, would have been as unexpected and surprising as the sight of an Elephant soberly pacing along the streets of my native City. My youth and inexperience prompted me to believe that as I never met with any of this class, none really existed. I consequently entertained a soverign (e contempt of the present generation and was for a long time, accustomed to regard my companions with mingled scorn and compassion. I imagined myself infinitely superior to my Juvenile associates, not, indeed in knowledge or abilities, but in a just conception of the dignity of science, and in the pure and sacred rapture with which I beheld the splendor which environs her successful votaries and with what exalted pleasure do I see, in the person of my friend, one who is animated by similar emotions! to whom the images of intellectual excellence, are familiar, and to whose steadfast and lofty gaze, the glory of a Milton and a Bacon only are deemed worthy to be offered. O my friend! Is not this the road to eminence? Why should we be discouraged or retarded in her progress,

2 The encyclopaedia referred to is the famous French one, to which D'Alembert contributed the introduction. We shall find another reference to this later in this same letter. Brown imbited none of D'Alembert's religious unbelief.

1 Torquato Tasso whose Amynta is mentioned by Brown in his Adini.

by unseasonable scruples? By the malign suggestions of untoward Modesty, that deals so largely in extenuating anticipations, and will not suffer us to ascertain by experience, the degree of authority to which her dictates are justly entitled. Let perfection be the scope of your ambition, and desire to be indebted for superior excellence rather to reflection than to study. Select a few books from the heap of volumes by which learned repositories are ostentatiously incumbered, books in which the elements of knowledge are delivered and employ your rational faculties in adding to the naked stock the requisite appendages of leaves and branches, of fruit and foliage; and for this purpose it is necessary that not only the mind but the pen should be employed, and learn, by conversing with the purest models and by frequent and careful practise, the art of composition.

Such, my dear friend, is my advice. I do not wish to appear to you arrogant or magisterial, and to assume airs of importance unbefitting my age and situation, yet I cannot forbear speaking in this manner, and shall never violate sincerity or fail to act the part of a friend whatever be the hazard of incurring the Imputation of vanity.

Nothing is more certain than that we derive from nature or from education a propensity by which we are directed. Whether habit cannot overcome or change this propensity, and whether true genius be not equally adapted to arrive at excellence in all pursuits, are questions which I shall not attempt to investigate because the situation of my friend leaves him at liberty to consult his inclination, and obey the motions of this original propensity and because in whatever pursuit he engages he cannot hope to be successful without a general acquaintance with every branch of human knowledge. The relations and mutual dependance of the sciences, is that which first attracts the observation of the student and a knowledge of those relations and dependencies, appears to me absolutely indispensable to a rational enquirer. It is for this reason that I have so warmly recommended the perusal of D'Alembert's celebrated Introductions to the Encyclopedia. 1 A task which may serve as the prelude of the noblest undertakings. But the mere perusal or translation of this performance is not sufficient. We must accompany each paragraph and sentence with our own reflections, and make the work itself a text on which we may usefully and copiously comment.

For this purpose I propose my friend, that when you shall have procured the book, and are fully determined to endeavor the translation, we shall communicate to each other, through this epistolary channel the sentiments and observations which shall occur to us in the progress of our undertaking. Surely no one can be so stupid as to imagine that time thus spent is uselessly employed.

1 Discours Préliminaire de L'Encyclopédie. A handy reprint of this work is the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale 1893 edition.

I will venture to assert that by no other employment, which would occupy an equal space of time, would so great a number of new and accurate ideas be added to your stock.

After reading this essay and another by Diderot, in which all the branches of human knowledge are analytically arranged and distributed (the "Arbre Encyclopedique") for the first time, I began to consider to what particular pursuit I was led by predominant propensity, and at that time concluded that grammar Rhetorick and poetry were the sciences to which I felt the strongest attachments, and of these therefore I thought it incumbent upon me to form some regular and Analytical System, which should furnish the materials of reflection and which should serve as my lode star, my guiding luminary through the grammatical historical and poetical library; by which I should be able to enroll in its proper class and assign its proper station to every new idea with which study or reflection should furnish me. These resolutions I immediately put into effect, and I flatter myself that I made no inconsiderable progress in these audacious enterprises, in the short time (about eighteen months,) which the deity of Love would suffer me to devote to it, but as soon as I began to riot in those intoxicating draughts which this divinity presented to my lips, all my airy fabrics vanished, all my reveries were forgotten, and the "journal of a visionary" thrown aside and entirely neglected.

It may be of service to relate the manner in which, in my rural retirement--But I believe this relation must be reserved for another opportunity. I am sorry that I cannot write so copiously as I wish but as my friend Wilkins is just preparing to go out I will close this letter, imperfect as it is, only informing you that I have seen your two last letters to Wilkins and most highly approve of your remarks and proposals. I cannot give you my sentiments at large at this time on the method of discussing questions or with regard to the questions themselves.

(Not signed.)

The first comment necessary to be made on that letter relates to the suggestion that Brown's early idea of a literary career owed its inspiration to the French encyclopaedists. In the course of our work we shall find the matter of a Godwinian influence too much exaggerated and this statement takes the credit for his application to a literary life from the English and gives it to the French.

The elliptical reference to a rural retirement has been used by us in our study of Brown's early years as a possible hint that when first married he went to live at some Chester county farm. At a later time (1800) a newspaper records some house situated on the Germantown road near Chestnut Hill and owned and offered for rent by some Charles Brown which may likewise refer to the rural retirement spoken of here. Perhaps the Passyunk farm rented by his brothers is the place to which he refers.

The next letter gives a continuation of Brown's advice in the pursuit of knowledge and his acquiescence in Bringhurst's suggestion that some sort of a debating club would be the proper vehicle for expressing Brown's ideas. The presentation of his process of preparing his speeches is both important and new.

(To Joseph Bringhurst,Jr.,Front Street.)

(Philadelphia,) 1 June 1792.1

There are certain persons, who, in all their enterprises display an ardor and impetuosity, which never fails to infect those by whom they are surrounded. They impart to others the same enthusiasm by which themselves are actuated. This is certainly the characteristic of the noblest minds, but whether my friend has exhibited any proofs of this intellectual elevation I cannot certainly determine, or whether any opportunity has hitherto been afforded him of shewing it. There are only two persons within the sphere of its influence, of whom one would, if his passions of a different kind were at rest, want no extrinsic or additional incitement to the pursuit of literary excellence, and the other I am sorry to observe that I think the indifference with which he regards those sublime objects of Juvenile and rational ambition absolutely incurable. An indifference which, when I observe that he possesses personal and mental qualifications which, assisted by perserverence, would enable him to rise to an extraordinary pitch of superiority, I cannot but sincerely lament. However susceptible of emulation and of Envy I might formerly have been, I feel not the slightest dissatisfaction from the consciousness of my own natural inferiority to Wilkins. I should remark with inexpressible pleasure any tokens of industry or ambition in my friend and should be as much delighted with the homage and admiration which should be paid to him as if they were directed to myself. Why will he thus pertinaciously slumber? Is it not possible to rouse him from his lethargy? Will he never be convinced of the dignity of seriousness? I fear my friend that he is incorrigible, and to confess the truth, he is already in his present disposition a youth so amiable and engaging, that I can scarcely desire any alteration. And yet, if I am so much pleased with him, when surrounded by all those Incongenialities, how infinitely agreeable would he be, if our dispositions were more conformable to each other. If his deportment had a stronger degree of resemblance to your own.

I cannot forbear repeating that I perused your letter with uncommon and extraordinary emotions, but to the accomplishment of those meritorious and exalted purposes, is not the concurrence of our friend absolutely necessary? And, in spite of all my endeavors to persuade myself of the contrary, I cannot conceal my apprehensions that he never will concur. I, for my part, shall be entirely governed by your inclination. I have often told you that I am no longer the votary of political or Rhetorical ambition, yet I am convinced that nothing is more laudable than the enterprise in which you wish me to engage, there are none to which I am more forcibly attached, and from which I shall derive greater pleasure. I do not, indeed, regard it as an avenue to reputation. I consider it only as a method

1 The date is at the end of the letter. It was addressed and was probably delivered by Wilkins.

The uncalled-for closing bracketed mention of his unworthiness brings back the old spectre of self-condemnation. Brown's growing displeasure at the light and airy though brilliant mind of Wilkins ultimately lead to an estrangement. The next letter is a mere note and shows the breach widening.

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst,Junr. Front Street.)

(Philadelphia, Friday 1 June 1792.) 1

I have given2 you permission to show all my letters to Wilkins. I have not,I hope been guilty of indelicacy, and I request your opinion whether a very useful purpose may not be promoted by it. It is true I have highly applauded him,but have I not generally mingled censure with my panegyrick,and may not both the praise and censure contribute to inspire with a just opinion of his own powers,to awaken his ambition and recall him from that state of ungenerous indolence,in which,he has so long suffered his faculties to languish?

(Not signed.)

1 Dated from the note by Bringhurst.
2 In the 20 May letter, which ~~we have made the~~ may be a second one written on the 19th.

The next is really a short letter and undated. From its context it must have been written during the week between June 1 and 9, probably the 8th. ~~It has~~ Having no seal or post marks ~~and~~ A was probably delivered by messenger. On the back it is docketed by Bringhurst "C.B.Brown, no date. A la mode. In Brown---"

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst.)
(Philadelphia, after Friday June 1 and before Saturday June 9, 1792.)

Thou receivest this because it is intended for thy own inspection. I must confess I am not highly pleased that W.W.W. saw my last letter.1 He is indeed my friend. I admire him beyone expression, and love him most affectionately. No one can take greater delight in his converse; no one can be more warmly interested in his welfare. But I have a weakness, which I very much regret. I acknowledge it because I know it to be an infirmity. A weakness which makes mirth and ridicule not equally acceptable on every subject. The anguish which certain reflections produce to me, is only embittered and exasperated by a Jest.2 What is sport to him is death to me. His refuge from sadness is gayety and wit. He is never more merry than over his own misfortunes

1 The 1 June one, not the note of that date.
2 ~~In 1803~~ Brown's ~~gave a~~ picture of Wilkins in the ~~Student's diary~~, Literary Magazine, Vol.I, p.81, ~~which we have~~ quoted in our study of the year 1788, ~~Wilkins died 15 February 1795.~~ ~~which~~ presents ~~Brown's~~ idea of this trait of Wilkins.

and disappointments,happy,thrice happy disposition! If a wish could hasten it on me,I should soon obtain it. But my disposition is in this respect invincible and that which saddens and torments me,is only rendered less supportable by being made the subject of Ridicule and Raillery by my friend. Such is my weakness. I do not demand from my friends any sacrifices to it,I do not wish them to be serious when they are only disposed to be merry. Heaven forbid! I only wish to keep the subject out of the way or to persuade them to discant upon some other,to which I have not a similar objection.

It is little wonder that Bringhurst showed Wilkins the wrong letter. Brown's instructions were not explicit and were so often reversed that he could expect nothing else.

The next letter is the first we have found that has the formal opening of address.

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst,Junr. Front street.)

(Philadelphia,) Saturday,June 9,1792.1

My dear friend

I am extremely sorry to hear that you are indisposed. The debt which you have,with so much difficulty discharged,I could have easily forgiven you. Think me not the slave of Ceremony,and believe that the pleasure which I derive from the employment,would be a sufficient motive to uphold this correspondence by my single strength.

I may be easily mistaken in the character of W.W.W. I lay no claim to sagacity,but the opinion which I formerly avowed with regard to him,will,until experience shall confute it,be still the same. I need not say how desirious I am that it may be proved to be erroneous by that infallible criterion. Nothing can be more agreable than your assurances of his courage and perserverance,unparalleled and indefatiigable. That nature has endowed him with the sublimest talents I have always firmly believed,but as it too frequently happens those talents appear to me to be incumbered and impeded by unconquerable levity and thoughtlessness. Forgive the freedom of my observations. I am afraid they are not only free but petulant. This indeed is a moment of unhappiness. I am a prey to repeated disappointment and unsatisfied longing: forgive me therefore and show not that passage to W.W.W. without shewing him this also. It will furnish some excuse for the severity of my remarks. His amiable qualities are numberless. I love him with a virgin's fondness. His faults are virtues in my eyes.--but is he all perfection? Is he

1 Dated from the end and consistent with the calendar.

all that I desire? I would he were, and yet how immaterial the wish, since though he were all that I desire him to be, he would not, in consequence, be more perfect than at present.

You ask me if I think that he is always internally gay when he is apparently so. Why should I adopt a different opinion? Is there any uncommon merit in counterfeiting gayety? Is it ignominious to be serious? Singularity is always a proof of a little narrow understanding. I will not impute to my beloved friend, the frivolous ambition of singularity or believe that he wears an aspect of continual gayety for no other reason than because he may shew his powers of disguising his emotions. You tell me that he is often sad when in the midst of mirth and gayety. That is very strange and wholly unaccountable. What is his motive? Is his character so singularly instituted that his wit and laughter is the natural and necessary consequence of internal sadness and dispondency? There is some difference between seriousness and sadness. Our sadness ought not to shew itself in conversation, but it may with propriety dispose our mind to seriousness. What is more amiable in youth than seriousness? By which I am far from meaning sternness and morosity, and which is perfectly compatible with smiles and genuine wit, but is utterly a stranger to merriment without intermission, and laughter without cause. Our sorrows ought, in our promiscuous intercourse, to be studiously concealed. Heaven knows that this is a rule which I have invariably practised for these four years past, but I never aimed, though I may possibly have been sometimes, by resistless and momentary impulses or by the desire to conform, carried beyond that mildness and serenity of air and manners which is a source of purer satisfaction both to ourselves and others than is to be derived from boisterous mirth and unceasing laughter. Do not, my friend, confound sadness with serenity, nor believe that we can avoid sadness only by excessive and unseasonable merriment. Is he only happy and agreable to those about him, who is perpetually risible and who never opens his mouth but out there flies a Jest?

Wilkins, ever condescending and obliging, thinks his gayety displeasing to me, and will, therefore, for my sake, become serious. Tell him that he will greatly heighten my displeasure in becoming serious merely to oblige me. I need not expatiate on the impropriety of such conformity. I would rather forever seclude myself from him than occasion any the slightest change in his deportment. We are frequently together and then he finds it impossible to be equally gay, as when in company with others more sprightly, and surely this is a sufficient penance and mortification.

But I am afraid you will laugh at me, I scarcely know what I write. I cannot but hesitate whether to send or to retain it, it is written in a disposition so remote from ease, so unfavorable to candour--What a pother is here about jests and smiles as if no man had a right to laugh and weep, to whine piteously and utter jests

whenever he thinks proper. I am in truth ashamed of it, but must defer the necessary apologies to another opportunity.

C.B.B.

Again comes the sadness of his life. In spite of all his attempts to bury it in literary work the spectre appears to terrorize him.

The next letter is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst,Junr. Front street.)

(Philadelphia, Sunday)June 10.(1792) 4 o'clock P.M.

As I have already observed my dear friend,I lay no claim to the reputation of Sagacity,but to obtain a knowledge of those with whom we happen to converse,and are not studious of concealment,little more is necessary than common sense and a disposition to observe.

What is the real character of W.W.W. is not of very great importance to enquire. I know enough of him to justify me to myself in loving him. No human being is exempt from frailties,consequently he is far from being perfect. But what right have I to arraign his faults? To talk of his foibles with the air of one injured or offended by them? What are his levities to me? Is it not the faulty excess of gravity in myself that renders his gayety irksome?

No. O, Amiable friend! O Wilkins! continue what thou art at present. Suffer not the slightest change in thy deportment. Be always as now the votary of mirth:enamoured of a jest: inimical to care; for this is the sum of human wisdom.

It is not without reluctance that I write in my present disposition. A disposition to complain of heaven,to murmur at capricious destiny;to harbor gloomy and attrocious thoughts,to mingle rage with sorrow to cast existence itself from time as a burthen insupportable;to exclaim against <u>you</u> my friend;against Wilkins;against all the world.

But I must stifle my emotions. I am too proud as well as too miserable for consolation. I have formed a thousand resolutions to conceal from you;from every one,my sorrows; my vexations. But I hourly infringe them,and weary the ears of my friend with murmurs and complaints. And why? My mental maladies are insusceptable of remedy,at least the opiate of sweet oblivion cannot be administered by a friend,and yet does not the mere disclosure;the mere participation tend in some degree to alleviate calamity?—

But my friend himself stands in need of a comforter. He is allied by nature (sacred and indissoluble tye!) with one with regard to whom his sleeping imagination is haunted by phantoms of impending evils. How shall I relieve him from those terrifying spectres! How shall

I express the sympathy which his ominous forebodings have awakened in my bosom? By telling him that dreams are naive? No. That would be false, because in my opinion "Dreams descend from Jove." and my friend has found that they are prophetic, by his own experience. But how vain and frivolous is all human consolation to him, who is prepared to submit to evil because it is inflicted by the hand of heaven? Whose pious acquiescence in the will of reconciling providence I cannot but admire but I fear shall never be able to imitate. Resignation is the genuine source of comfort. Every other fount is easily exhausted, but this is perennial. Of this fountain you seem to have already drunk but I am nothing but frailty. For one to inculcate patience and fortitude, who is himself an utter stranger to both, is indeed preposterous. I hope a period has elapsed since your dream sufficient to explain whether it was ominous or not, and that your particular friend, who however, if he be the slave of wine, is unworthy to be so distinguished, whether the ties which bind him to you, be those of choice or nature, is still safe.

You tell me that Wilkins is not desirious of singularity. Shall I venture to insinuate--ah! my friend! I am going to be again selfish, petulant, unreasonable. I will not finish my sentence. You ask me if I have never laughed and uttered ludicrous sentiments without knowing what I said at times when my heart was far from being easy, and you add that Wilkins does the same. This may be true, but the motive for his acting thus is not explained for is it not impossible to assume the appearances of ease and gayety when the heart is wrung with sorrow or a prey to melancholy without an effort! And what motive can there be? I know of none.

Some persons are the slaves of mechanical impulse. Their Joys and sorrows are equally the offspring of the seasons. If the air be lightsome and serene they are happy; if cold cloudy and tempestuous, they are gloomy and desponding. Their misery and felicity is inevitably the effect of physical causes, and whatever be the situation of their mind they scruple not to make it evident in their intercourse with others. But a reasonable being is actuated by sublimer motives. He delights to please and to instruct, he knows that levity and pensiveness are two extremes that are equally to be avoided. That it should be always in his power to be either sprightly or serious, suitably to the company or the occasion. What is he that seeks to amuse only by the wildness of his contradictions and the novelty of his absurdities? Is it any proof of ingenuity to substitute laughter for wit or ridicule for argument?

But this is a subject which my present position wholly unfits me for discussing. I will possibly resume it when more inclined to discover excellencies than defects.

Your assurance of your friendship for me is balm to my soul. To be known to many I have not the least ambition. Popularity has lost its charms. The affection and esteem of a very few is all that I desire, and the only

source of happiness to which I can now gain access is the friendship and society of yourself and Wilkins..

We must not entirely forget the laudable scheme of literary and rhetorical improvement which you lately proposed. Your mind is at present perhaps too uneasy to think of it..As soon as you recover your tranquillity I hope you will resume your noble purpose. As for me my happiness is only an additional motive for zealously embracing your proposal,for while absorbed in those elegant pursuits I shall be more able to banish distressful thoughts. I regard your scheme not as an instrument of ambition,but as a method of eluding sorrow.

I would give you the result of an hour's meditation on a passage in Diderot's "Systeme figuré"[1] were you in a less melancholy disposition. It is an attempt at an analysis of grammar,but I shall reserve it for another opportunity. Meanwhile forget not your affectionate

C.B.B.

The spectre undoubtedly has again taken hold of our author. That he was verging toward that promonitory on which he had barely escaped the death of a suicide seems ~~evident~~ implied but was now probably more due to what he calls his fretfulness than to any serious cause a natural sequel to the strained relation with his friend it is a

The next letter is probably the most important single one in the whole Bringhurst collection. The statement it contains is not only new but it is a justification of his sadness and vital to an understanding of all of Brown's early life. There is plenty of evidence in many of the Bringhurst letters to show what suffering Brown passed through at this time but one thing is certain and that is that this early experience

1 In the Discourse préliminaire of D'Alembert we find an acknowledgment to Francis Bacon for the plan of the systeme figurè, p.91 edition cit.supra.

exerted the greatest effect on the early part of his life. There are no traces of it in his later life. Save for the death of Helena in Ormond we have in his works few death-bed scenes and no other portrayal of the peculiar agony of a lover's loss such as he might have based on the death of his first wife..

This confession to Bringhurst is all too brief and we wish he had written at greater length concerning the young lady. From the fact that the relations with his home were somewhat strained at the time of this marriage we may surmise that she was not of the Society of Friends. Possibly the Louisa Levenson of Henry Colden and Mary Waldegrave of Edgar Huntly may owe something to her. The affection Brown expressed, in his letter of 21 April 1793, for Connecticut because his beloved had traversed its fields may mean that she was from there; but all endeavors to trace her have been in vain..

One of the remarkable things about this early marriage is that his second wife Elizabeth Linn when writing the memoir of his life for the Boston 1827 edition of Wieland does not speak of it.

That she did not know of it is not to be believed, but that she did not mention it is ~~just~~ exactly what anyone should expect from her. ~~Her~~ Her silence ~~she shows the nobility of character and~~ shows the excellently good taste which we believe she had.

From the nature of the statement itself as well as from its iteration by Brown and its reception by Bringhurst it is hardly ~~possible~~ probable that it is to be understood in any other sense than literal. Because it was made by a man of such vivid imagination and because it was written to the same friend to whom the fanciful pictures of "ma petite epouse" were addressed: it may be hastily concluded that it was after all imaginary and fictitious. Such an explanation is unreasonable ~~to the present writer.~~ though possible so that we must ~~should~~ consider it as part of the twilight of mystery enveloping the whole of Brown's life.

Other than these preliminaries no further comment needs to be made on this letter. It is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst, Junr. Front street.)

(Philadelphia,) Friday August 9,1792.[1]

How pleasing is the converse of a friend, in which there is nothing but according sentiments and harminizing dispositions, or if there be any diversity of opinion, disputation is conducted with mildness and complacency. To the harmony of friendship it is necessary that either there be no sublinked and contemptuous contradiction, or no disposition in either party to be mortified or offended by it. Men are generally stubborn and opinionative in proportion to their want of knowledge, and I have often observed that those who are best acquainted with the

1 The date is taken from the end. ~~Friday was not the 9th. but the 10th. and as in a former case we believe the day is correct and not the date.~~ not according to the calendar

So it may be Thursday the 9th. or Friday the 10th.

world are never surprised at any contrariety of opinion, or at least they are always careful to conceal their wonder and contempt. Those whom a reasonable and necessary diffidence of their own powers or acquirements has not taught this lesson, may at least have learned it from prudence and politeness.

What is your opinion my friend? By your opinion, who can talk gayly and seriously as is suited to the hour or the company, who maintain your opinion with equal firmness, skill and moderation, I shall willingly be governed. Is it possible to explain the reason of all our sensations? Can you tell me why at this moment when my stomach is unsettled and disordered; my brain turbid and oppressed, my body drooping under this intolerable sun, my soul is mistress of its functions. Why I am thus overshadowed by a tranquil and bewitching melancholy, why a futurity pregnant with disastrous probabilities is received without emotion, and why I cherish with a kind of mournful pleasure the images of former sorrows? What a heavenly serenity prevails around me. Alas! let me not too assiduously foster it, for though it be a source of pure and rational enjoyment, yet nothing can be more unfriendly and unfavorable to success in those pursuits to which necessity condemns me. It tends only to render life a worthless bauble; a bauble valueless and perishable, and to persuade me that he has the justest claim to wisdom who holds in least estimation, this transitory being, and who scruples least to throw it from him.

My friend--for art thou not my friend? Wilt thou not give me leave to love thee, and to call thee my friend, my brother, my Bringhurst. Many friends hast thou. Many whose future eminence in the walks to which their fate has limited their footsteps, will be to thee a subject of joy and congratulation, who are destined to bear away the palm of medical and legal excellence, to spread their flowing canvass to the gales of popularity, and listen to the acclamations of posterity. Many friends whose smiling destiny, vigorous understanding and extensive knowledge enable them to aid thy progress in the road of intellectual and moral excellence, and to contribute in a thousand ways to thy happiness, but art thou not actuated by the soul of gentleness and sensibility. Does not thy ample benevolence embrace all the children of humanity. Thou art willing to attend to every tale of woe, to sympathise with every child of sorrow.

Who is he that now addresses thee? One who has no pretensions to thy confidence: no title to thy love and reverence, unless it arise from the influence which he wishes to repose in thee, from the esteem and love which thy amiable character has excited in him. How ardently does he long to pour into some friendly ear the effusions of his inmost and most secret soul, to waken in some faithful bosom the spirit of celestial sympathy, and know once more the unspeakable felicity of friendship! How wonderful; that there should be consolation in imparting sorrow and that grief is always lightened by the liberty of complaining! Wilt

thou forgive my talkativeness, my communicative disposition? Thou art not yet thoroughly acquainted with thy Charles. Thou knowest not half the incidents of his uncommon life. Thou knowest more than any other. Shall I request thee to pardon me for telling thee so much? No. I know thee better. Thou art not wholly uninterested in my fate. Thou knowest that grief as naturally disposes to garrulity as age, and thou listenest to me not only with patience and complacency but (shall I not believe it?) with interest and attention.

It is true that to talk of ourselves to ordinary associates is idle and impertinent, but where is the difference between friendship and a common connection unless it exist in a superior degree of freedom and confidence. The chief end of friendship is the alleviation of sorrow, and of sorrow what antidote is there more powerful than sympathy? O my friend! I cannot help believing however this opinion may be decreed a proof of vanity, that they who feel the dominion of the passions are nearer to the perfection of their nature than those whose virtue is united with insensibility. If their sorrow be more acute, their joys also are greater and think not that I would change conditions with any persons breathing, for I should never have been thus overborne with affliction, had I not previously attained supreme felicity. O Bringhurst! Thou shalt be master of my heart. I will not ask nor wait for thy permission. Thou shalt know all in spite of thee. That I loved, that I wedded. 1 That, ere a lunar revolution was accomplished death snatched from me the object of my vows. She left behind her a wretch forever desolate, forever sad. What a tale could I unfold. What a striking comment on the fictions of Goethe and Rousseau. How eternal is the difference between truth and falsehood, between nature and imitation! And how evidently discernible is this difference rendered by my ex(p)erience! But thou shalt be told it at another time.

C.B.B.

The next letter was shortly after but it is undated and contains nothing to assist in the dating. It is docketed by Bringhurst to the effect that it is by Charles B. Brown and is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst. Front street.)

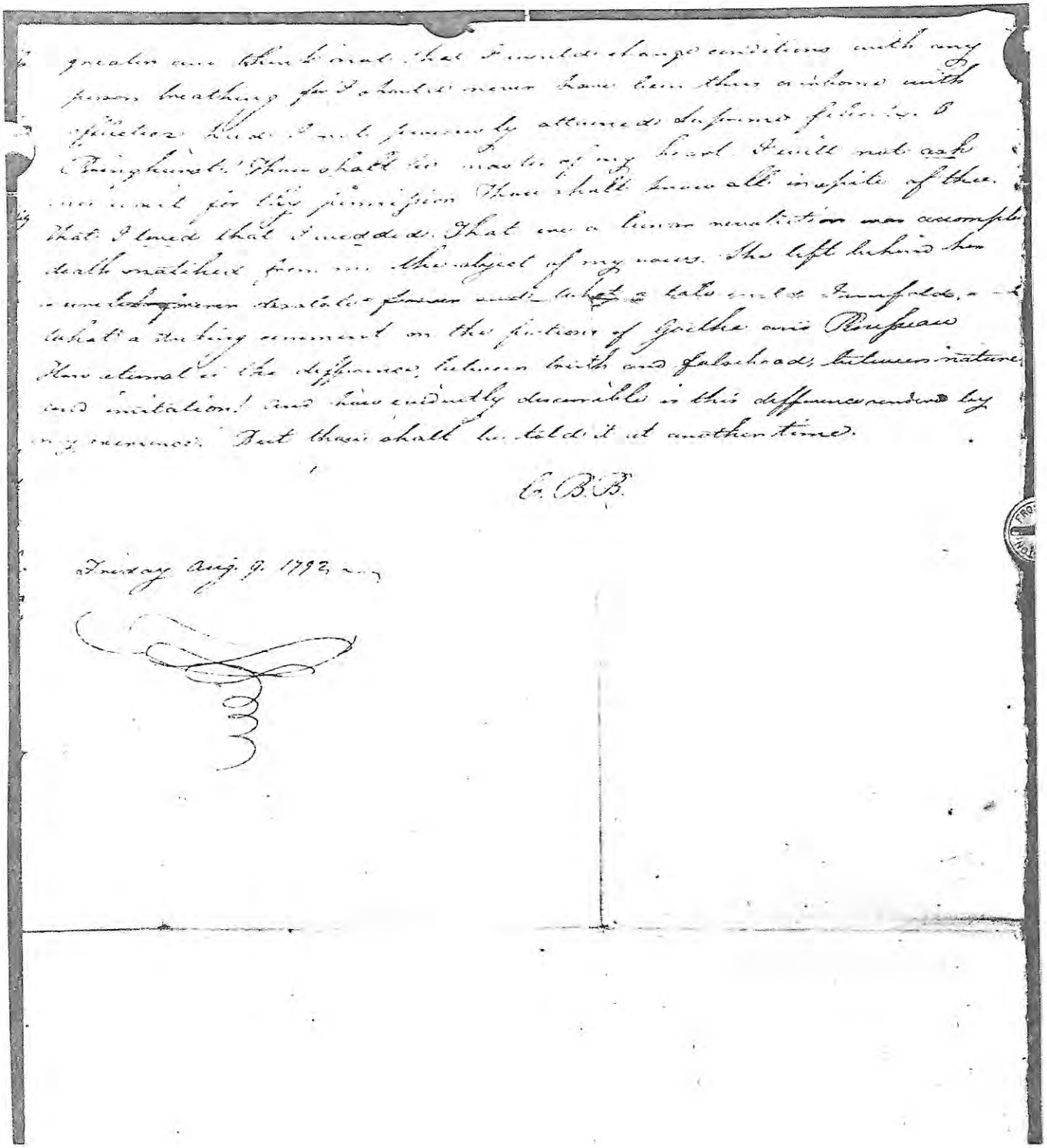
(Philadelphia, n.d. but shortly after 9 August 1792.)2

1 We shall find a confirmation of the statement in the next letter.

2 We have supposed it written on some day such as one from the 10th. to the 13th.

(Illustration to be placed

opposite page 56)



Photographic facsimile of the letter containing the statement of Brown's first marriage.

My dear Friend

The anxiety which you express, as it arises from the interest which you take in my welfare, is not a little flattering to me, but surely my last letter must have been a very strange performance to have given you so much uneasiness.

Who is there who is not subject to fits of disconsolationess arising from some constitutional defect, from the unkindly aspect of the weather, some unexpected disappointment or casual vexation? And who is there, who, during these gloomy paroxisms would not, should he vent his sentiments on paper, utter things which his reason in a less dreary moment, would disavow?

Such my friend is the spirit which dictated my last letter, one which you have answered in so very serious a manner that I am sincerely sorry to have written it. I cannot answer for the effusions of such cloudy moments, I formerly defied the influence of the weather, and supposed myself entirely exempt from the malignant dominion of the cloud-compelling East wind, but I am now of a different opinion, and am persuaded that the gloomy temper which I have, for some days past, experienced, is in a great degree to be imputed to the weather, and expect that the return of sun shine will dissipate this intellectual darkness, and restore me to myself.

Be assured, my friend, I expect nothing from my intended journey, but pleasure; pleasure which will only be heightened by some intervals of saddening recollection, and unavoidable despondency.

Far, very far is my friend from being unworthy of my Confidence. When I reposed in his bosom a secret, the most important, that I have to unfold, and told him that I have been once an husband, 1 I think I gave him no common proof of my confidence in his friendship. Would to Heaven that by unfolding all the circumstances of my disastrous attachment any useful purposes could be answered, but shall I not add to the portion of sorrow which has already been allotted to my friend, without in any degree alleviating my own burthen!

---Lay aside you(r) apprehensions, my friend. Think me not capable of committing so rash an action. 2 The same motives which withheld me from treading the irremiable way, when my misfortune was recent, will certainly continue to exert their wonted energy; indeed, time has greatly strengthened them, by multiplying the ties which bind me to life, in the affections of my friends, and by necessarily weakening the influence of that grief, which though it has spared my life, has certainly disqualified me for all the offices of life.

No, my friend think not that I shall give your gentle heart so severe a pang. Your peace, your happiness so far as it depends upon me, will ever be inviolably kept.

1 This is a confirmation of the statement in the letter of 9 August.

2 Bringhurst has evidently found traces of a return to his idea of suicide in his late letters.

Do you imagine it is easy to break the bonds of filial piety and fraternal gratitude.

How wondrous and mysterious are the ways of providence! You will not be displeased to hear of any instance which makes an intercourse with invisible agents, probable. Such an instance is that of a prophetic dream which I shall relate to you in the very words of the lovely and lamented dreamer, and which I have often considered as amounting to a divine prohibition of an Act of such fatal temerity.

"--I dreamed that thou and I were wandering in the region of Romance, in Spenser's fairy land; that we were Pilgrims clothed in Palmer's weed and going to perform our devotions at the temple of some divinity, whom I know not, but methought it was of great importance and that all our happiness depended on the success of our journey. Methought our way lay through many wild, unknown and dangerous regions, but that perserverance at length placed us within sight of the temple, but, methought, between us and it there flowed a stream, on the opposite bank of which the temple was erected, and that we could reach it, no otherwise than by passing through the river. This after many doubts and delays, for we were uncertain as to its depth, we resolved to attempt and accordingly methought you lifted me in your arms, and walked through the stream, which, upon trial we found less steep and rapid than we had at first imagined; but as soon as we had gained the opposite bank and were congratulating ourselves on the happy termination of all our labors, a gigantic knight, arrayed in black armor and of a fierce and terrible mein (the very remembrance of it makes me shudder) rushed suddenly out of the neighboring forest and seizing me who was speechless with affright placed me before him on a steed, who like himself was coal black, and, in spite of all my cries and struggles, rode furiously away with me into the wood. On looking back I thought I saw you still standing on the brink, but exhibiting marks of the utmost horror and despair. At length on observing that you had irretreaveably lost me, I thought you attempted to throw yourself into the stream, but suddenly a woman who methought was your mother, appeared behind you, and pulled you back. I never saw your mother and therefore it is quite unaccountable how I recognised her in that person. I at that moment awoke in much distress and horror.----"

Such my friend, was that uncommon dream which when that calamity happened which it undoubtedly fore signified, prevented its most fatal consequences, and never till I forget that I have a mother, of whose afflictions my death would complete[1] the sum, shall I voluntarily cease to live--

But why may I not be happy? What miracles in this respect may not time produce? Be assured that I shall afford it abundant opportunity to exert its influence. Adieu

C.B.B.

1 The real outcome was quite different. Brown's death caused his father's--his mother survived it apparently by fifteen years.

he — another Brown mystery

Where ~~Brown~~ was going on a "journey" is ~~not clear~~. The next letter

would seem to ~~show~~ suggest it was merely a plan to ~~leave home to~~ go from Vine street to the

house in Passunk which in the 17 May letter he had ~~described~~ designated as

overlooking the emptying of the Schuylkill into the Delaware; but such a small distance—especially to Brown—would hardly appear to be worthy of the designation. It is more probable he was thinking of the tight

The following letter is not dated ~~and with no hint of the season~~ Connecticut which we shall find him making in the spring of 1753

So it is only possible to suggest ~~the~~ approximate ~~time of~~ its composition. ~~It is~~ (± A)

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst,Junr.Front street,near the Dock.Philada.)

Banks of Delaware,Tuesday 11 o'clock P.M.1

I have read your letter by favor of my friend,2 and my expectations were extremely raised by the striking and pathetic exordium. I expected nothing less than another illustration of the Doctrine of Suicide. Self-murder or the murder of one's wife and child,are,in the opinion of mankind crimes of the deepest malignity,and though I,at present,differ in opinion from the majority with regard to the first of those offences,if such it may be called, yet I cannot but confess that I listen to the tale of self-destruction with as much awful attention and delightful horror as any of my fellow creatures. Have you ever philosophised upon Pity,and ever ventured to distinguish it from affliction on the one hand and benevolence on the other? If you have not why then--the question is of no importance. But to return to the letter. I must now inform you how much the sequel belied the prelude. Were you so much affrighted at the bloodless spectacle of quick and unpangful death. As one that is in some degree, conversant with the medical science,and its mournful trappings and appendages of Skeletons and livid Carcases,I should scarcely have expected that this scene should fill you with dismay and trepidation. Some portion of your disorder must,doubtless,be imputed to the sudden and abrupt appearance of domestic calamity and womanish despair.— Think me not,however,a wretch insensible and obdurate, or one who did not partake of your emotions in as great a degree as it is possible for one that is only imaginatively present at the scene which is so luminously pictured. I have a bosom susceptible of sympathy. Heaven has given me all I asked,a friend,and I bestow on misery all I have,a tear. The circumstances of the scene which you describe are,indeed,peculiarly interesting, and such as are highly worthy to be more elaborately delin-

1 The half-date is taken from the end. ~~of the letter~~. This ~~one~~ and the two following letters belong ~~closely~~ together on some Tuesday and ~~Wednesday~~ Wilkins / Saturday and another Tuesday and August 21 [illegible] writ

It may belong to the time of the three letters written on 5 May; ~~thing~~ in fact there are many details that would seem to make it so though there is no way of fitting it – and the two following letters that belong with it – to that time.

~~Of course~~ With all the letters of this year are probably written from Vine street with the single exception of this ~~one~~ from the Bank of Delaware it is probable the journey spoken of in the preceding ~~letter~~ one is the proper guide to follow in dating this group of three letters.

eated by the heaven-conducted pencil of a certain person[1] whom I could name. From the earnestness and solemnity with which you have written I have, indeed, reason to believe that the impression which this uncommonly disastrous and distressful incident has produced on the mind of that person, will not be easily obliterated.

But I have, perhaps, dwelt too long upon the subject, and will now, with your permission, retire from the house of tears and endeavor to still the vibrations of those chords, which are ever eloquently responsive to the Song of Sorrow. I want a subject. Would you believe it? That he who professes to write, not a formal dissertation, but an easy variegated letter, should want a subject. And yet--after more mature consideration--I know not whether to be easy, is not sometimes not only difficult but absolutely impracticable. Is ease in writing a precise and discriminate quality! Is it not of so slight and volatile a substance as always to elude the chains of definition? Or is it reducible to rules and precepts, to be methodised and Scientificised and to be inculcated by mouth of solemn lecturer? If it be I wish thou wouldst assume the preceptorial capacity, and explain the principles of ease, show its kindred with simplicity, and its reconcilability with Elegance. In what species of composition it ought to predominate? and to furnish the solution of a thousand questions of the same kind, which might be easily mentioned if I were certain of addressing myself to the occupier of a professor's chair in an Academy, erected for the sake of propagating the influence and extending over lettered and enlightened understandings the dominion of Simplicity and Ease.

I know not whether you are not already apprised of the intention of some members of our Society to make the subject of the essay which I read at their last assembly, a topic of debate. I hope you will not fail to exhibit a conspicuous figure on that occasion, and to express, in terms of eloquent indignation, your opinion of the Cowardice and wickedness of the Self-destroyer, detect and expose, in all their native littleness and deformity, the Rhetorical and specious artifices of a Goethe and Rousseau, and be the patron of humanity, the interpreter of Wisdom, and the Advocate of GOD. This is the true province of genuine eloquence, of which, however, my feebleness or depravity is such, that I find in myself no symptoms of Ambition, but shall content myself with an employment far less meritorious: with the task of defending those with respect to whom such is the darkness and perverseness of my understanding that I think them, if the truth must be honestly avowed, wholly justifiable!!!! that, their conduct is such as a slight accident once prevented me from imitating. That there are a thousand possible disasters that I am able to conceive, on which, unless religion should afford seasonable and unexpected aid, I should, though not unscrupulously follow their

[1] Evidently this refers to Bringhurst; but it may refer to some other indefinite person as well.

example.[1] But the word is given. To lay aside the pen. I obey.

C.B.Brown.

The next letter is undated and involves the same difficulty as the one just given. It is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst,Junr. Front street.)

(Philadelphia,) Vine Street. Saturday morning.7 o'clock.[2]

No sooner have I read your letter than I borrow Ink and paper from the friendly Poulson,[3] and sit down instantly to write an answer. The seriousness with which you speak and the striking and affecting manner in which you describe your emotions on the perusal of mine from the banks of Delaware,produced in me sensations,which I will not attempt to describe. What have I written (said I to myself) that could justly occasion so much terror and alarm? This is a manner of address to which I have not lately been accustomed and have I not reason to congratulate myself in having once more found a person who can be so greatly interested in my welfare? That he is capable of feeling pain on my account I cannot reflect without a new and uncommon kind of pleasure,and that this pain is actually felt cannot but produce uneasiness. Cannot but produce the strongest desire to remove it.

Have I done any thing more than give my opinion on a speculative question? Does my friend differ from me in opinion on the subject of suicide? So it certainly appears,but do we not differ on a thousand other topics? But it is,perhaps,of more importance to adopt a just opinion with regard to the lawfulness of suicide,than with respect to any other subject. It is possible that practise may be influenced by opinion,and who does not shrink with horror at thought of a friend destroying himself? It is indeed "a horrible conceit." But on this occasion my friend,I believe it will be unnecessary and unseasonable.

I have already hinted;(with what degree of prudence or propriety I know not) that I was once on the very point of perpetrating this crime. But this time is not pleasing but dreadful to recollection. It is useful to have experienced the horrors of it;because it will induce me more strenuously to prevent the same concurrence of disastrous accidents or gloomy ideas,or it will enable me with greater fortitude to bear calamity. But

1 As will be seen in the following letter Brown only intends all this to mean that he believed argument made suicide justifiable. He does not mean he intends to follow the reasoning by its practise.

2 The half-date is taken from the end of the letter. See note to the date of the preceding letter.

3 Zachariah Poulson,Jr.

what effect can an opinion formed in sober, and enlightened moments possibly produce on my conduct? Do you fear that I shall ever kill myself merely because I think it justifiable? If this be your fear lay it aside because it is unreasonable. The principle of self-preservation is not to be extinguished by Argument or declamation. He that is persuaded to esteem it improper to avoid death or danger on any occasion whatsoever, will yet start from the Ruffian's dagger with as much agility as he who never bewildered himself in the same refinements. Is it always sufficent to deter any man from the commission of wickedness to convince him that it is his duty to avoid it? If that were true wicked actions would be far less frequent than they are at present. If to destroy ourselves it be only necessary to justify Self-destruction it would not be easy to conceive a question of more unspeakable importance but it is evident that somewhat more is requisite, and that whether suicide be justifiable is a question of importance only to him whom some other motives have previously influenced to resolve on death, but if, in those circumstances, any one can by any means convince himself that he is acting rightly would it be kindness or cruelty to undeceive him, and to convince him that what he is about to do, in pursuance of other irresistible motives, is, in the highest degree, criminal, when that conviction would not prevent the deed? It would in my opinion be the summit of Inhumanity. Let me assure you that I shall take no fatal resolution of this kind but in consequence of some other motive, than a belief, a naked abstract and philosophical belief of its justifiableness. A motive too strong to be obviated by an opposite opinion, and a motive that in itself, will be a sufficient justification of the act.

I do not love to dwell upon this gloomy subject. There are two persons 1 to whom I have, of late, been remarkably communicative and who know what is unknown to any other person living. There are many things yet to be disclosed, of which in the disclosure of the greater part I cannot discover any impropriety except that which consists in the violation of that rule of politeness which teaches us to speak as little as possible of ourselves. What I have already revealed, and what I may hereafter reveal, is pleasing only either in the act or in the remembrance but many things I am hindered by an insuperable consciousness of impropriety from revealing.

Why should I make the bosom of my friend the Repository of melancholy secrets? Why should I call forth his pity by relations of private and relative 2 distresses, when they will not be alleviated by his participation of them?

I have often hinted that I once was determined to destroy myself. This is awful and incredible Intelligence! If the circumstances which suggested this resolution were known it would cease to be incredible. But these circumstances must never be revealed. For what useful end would be answered by explaining them? What

1 Bringhurst and Wilkins, Will and Joe, as he calls them.
2 In the sense of personal distress and that of one's kindred.

is pleasing to myself and what, consequently, may give pleasure to my friend I shall never be solicitous of concealing, but there are some circumstances of a different nature, which I am unable to conceive it possible for my tongue to relate, and of which the knowledge would be, by no means, desirable.

Suppose for example I should tell you that when eleven or twelve years of age I spent twelve hours in each day, that is, that I passed the night, for eight months together in a Jail,1 In an apartment in which my slumbers were hourly broken by the clanking of chains and bolts and iron doors. Where my ears were continually assailed by blasphemies or obsenities. Where there was a continual succession of Inhabitants, of various and opposite characters, associated by Calamity. Wouldst thou place any credit in the narrative? I assure thee, my friend, it is literally true. Suffer your imagination to connect with this incident all the circumstances by which it is naturally accompanied. I will not enumerate them. I cannot bear the repetition. And then thou child of Sensibility! Thou minion of propitious fortune--propitious when compared with mine--tell me how thou wouldst have acted in similar circumstances or what emotions would the recollection produce. What scenes could I describe--in what colors!--In every character of Son and Brother and man my sad experience has been too extensive.

1 In 1796 the debtor's prison was on the Prune street front in a separate prison intended to be used as a workhouse. The prison description was elaborated in Arthur Mervyn, Vol.II, chapters IV and XIII. The Quakers were the earliest in demanding Prison reform. See R.J.Turnbull Visit to the Philadelphia Prison Philadelphia 1796 reprinted at London 1797. Volney saw the publication in the newspapers and wrote 27 February 1795 a letter of approval.

I have no talent at description, and yet I will venture to depict a scene, that does not frequently occur. Imagine yourself in an apartment, defended by an iron door and grated windows. A cheerful fire blazing on the hearth surrounded by ten or twelve persons, the tenants of the same room. Among them there are scarcely two of the same nation or two that before their entrance into this mansion were not utter strangers to each other. Some of them are employed in conversation either mirthful or serious, either delicate and manly or base and brutal. Another party is endeavoring to drown their sorrows in intoxicating spirits, another at the card table practising with amazing skill and eagerness all the wiles and artifices of Piquet and Whist. What discord! What confusion! Half the night has past before it subsides. But who is he that sits in the corner on a block sawn from the end of a hickory log, fixed on the paper or the book before him in abstract attention? He is akin to one of the unhappy prisoners, Filial affection has persuaded him to change the social circle and tranquillity at home for noise and stench and interruption here. But how is it possible for him to write or read amidst this chaos and in that uneasy posture? Habit has at length reconciled him to his situation and he writes and reads with as much attention and collectiveness here as in a hermitage. But at first he made use of a singular expedient to prevent interruption, and that was by stuffing his ears with cotton, so artfully as to render himself absolutely deaf.--I will proceed no further. You may easily imagine who this stripling is. I was at that time cultivating short hand, and principally amused myself in relating in these commodious characters, the minutest

incident of the day and of the night, in painting the attitudes, and recounting the expressions of those around me. An employment that rendered pleasing and instructive hours that would otherwise have been insupportable.

Let me tell you that, if my happiness were to depend upon that of those with whom nature has connected me, of those who are entitled to my utmost love and most profound veneration, there, at this moment, creeps not upon the surface of the earth a wretch more miserable. (How does outward appearances deceive!--) But philosophy or custom has taught me to be cheerful or indifferent in almost any circumstances. I have learned to forget the present in the contemplation of the future or the impossible. Real Calamities affect me much less than might justly be suspected, and those evils are more terrible to me, which to the sons of earth, are of least importance. I have often felt a mighty and heart-rifting sorrow on occasions on which others would not have been affected by the slightest uneasiness, and have enjoyed tranquillity and gayety undiminished by intelligence which would probably have suffocated others with untearful and unutterable grief.

There are few persons more prone to vanity than myself. I will not conceal from you my foible, but though conscious of the impropriety of my observation, cannot forbear observing that, in my own opinion, no one of the same age that ever lived has seen, has read, has written, has reflected more than myself. No one whose character is more singular, and less known to those that know him best, the transactions of whose life are more extraordinary, more romantic, and more contradictory to all appearances, who has acted at different times more nobly or more despicably. Who has felt more passionately all the sensations of the lover or the friend,--ever existed.

What a confession have you here! Shall I cancel it? Shall I destroy the whole letter? Is it proper to be seen? Surely to speak this argues enormous vanity. But if I am vain why should not my friend know it? I do not desire to appear to him otherwise than I am . I have done no more than express my real sentiments. If I want modesty, let my want of it be known to those whose affection for me must always be governed by their knowledge of my character. But they know my character already. My appearance and conversations and deportment have sufficiently disclosed it. Impossible! How often have I smiled on considering within myself, "How different a person am I from him whom those with whom I associate, suppose me to be. How imperfectly is my real character represented by my countenance my manner or my dress. How little do they know of him with whom they imagine themselves perfectly acquainted.

Do you see (says one sportsman to the other) that boy upon the bank. He is not above fourteen years of age. It would be

o o o o o o

Cursed! Cursed. Cursed. Who can help it. Let him send—

perdition seize him--tears of joy would I shed upon his grand--no sweeter music than his funeral dirge.--fye--fye upon thee. How easily ruffled?--How quickly will it pass away--to morrow it will only be remembered--lend me a staff to drive him from my toes--This black ox, according to the vulgar metaphor---

o o o o o o o o

It would be amusing to discover what are his reflections at this moment. Nothing (say the other) but a country bumpkin, illiterate and unreflecting. A short interval from work he snatches to amuse himself with thoughtlessly wandering in the sunshine. I wonder where his fishing Rod is. He can be suited to no other employment, mean rustic and ungainly.

"Cease ye praters, conjecture till to morrow and ye will be just as far from certainty as now. He is as far above you, as nature formed ye above the brutes over whom ye triumph--

Enough---

o o o o o o

I was at the meeting last evening. Farris spoke with all the parade of the orator--But I shall see you before you read this letter and will tell more of it by word of mouth--Adieu--

C.B.B.

P. I write nothing to you which may not be seen by Wilkins—

The next letter is not dated, but from internal evidence belongs following the 7 A.M. Saturday letter from Vine street. It is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst, Junr. Front street.)

(Philadelphia) Vine Street. No. 159. 11 o'clock. Tuesday night.[1]

I have read your letter with the utmost satisfaction. I hope that the continuance of this correspondence will not prove disagreable or inconvenient to you. I persuade myself that if it be suffered to proceed, I should derive the highest entertainment and instruction from it, and may I not flatter myself that it is calculated to afford you equal pleasure and improvement? I am not vain enough to imagine that my weak and desultory efforts will in any degree facilitate the discovery of truth. I do not pretend to be a reasoner[2] and shall do little

1 The place, time and day are taken from the end of the letter. See note to the second preceding letter's date.
2 The word seems written seasoner, but is not at all clear.

more,at any time,than throw upon the page the conceptions of the moment,than mingle,with capricious eagerness and copiousness,the stream of Sentiment and fancy, amuse my amiable correspondent with the air-built Structures of a wild,undiscliplined,untractable imagination, and whisper soft effusions of a soul that longs to mingle with a kindred spirit in his mind's attentive ear.

Pity is the friend of virtue and the daughter of benevolence but is not,as is commonly though erroneously imagined,the same identical personage. In my letter from Delaware [1] I intended obliquely to insinuate this opinion,but I gather from the letter which lies before me that this opinion is also yours. That you justly distinguish between Grief,Benevolence and pity.

All disputes of this kind are,for the most part, merely verbal and are therefore useful for no other purpose than the promotion of accuracy and precision, but yet this end is of some importance.

Benevolence is the desire of rendering others happy. Beneficence is the act of conferring happiness. Pity or compassion is a sympathy or fellow feeling with those that are afflicted. It is that emotion which is excited by the contemplation of misery. Does not benevolence necessarily imply pity? but though they may always be united,they are,perhaps,not the same.

You appear to think that pity differs from Benevolence only as it operates in a more contracted sphere,and is not essentially distinct from it. I cannot easily adopt your opinion. I think they differ in their essence. Benevolence necessarily implies pity. He that wishes to relieve the miserable,which is the proper definition of a benevolent man,must previously be sensible of Pity for their distresses. Different men may display different degrees of Benevolence;and he who desires the felicity of a single person,is,according to the proper meaning of the term,benevolent in a certain degree.

You seem to confound two words manifestly distinguishable from each other,and appear to discover no difference between him who merely wishes that another should be happy and him that actually makes him so;between him that busies himself in promoting and him who contents himself with idly and inactively desiring to promote the good of mankind. If you consider the derivatives of Benevolence and Beneficence,you will readily discover that different ideas are represented by them. That this difference is founded in the nature of things and is no less than that which subsists between Volo and Facio.

I still continue to think that whether Suicide be justifiable or not,is a question of importance only to those who are incited to commit it. And surely this observation is indubitably just,whatever question it regards,when we are to act only in consequence of opinion. It is necessary that some opinion should be

1 The Banks of the Delaware.

clearly and deliberately formed. He who is about to pass a gulph on which he can escape destruction only by the continuance of a serene sky, ought doubtless to examine with exactest care, the face of heaven and, by investigating and comparing present appearances, endeavor to form a rational opinion with regard to the future, but the same inquiry is evidently of no importance to him who tends his flock upon the shore and who will be equally safe whether the waves be calm or turbulent. I have always believed that the justice or iniquity of Suicide was a question merely speculative, and that the decision of it could never have any influence on the conduct. But this decision is by no means necessary. I cannot indeed forbear to form an opinion on this Subject, but when the time shall arrive at which my practise is to be influenced by my opinion, I shall enquire with infinitely greater vigilance and caution into the propriety of my conclusions.

You assure me that on a more attentive scrutiny I shall easily discern the fallacy of all the arguments that are used in vindication of suicide. My friend, will you permit me to observe that this is rather an hazardous and precipitate assertion? I am not so easily misled as you may possibly imagine. Whether Suicide was defensible, on moral considerations, was once a question of the last importance to me, and was therefore examined with proportionate anxiety and caution. There are few subjects on which I have written or reflected more, and therefore am not much pleased to be told that my conclusions are fallacious and that their fallacy will be obvious on a slight enquiry.

That the Self-destroyer acts in pursuance of necessity; that he cannot avoid the death on which he rushes; that his liberty is taken from him, and that he sinks under an <u>insupportable</u> burthen, is a position the truth of which I believe independently of argument, and which it is useless to deny, or to endeavor to disprove: my opinion is the dictate of experience only, and can therefore be no otherwise confuted, than by observing that that is not truth which I know, by my own experience, the most infallible and indisputable criterion, to be true: But this I cannot but account impossible.

I have stated it as unquestionably certain that no one destroys himself in consequence of the mere conviction of the moral justifiableness of his conduct. That grief must always have extinguished his love of life, and out-rooted the principle of Self-preservation; That he acts like one who throws from his hand a heated piece of iron, by which his flesh would be consumed, instantly and mechanically, without pausing to deliberate whether it be proper to hold or relinquish it.

And surely this is not to be denied at least with regard to the greater number of Self-destroyers. But I cannot dwell on this subject without

reluctance. I do not think it possible and am far from wishing to make you a convert to my doctrine. I shall always think that he whom a disaster so severe has befallen as to suggest a deadly resolution, and who acts agreeably to this suggestion and imagines that he is acting justifiably, may easily be justified. Examine this position in its full extent and you will find it impossible to doubt the truth of it.

Every man must determine with regard to the propriety of his own actions. The reason with which he is endowed will enable him to determine aright; At least, whatever be its dictates, it is his duty to obey them, and to disregard the decisions of others. He cannot be censured or punished for any action, which did not appear to himself to be criminal.

In allotting to every man his final reward or punishment the judge will undoubtedly consider, not the naked and abstract propriety or impropriety of actions, but the circumstances by which they were suggested, the intention with which they were committed, and the opinion which he who committed them, had formed of them. If a man acts, in his own opinion justly, who shall presume to censure or to punish him?

Every destroyer of himself must be of opinion that he is acting either criminally or not. That he was not conscious of acting guiltily is surely a sufficient justification. Whatever be the speculative notions of another person, I am to be governed by my own conceptions of Right and wrong. He that does a deed of Benevolence or heroism on the supposition that he is acting wickedly, is surely just as culpable as he would be were it in reality wicked. Vice and virtue are terms relative only to the intention or opinion of the intelligent agent.

But you may, perhaps, be of opinion that the guiltiness of his own conduct is evident to every Suicide, that he obscures the truth by artful Sophistries which are yet apparent to himself: that he assiduously labors to stifle his conviction; and suffers inclination and argument to govern his belief. This opinion must arise from your thorough and complete conviction of the iniquity of Suicide.

But, my dear friend, different minds form very different conceptions of the same thing, and you ought not to be surprised if you should find that another as firmly believes and as strenuously maintains an opposite opinion. The number of those who, in killing themselves, do not wound their conscience or conviction, may appear to you to be small; to another, it may seem so large as to embrace the whole. Now the real number will undoubtedly be the same, however we should estimate it. It is still certain that those who have fallen by their

own hands,acted either in opposition or agreably to their own conviction of truth and justice,and were,therefore,justifiable or not according to the Sentiment which predominated. To shew that every Self-destroyed,acted criminally,even in his own opinion,it must be shown to be impossible for any human being to be convinced by the arguments which have been alledged in defence of suicide. How shall this be performed? It is surely no easy undertaking. Your arguments may appear irresistible to me,if they should produce a change in MY opinion,but if I,notwithstanding,should destroy myself,the deed might possibly,with some appearance of propriety, be deemed iniquitous. But have those who are already dead been convinced in the same manner? Have they heard the arguments which you alledge? And were they followed by conviction?

It is asked whether Suicide be justifiable? Of what solution is this important question capable? What answer can be given to it? Only this:It is justifiable to those who think it so:it is criminal in those who esteem it criminal. But you attempt to reason on the subject. Preposterous!-- What effect can your reasoning produce? Suicide is an act. An act,considered separately from the sentiment or purpose of the agent,may indeed be determined to be useful or detrimental,but whether it be criminal or not,it is absolutely impossible to determine otherwise than by referring to the original opinion or intention of the agent. Your arguments can effect only yourself or those who hear you. If you are convinced,by reasoning,that to kill yourself would be criminal in YOU,self-destruction would incontestably be criminal;but in others whom your arguments have not affected in the same manner,where is the Culpability of Suicide?

On this topic I have formerly <u>soliloquised</u> in a more ardent and forcible manner. When it is more convenient,you shall,if you have any inclination, see my soliloquy.

I am weary of the subject. As I <u>should</u> not scruple to sacrifice my life to the happiness of others, I <u>will</u> not scruple to sacrifice it to my own. I did not intend to finish this letter so quickly, though perhaps it is already disagreeably prolix; at least when compared to yours. I cannot but be ashamed of its prolixity. You will never,my friend, be called the paper-sparing Bringhurst. With how much ease and expedition do you fill a sheet? But how do you fill it? How many and how spacious intervals are seen between each line,each word,each letter! I open your epistles in expectation of a Rich Repast. I naturally expect that a table of such ample dimensions must be plentously and sumptuously piled,but what do I find? The table is indeed

extensive,but the cates are few,the provision scanty,the banquet frugal. I should be grateful, however,for what is given,tho' more would be acceptable. I know that your situation does not suffer you to be as liberal,as perhaps,you wish to be. Accept my acknowledgments for what you have thought proper to communicate. But beware of the consequence: I modestly intend to limit myself,in my answer to your epistles,to a tenfold propertion. In writing to me,it is therefore incumbent on you to consider of what length the letter in reply must be,to be perused without irksomeness or inconvenience:Since for every ten words,you will be subjected to the disagreeable necessity of reading an hundred.

I verily believe that I could,without difficulty, crowd a dozen of your sheets into one of my pages. What a provoking prodigality is here! How wide the meaningless and unworded spaces! Every line and letter looks as if he feared his neighbor,and endeavored to get as far as possible beyond the reach of his malignity. Of what ye idiots,are ye afraid? I intreat ye know each other better. You there,go a little nearer to your neighbor. Do not appear in my presence again at such a supicious and unfriendly distance. Ye cover a wider field than belongs to you. If ever ye come within the reach of my pen I will tell ye a different tale. Ye shall huddle together like pigs in a storm. I will convert ye from Giants[2] into pigmies,[2] and work,by the assistance of my magically-pointed pen, as great a miracle among ye,as was wrought of old, amidst the throng that waited in the hall of Pandemonium.

-----So thick the airy crowd
Swarmed and were straightened;till the signal given
Behold a wonder! they but now who seemed
In bigness to surpass Earths Giant Sons
Now less than smallest dwarfs,in narrow room
Throng numberless,like that pygmean race
Beyond the Indian mount;or fairy elves
Whose midnight revels by a forest side
Or fountain some belated peasant sees
Or dreams he sees-------- [3]

Such,I promise ye,shall be your lot when accident shall (put) you in my way. In the mean time tell your master and creator,that he will always find a

Sincere affectionate and faithful friend
in
C.B.Brown.

Brown's argument as just presented is a very fair example of the clever dodging back
logic of his youth. What reception it had at the hands of Bring-

~~[1] This hardly bears out the statement of Allen (p.56) and Dunlap (p.51) in regard to the character of Brown's correspondence.~~

[2] Written small and large. [3] Paradise Lost, I, 781 ff.

Hurst and his other friends is not known but it is probable Wilkins

at least would not let it pass without the puncturing it deserved. ~~His~~ It is
Brown at his stupidest.
this idea of what was criminal and his statement to justify suicide in

superficial and flay
any one is not only ~~poorly supported~~ but based on the only selfishness

he ever exhibited. However, he is perhaps to be partially excused

had been
because he ~~was~~ again suffering from blue devils. The next letter to

will show his
Bringhurst ~~shows his~~ mental tone to be considerably healthier.

Meanwhile
To preserve the chronological order ~~we here break~~ the continuity

may be broken
of the letters to Bringhurst by ~~this~~ one written to Wilkins.

three days after being admitted to the bar
On 22 September Wilkins went to his old home in Woodbury and ~~leaving~~
decided to study further so as to be able (visit) the practise in the Supreme Court on
23 October he went on to Trenton to read ~~the New Jersey~~ laws under

the guidance of Richard Howell. At Trenton he knew few people, he

missed his Philadelphia friends and was homesick for them. He walked

the streets when he was free from the office and it was not until his

had
acquaintance widened and he formed a literary society under the title

of "the Bachelor's Club" that he found life tolerable.[1] X as we shall
see later when the whole ten ~~essays~~ had been published
it was at this time he ~~also~~ wrote his series of Tatler

~~1 Bringhurst's Wilkins Memoir p. 35 and 37.~~

Part of the letter is derived from Allen. Dunlap gave five paragraphs from it--about one half--but they were selected without critical taste.

Allen[1] represents the letter as an extract, implying that the opening is missing; but he probably is in error.

(No address. To William Wood Wilkins, Trenton, N.J.)

(Philadelphia, n.d. but 5 November 1792 or later.[2])

1 P.61.

2 Brown says that the letter received last evening was long delayed and dated 4 November, so this date must be at the earliest 5 November but may be any time up to 1 December but not later. Twenty-four hours would seem a long delay when we consider how quickly they had been exchanging letters.

"Why, my friend, is there so wide an inteval between the writing and the reading of your letters? That which I received last evening, is dated November 4, and was delivered to me by a person who, passing through Trenton, saw it at a tavern, and made himself, through mere politeness, the bearer of it.

However, nothing, I assure you, can be more acceptable. You lament very pathetically the solitary and unsocial state in which you are placed; but as your views are merely studious and scientific, I know not whether that which you deplore as a misfortune, ought not rather to be deemed a felicity. Is not your whole time devoted to your books? And if agreeable company should entice you from them, would it not require a new exertion of fortitude to resist the temptation, and persist in your designs? I will not speak of the danger to which you would be exposed, of neglecting your pursuits for the sake of social pleasures, for I believe your remarkable prudence would exempt you from all hazard of this kind. I form this opinion from your behaviour here, where you firmly resisted every temptation of this kind, and sacrificed every consideration to the diligent prosecution of your studies. This indeed may make one suspected of vanity, since it implies a belief that my example was the most powerful that would be afforded to your imitation and that it required the utmost exertion of your fortitude to forego the pleasures of conversing with me, and participating in my indolence; but this I am far from intending to insinuate, nor is it indeed a necessary conclusion, since I believe there were few young men whose acquaintance was more extensive and agreable than yours, and who had stronger and more numerous motives to indulge himself in the indolence of desultory conversation.

But is not your complaint in reality without foundation? Are you not a voluntary hermit? Surely it is in your power to make the circle of your acquaintance as ample as you please. In the metropolis of New Jersey, or in its neighborhood, there cannot be wanting many agreeable, polite and hospitable families, in which a man with such advantages as my friend possesses, cannot find it difficult to form the closest intimacy. For what company does not your birth and education qualify you? Every extensive recommendation is yours, and with respect to personal qualities--I will not draw upon me the charge of flattery by delivering my opinion, but it may at least with safety be asserted that every requisite accomplishment it is in your power to attain. He that is sincerely desirious of pleasing, cannot fail of accomplishing his works.

Be but desirious of forming an acquaintance, and your own prudence and invention will furnish you with a thousand expedients to effect it.

But perhaps were you invited to familiarity, you would be hindered from accepting the invitation, for fear that the ardor for study might be lessened, and your attention be diverted from the principal object. Of this I can only say, that were I in your condition I should not be afraid, but should reflect that the chief pleasures are those flowing from refined society, and that nothing can conduce more to my professional success, than a numerous and respectable acquaintance. Certainly, my friend, it is in your power to mould your mind into whatever shape you wish for social intercourse as well as studious retirement.

Am I not guilty of that presumption with which in a former letter, you unreasonably charged yourself? The presumption of giving you advice, of treating you as a pupil. But there is another reason for which I ought to apologise for my unreasonable arrogance. I ought to have forborne, not only because I of all others am the least qualified for the office, but because, a reason not less strong, you do not stand in need of it.

[1] Your letter has indeed a very singular appearance, and I congratulate myself more than ever on the enjoyment of your friendship! What! Is all this wisdom from a youth? Whose passions are impetuous? Who has been exposed to all the seductions of pleasures, with no other security than his own prudence and reflection? And is his conduct agreeable to those maxims? Justly then may he indulge the impulse of virtuous ambition, and please himself with the prospect of affluence and honours. Go on, amiable and ingenious youth, and mayest thou speedily attain what thou so laudably aspirest after—the fair fame of integrity and the peace of virtue. These are purposes that are truly worthy of a rational being; purposes that are almost peculiar to thyself, which few men of whatever age make the object of their wishes, or prosecute with equal steadiness and diligence; and which is still more rarely to be found in the mind of those of the same age.

1 This paragraph is given by Dunlap Vol.I, p.43.

Thou hast travelled through eleven folios, thou sayest, and Trenton had the honor of receiving thee. By my faith a very tedious journey, performed with wondrous expedition. I would not challenge thee to a race of that kind, unless it was agreed that he who was beaten should be considered as the winner, for half the wealth of India. Pegasus is a poetical beast, his pace is generally rapid, but he carries his rider through the flowery fields of fancy only; whereas, the nimble palfrey which bore thee through those volumes was the sturdier stud of reason, whose tougher hoofs could trample without difficulty the thorns and brairs which beset them; could traverse, unstumbling and unwounded, the rocky and uneven surface of dreary and unornamented law. Why if those were fairy tales, the unformed luxuriances of fancy, or the bright redundancies of wit what thou sayest would be undeniable; but that they were the essence of technical nothings, the substance of shadows, and the plenitude of emptiness, the barren and vexatious yeas and nays of Doe and Roe, cannot be believed, or at least can be believed only of my friend.

1 May the hour in which you expect to be admitted speedily arrive. Impatience is certainly unnecessary: that there are many things beside a knowledge of law requisite to form an advocate, is very obvious; and though your legal knowledge may qualify you long before April 2 for admission, yet, my friend, there are other accomplishments which, whatever should be your diligence or resolution, you will scarcely have attained in the seventh April after the next. But if legal knowledge were the only requisite, yet your impatience is unreasonable, since while there remains any thing to be known, you cannot be esteemed perfect; since it is impossible for you to know too much, and since, after twenty or thirty years study there will still be a legal something of which you are ignorant.

It is true that success in all the learned professions is too frequently the consequence of accident, and that men are not always rewarded exactly agreeably to their merits; but there are particular exceptions, and, as a general observation, it is undoubtedly true, that men of all professions, and particularly lawyers, are successful in proportion to their skill.

I need not tell you what, in my opinion,

1 The next four paragraphs are given by Dunlap Vol.I,p.43 ff.
2 Wilkins was admitted to practise in Philadelphia 19 Sept.1792 and in Trenton in the Supreme Court 8 Apl.1793.

are the necessary accomplishments of a lawyer. Our sentiments, I believe, are somewhat different on this subject, but, however few and simple they may be, I cannot but still discover the necessity of time and patience, diligence, and the unreasonableness of your impatience for admission. Whatever be the qualifications of an accomplished lawyer, yet there are different degrees of excellence in them. This undoubtedly is his employment, to think, to write, and to speak. The certainty and facility with which he shall answer questions that come before him, will unquestionably depend on the degree of knowledge which he has acquired, and of the sagacity which he possesses. Study and reflection are the sources of legal knowledge, as of every other kind, and these sources are inexhaustible. From these fountains, therefore, whatever we possess must be drawn. But we cannot draw too much, and every possible accession to our store, must be not only not useless, but highly advantageous to us, whether we be eager for wealth or for reputation.

As a writer, both his style and his penmanship are improvable by practice. How far the qualities of style are entitled to his attention, may perhaps be a question; but that he has numerous occasions for the exercise of penmanship is indisputable; and that it is highly his interest to become master of an expeditious mode of writing. A lawyer, whether at court, or in his own closet, has perpetual use for his pen; and is it necessary to expatiate on the advantages of writing with as much rapidity as any man can articulate? or can you doubt either that you have not attained this, or that it is attainable?

With respect to speech, it may not be incumbent on my friend to make himself an orator in the genuine sense. The talents of Cicero could not, perhaps, with propriety, be displayed in their full extent in any American court: but what is more necessary or desirable, than to deliver one's self with fluency and correctness? There are no ears to which the utmost degree of accuracy of reasoning and language is unsuitable; which cannot relish the utmost degree of perspicuity both of expression and of argument. But have you already attained these

qualifications? In short, can you on all occasions, conceive and express clearly, forcibly, and gracefully, to which I may add, rapidly? These are attainments within your power. The end is not unworthy the means. The more you acquire before admission to the bar, the less will remain to be acquired after. So far are any of your pursuits, merely as a lawyer, obstructed by the delay of your admission, that it will in reality be favourable to them. There is a goal which you are desirous of reaching, and between which and yourself there is an ample space. Now if your strength is at all times equal, if whenever you begin this career, exactly the same space of time will be required to finish it, it is doubtless, proper to begin as soon as possible, because the sooner you begin the sooner you will end; but if by delaying to begin for a reasonable time (two, three, or four years) you do not set the gaol at a greater distance; if supposing you should begin now, you would reach it in seven years; yet that, if you should delay your enterprize for two years, and begin then, your strength and vigour would be augmented in the interval, so as to enable you to reach it as soon as another who began at this time, would not the delay be rather advantageous than otherwise? At least is the advantage greater on one side than on the other? And are not these your circumstances my dear W.? The longer you delay your admission will you not be better qualified for practice? I have heard a gentleman observe that were he a student of law, he would not begin to practice till he was twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age. But, my friend, perhaps your domestic circumstances would not suffer you to delay your admission so long, and I am sure that your present attainments would not justify so long a delay. You are very young, and though it would perhaps be impossible, or if possible, by no means necessary to continue a student for seven or eight years longer, yet to preserve that character for one or two years more would neither be impossible, or improper. However you should think proper to determine, were it in your power to hasten or procrastinate your admission, yet these considerations ought at least to make you patient under unavoidable delays.

Who now, my friend, is dictatorial? I cannot but admire my own audacity. However I am more excusable in my own eyes as my purpose was innocent and friendly, being no more than to convince you that you ought to wait patiently for the hour of admission, not because the delay is unavoidable (which is of itself, in truth a sufficient motive to patience with philosophers)

but because it is at least productive of no disadvantage, though I hope I have proved, if it be necessary, that it is actually advantageous.

How vividly my W. do you paint the joys of virtuous and wedded love! How have you thus avoided at once the vicious principles and practises of youth? And why cannot I contemplate with unmingled pleasure those proofs of a pure and virtuous mind! Ah! my friend, thou are talking of domestic pleasures, of the union of love and innocence, to me who wants not sensibility, but how does it happen that I never hear of a marriage without an instant dejection and despondency? Because it recalls to my view my own deplorable lot.

How now! I intended to have for once written a letter to my friend, without once obtruding myself upon his attention. As I wish to make this correspondence agreeable, I am determined while writing to think of nothing but his felicity, and to exhibit only the pleasing images which the observation of that suggests, and solicitiously to banish the idea of self from my mind. And this is not only advantageous to you, but highly to my own advantage; since whatever dissipates the gloom by which I am encompassed is useful, and while I contemplate your happiness, I am happy. And yet my W. (did you never observe it?) there is something unaccountably consoling in complaint; in pouring ones sorrows into the bosom of a friend; in building trophies to grief, assisted by him, and lamenting with him over the ashes of extinguished hope.

But hold! What am I doing what I was so desirious of avoiding? I cannot conquer myself on this occasion, and can not avoid infecting you with this unwelcome melancholy, only by relinquishing the pen; which, however, I will not part with till I have assured you that I am, &c."

1 Willis never married.

Aside from its general interest as showing Brown's method of correspondence with Wilins, at this time that letter brings out two points of importance. For one it appears clear that Brown did not approve of a race through eleven folios, a point which is of value even now. The other point is that Wilkins seems to have been one of the friends who had argued against Brown's abandonment of the law. Here Brown has the chance to retaliate and he does not hesitate to make another slap at "the rubbish of the law".

We now continue with the next Bringhurst letter which is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst, Junr. Front street.)

(Philadelphia,) December 1792. 1

> There is a kind of intercourse which I wish to maintain with you, how shall I describe it? In what language do we speak to our own hearts? Are you master of it? If you are you will understand me when I tell you that it is in that language, that I wish to converse with you.
>
> Why cannot I speak to you as I would speak to myself? Cannot (I) expect from you, answers equally sincere and with less probability of erring?
>
> I am a poor creature. I know my own defects. If I do not want capacity yet I want steadiness. There is no science in which I have the least acquaintance except that of law, and of that I know less than any other of my age, and with my opportunities for improvement, and motives to application. In no language am I moderately a proficient. Let me examine this assertion. In no language? Not in my own? Never let us judge of our own acquisitions merely in comparison with those of others.

1 The date is taken from the end of the letter. It probably belongs near the first days of the month, probably from the 1st. to the 8th.

It is scarcely a paradox to say that there is no man who does not excell some other,and also that there are none without a superior. We must estimate our own merit, and that of others by an uniform ideal and abstract criterion:by a pattern of speculative and imaginary excellence. There are many who probably know less (may I not believe so?) as there are numbers without number who know infinitely more of their native tongue than I, but on the application of the most authentic standard, how egregiously contemptable,how monstrously little appears my skill.1

It is natural for people to enquire into the sentiments of others concerning themselves. These inquiries are generally esteemed useless and ridiculous. Why? only because certain information on this subject is,on most occasions,impossible to be obtained,and because this kind of knowledge,supposing it attainable,is useless in itself.

I, for my part,think it extremely useful and desirable. I esteem not the opinion of others infallible: as I do not question my own infallibility. Though what I hear and what I think bear not the marks of unquestionable and eternal truth, I am nevertheless curious to know my own thoughts and those of others.

Cannot I appeal to you,on this occasion,as my other self? Come--you surely wish me to regard you as my friend. Consider not this as a proof of vanity--indeed I know how any one's desire to know the opinions of others,with respect to myself,can be imputed to him as a proof of vanity. It is a desire that predominates in every human breast,and implies a weakness of understanding and a love of flattery only when imprudently and unseasonably attempted to be gratified-- Regard it as a proof of confidence:of peculiar confidence. I believe I am as little chargeable with this kind of vanity,(if vanity it be) as most people. Let me put your sincerity to this test,your friendship;for without confidence and mutual sincerity what is friendship but a confederacy of villians or a compact of imposture? Set my picture before me. Let me know in what estimation I am held by others and by yourself. How can I mend my faults before I know them. I will indeed give you leave to think,(if you are of opinion that no man is ignorant of his faults,) that,in order to induce me to mend,I must not only know my faults but know also that they are observed.

Let me then,my dearest friend,solemnly adjure thee to deal sincerely with me,and personate my better angel.I know every man may be what he will. Every man who is not distinguished by absolute incapacity. That Richardson painted after nature when he made his hero owe all but his form and understanding to himself:That

1 This whole passage shows us what a high ideal of excellence Brown held. There are many pieces of evidence to show that he was "moderately a proficient" in not only English but Latin and French.

every man may become a Grandison,whose desire of imitation is seconded by zeal and perserverance. It is natural for me to wish to be what I am not but which nature has enabled me to be.

The time is past,when possessing an undistracted attention,all my ardent soul ran on glory,but now my feeble resolutions require to be fostered by the gentle gales of approbation.

a/ I have always lived,very solitary and secluded life but sometimes had occasion to flatter myself that I was more known than I deserved or than I expected to be. Whether I was right in this persuasion I cannot tell. In short my friend I call upon your friendship, to furnish me with a portrait colored with the freshest tints of nature,and in which "nothing is extenuated nor aught set down to malice."1

I was idle. Every image but one gradually deserted my mind,and I made several languid efforts to discover whether that Image was a male or female. Whether it was reflected in the mirror of love or of friendship. On a more accurate survey I found it was the image of my Bringhurst.

I longed to converse with you:many pleasing recollections, stretching their aerial pinions fluttered round your brows,and I clearly perceived as I watched the strokes of fancy's volant pencil,2 the particulars of our last conversation drawn from their oblivious dwelling,and opening their distinctly charactered fronts above the surface of the intellectual Lethe.

You say no one ought to be distinguished by verbal peculiarities. I agree with you;but it is a fault so common or rather universal;as nearly impossible to be corrected,the absence of which implies a degree of skill in language attainable only by as great a degree of application and attention,that it ought scarcely to be censured or at least to be censured,with as much severity. Who is exempt from it? Shall I say even yourself? Do not provoke me to mention proofs. I am in a very critical disposition. Do not defy me to support my accusation. I assure you I feel myself sufficiently inclined to it. A very little will turn the balance against you. Well--you do defy,hey! I will not answer for your rashness,since you are resolved to hear my proofs. When and from whom have I heard "This is a sweet little thing"?

I have often,while you sat at the Forte Piano and I by the fireside,imagined you surrounded by several bystanders from each of whom your observation produced a different answer.

I think I see them this moment. You raise up your head,look around you with an air of satisfaction and intelligence and say--

1 The quotation is evidently from memory. It reads "nothing extenuate,|Nor set down aught in malice." Othello, Act v.sc.1.

2 This is an echo of the quotation from Paradise Lost,II, 11.927,which we found him quoting in his letter of 5 May 1792.

It's a sweet little thing;is n't it?
One of them emphatically with a strong twist of his features and licking his lips,as I have seen an unlucky urchin while busy in pillaging a molasses hogshead
Ay (says he) as sweet as sugar!"
Another whom his lofty frown and piercing glances distinguish for a dealer in hyperbole
Yes (replies he) sweeter than a dozen beehives
" A whole dozen? (says a third,turning round and looking gravely in the face of the aforesaid Dealer.)
Truly (cries one,who is equally prone to diminish, as the hyperbolist to exaggerate) it is a pretty lee-tle sweet-y thingumbob."
"Why aye" (slowly exclaims a fifth,who is most pleased "to elevate and surprise" and who,but for his noted silliness might have been believed to have intended an ingenious ridicule on your musical taste) as sweet as green grapes. A parsimmon hardly exceeds it.
It must be owned to be a sweetling" (says a sixth, who intended to express his approbation,before you set him the example,who had words enough to express it with propriety,in different terms from you,but to whose tongue ready to obey the ready impulse,your words dictated a kindred phrase.
Perfectly mellifluous (cried a scholar) every strain was replete with hyblian dulcitude."
The composition is good (cried a musical critic) I never heard a sweeter adagio.
It is,I must confess (cried a punster) a little sweet
One in the corner then gave his opinion in Rhime,songwise by way of comment on your phrase.1
Of sweet little things,a sweet musical string
Is the sweetest,and this is a "sweet little thing."
Not best muscovado,nor honey in spring
Was ever so sweet as this "sweet little thing"
I would place,if all sweet things were ranged in a ring
In the midst of all sweet things,this "sweet little thing"
Ne'er on May's dewy lap,did sweet Zephyrus fling
A sweetness more sweet than this "sweet little thing"
Nor did May,queen of sweets,ever shake from her wing
A sweet half so sweet,as this "sweet little thing"
Were I bard to a beehive,I sweetly would sing
In that treasure of sweetness,"this sweet little thing"
No frolicsome cherub from Eden would bring
A sweet thing so sweet as this "sweet little thing"
No sweet soldier of Hybla,e'er sweetened his sting
With a sweet that outsweetens this "sweet little thing"
No sweetner of Sweets,e'er prepared for his king
In his sweetest of sweets,such a "sweet little thing"—
Alas! I am afraid you will laugh at me rather than with me on this occasion. I write because I can do nothing else;little therefore can be expected from me.

C.B.B.

1 This was probably Brown,from the couplet verse, from his being in a corner,and from his speaking latest.

That imaginary scene,with Bringhurst at the piano and a group of friends about him, each expressing his individuality by his shade of meaning of the "sweet little thing", is an excellent example of Brown's sense of humor, which so many have found lacking in his works of prose fiction. There should be no objection to the statement that there is no humor in some of Brown's novels. We shall see that that is not exactly true,but it is near enough. The fortunate preservation of the "sweet little thing" will contradict any one who carelessly says Brown had no humor,implying to the reader that he personally had no sense of that saving grace.

The following letter the opening of which is the earliest existing example of Brown's shorthand[1] may be fragmentary,perhaps having even been preceded by several pages now lost,but the opening seems to indicate it is the actual beginning.

1 Our study of Brown's system will some day be included in a volume of Browniana.

This earliest example is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst,Junr.Front Street.)

(Philadelphia,Sunday,)Decr.9,1792 1

You seem,my friend,to think very highly of the importance of correctness in common speech. Have you had always these|2 opinions? But your ideas of excellence are extremely nice,if you think that you are guilty of shameful|inaccuracies. I sincerely affirm,that I never met a more correct speaker than yourself,but one,and he can only be|excepted because,in my opinion,it was impossible to go beyond him in this respect. I am indeed a very imperfect observer,and|to this cause you may,if you will,impute it, that I have not yet discovered those faults,which it seems are so visible to your own|discernment.

I used to meditate on this subject with great pleasure. Whenever I was seized with a wish to be an adept in| ---3 languages,my good genius would whisper me,Forbear these idle wishes;the question of excellence|in thy native tongue is a purpose sufficiently extensive;--to this single end thou wilt find all that|capacity and diligence indicate; but our progress in any pursuit will always be proportioned to the time and diligence we spend upon it.

While others place their glory in being esteemed linguists, let it be thy ambition to attain the more common,observable,and useful| excellence of skill in English. And how shall that skill appear? In talking

1 The date is taken from the end of the letter.
2 The line indication is given to assist those particularly interested in stenography.
3 The missing word is probably several or possibly bookish. For the latter compare the expression as used in the June 1793 letter.

and writing on all | occasions and on every subject, so far as thy performance depends on the knowledge of words,with facility | and elegance. Many methods ----- contrive for the acquisition of this excellence,and for the display of it after its | acquisition,but as none of them was ever exacted it is needless to mention them.

[1]Will this be sufficient by way of exercise? So much written and interpreted every day will doubtless be sufficient. Whenever the sentiments which I am going to communicate,are not peculiarly interesting,or do not require impentrable secrecy,[2] I have no objection to the use of short hand. But when the Subject greatly interests my attention,I find it easier to treat of it in common characters than in those of Shorthand. As soon as I can write and read it with perfect facility, it will on all occasions be preferable to the ordinary method,and shall I not perform all my duty as a pupil of this art,if so large a portion [3] of my letters be, meanwhile,written as above? I think I shall,and shall therefore proceed to the end of this epistle,in the beaten road;but I do not exact the same treatment from you. On the contrary I shall hope to receive from you the usual quantity of short hand.

Come back thou fleeting phantom. Thou departedest ere I was willing to dismiss thee;but escape the punishment that hangs over thy contumacy,by checking thy unseasonable haste,and instantly returning to my presence,in obedience to my will. Do I not hold thee, and thy fellow "spirits of the vasty deep"[4] in absolute subjection to my power? Are ye not the vassals of my imagination,and bound,by every solemn and inviolable obligation to watch the nod of your creatress and implicitly submit to her commands?

For what purpose art thou resummoned from the "void profound" dost thou ask? To sustain thy part in the following dialogue.

Are you not afraid of the imputation of Singularity and pedantry,supposing the skill of which you speak to be attainable?

Why should I be afraid? Excellence of any kind is singular,and I cannot discover any disadvantage in being noted as singularly excellent,on any account. Singularity is generally unamiable,but does this kind of superiority truly deserve that name,and can it be ever dishonorable,can it ever be otherwise than graceful and becoming to excel in shining and useful qualities?

But pedantry,my friend,--always to speak with rigid accuracy,to do scrupulous justice to the "And's but's yet's though's and whereas's" to treat with invariable

1 Here the letter continues in long hand.

2 Brown's carelessness often lead him into statements as curios as this. Shorthand such as Brown's would seem to be the most appropriate for "impenetrable secrecy".

3 If we have all of the letter,the proportion here is so small it is almost negligible.

4 Henry IV,Pt.I,Act iii,sc.1.

respect,the Who's and Which's of discourse.--will it not sometimes be censured as a proof of pedantry and ostentation? I have seen a parallel drawn between the various parts of conversation and the various species of composition which I thought extremely just. The epigram, the Satire,the tragedy,the comedy and so forth,were all attempted to be traced,in their essential principles in ordinary discourse,but there was an insuperable barrier raised,a line of difference drawn between them, which neither, consistently with propriety,(can) be passed.

I will now prosecute my purpose no farther. It would inevitably carry me into much greater prolixity,than would be tolerable to one under your engagements. I will resume it at another time,when you have more leisure to listen to me.

As to the request,which you seem,with great reason, desirious of being excused from answering,I was not, at the time it was made, fully convinced of its propriety; and now more than ever doubt of it. To be either careless or solicituous about the opinions of others,is perhaps blameable. To feel either great indifference or great solicitude is faulty,but is it not a vice of constitution?

We ought doubtless to be anxious to intitle ourselves to the good opinion of the worthy and discerning. If indifference with regard to the sentiments of others, can be reconciled with an anxious desire to obtain the approbation of our own hearts,is not such indifference virtuous? And yet a wish to know the opinions of others, is certainly a natural and reasonable wish. There is neither folly or imprudence in entertaining it. Folly and imprudence can be shown only in the choice of means for its gratification;and are there <u>any</u> means,the employment of which will not be an argument of folly? for can any means be possibly discovered which will be successful? But if the sentiments of others could certainly be known,it would be a proof (of) great weakness, to suffer them,if disadvantageous to depress,if favorable,to exalt us, whether the suffrage of our own hearts agree or disagree with them,for a man must be wicked, in proportion as he loses the approbation of his own conscience,and foolish in proportion as he is contented to supply that loss by the approbation of others. From the same principle flows the impropriety of allowing the contempt of others to depress us,since every man must be a sufficient Judge of the rectitude of his own motives;virtue and vice exist only in the region of motives. Here only is the genuine source of self-applause or condemnation. If therefore we have reason to despise ourselves,this contempt ought neither to be increased by the scorn of others,nor diminished by their commendation. To a pure and ingenuous mind applause can be acceptable only as it is deserved. To deserve it depends upon himself;to obtain it upon others,and I

think the character of any man, for moral rectitude, will depend upon his solicitude about the former, and his indifference with respect to the latter.

But these remarks, it is evident, have relation only to our moral character.

I expect no panegerick on my morals, from you, because I am conscious of not deserving any, and because, however worthy they might be of being celebrated, you have had no opportunity of Judging of them. The only merit I can boast on this head is that, whatever my propensities may be, my principles, in general, are uninfected. That I do not boast of my depravity. That I at least endeavor to observe the laws of decency. That I do not miscall my depravity virtue. That I do not regard that virtue as chimerical, which I have not attained.

I have never for a moment been free from the dominion of passions. Turbulent and headstrong passions. These passions may, indeed, have sometimes tended, to good, as they have, much more frequently, to evil, but whatever was their tendency, they were equally irresistible. I never was virtuous merely for virtue's sake. The impulse to good and to evil was equally blind and instructive, equally an alien to reason and religion, equally arguments of moral infirmity. In acting rightly, I have indeed gained the approbation of my own conscience, but this was not the motive of my actions. It was a passive consequence and not an active cause. It was indeed rather to be styled acquiescence than applause.

If the use of unjustifiable means, for an end not illaudable, be depravity, I have but a slight pretension to virtue, for surely he, who would certainly have yielded to temptations, had they been offered, is no less criminal than he, who actually yielded to them, but if evil actions do indeed blacken and deprave the heart more than evil intentions unexecuted, or a susceptibility of evil intentions, yet, I can derive little consolation from the superior whiteness of mine, since this superiority is merely accidental: it is the offspring of capricious hoodwinked Chance.

My attachment to literature and my attchment to women are nothing but passions. The end suggested by them is, in one case, the attainment of knowledge, in the other, the possession of the person and affections of the beloved object. In the pursuit of these ends, I could derive no applause from the laudableness of the end itself, since it was pursued in consequence of a blind instinctive and original propensity, to which reason and conscience were principles, wholly subservient, wholly impotent and nugatory. Now I know from experience that the passions which impelled me to these ends, would not have scrupled the use of any means, not naturally inconsistent with the nature of the passion, for the accomplishment of them.

It is incompatible with the nature of true love, to compass its designs by hypocricy or perfidy. In the

prosecution of my purpose therefore as a lover, I can be justly charged with nothing but imprudence. There never was a more voluptious fancy than mine. Books and conversation, were the causes of it, that is to say the extrinsic causes. Love is not merely intellectual; nor yet merely sensual, but it is both. It is the union of appetite and passion. Any other supposition is big with absurdities and contradictions. To be swayed by the appetite merely is criminal, but to be swayed by the passion merely, which is friendship, or both together, which is love, is unquestionably innocent. If they be criminal it is criminal to be a man.

Now let me consider what on those principles, has been my guilt. I have been guilty, but this I can affirm that the guiltiness of the end was all my guilt. In two instances do I esteem myself guilty in this respect, but in neither was the culpability of the end aggravated by the guiltiness of the means. For in the first instance, the imagination of the object was as luxurious as my own. But I am guiltless in this respect. I gratified her flame it is true, and therefore the guilt was mutual, but I never was, in the least, instrumental in kindling this flame. I was rather the seduced than the seducer.

In the second instance I incurred all the guilt which must adhere to the end, but none of that arising from the means. The guilt also was wholly mine, not, in the least possible degree, mutual. This you will perhaps think was very unaccountable, but its unaccountableness will vanish as soon as circumstances are explained.

What an eventful romantic life has been mine. You may, perhaps, with the strongest reason, impute the declaration to inexperience and an unacquaintance with the world, but I have always thought that the lives of few persons can be paralleled to mine.

It is my resolution to disclose to you every part of it which is likely to gratify your curiosity--but what has made me thus ramble into the past? I remember now. It was the distinction between the moral and intellectual character.

It is time to dismiss my morality. I only can afford you the means of Judging of it. But it is my opinion, that no man need any information on this Subject, being the only judge of his own moral character.

Cannot the same be affirmed of his intellectual? I think he, who possesses candor and common penetration, can know himself with greater certainty. But how is the existence of this candor and penetration to be known? Very difficult to ascertain it, for if a man knows himself better than others know him, his opinions respecting himself must be different from those of others, but what other proof is there than this very difference of a man's being unacquainted with himself? A man's ascription to himself of more than others ascribe to him will hardly be admitted as a proof of this superiority of self-knowledge. We should indeed be more inclined to admit it, if the effects of it were unfavor-

able (to) himself,and yet if it exist at all,and it's existence is demonstable,it must sometimes pronounce a more favorable sentence,as well as a less (favorable one) than others.

But however this be,it is more difficult if it be not in itself absolutely impossible to discover the opinions of others concerning us,without enquiry,yet our conclusions on this head are not equally or always necessarily erroneous.

Excellence is in general comparative. Our errors arise not from erroneous opinions of ourselves,but from erroneous opinions of others. Various causes may conceal from us the characters of others. It is common for men to form their opinions of themselves merely from comparison. I am greater than ten thousand but I may not know that ten thousand are greater than me. We are great not only because we are intrinsically so,but because we have no competitor. In judging not from comparison,it is scarcely possible,nay absolutely impossible,to judge erroneously,but in judging from comparison there is,from obvious reasons,almost the same impossibility of judging aright.

A musician is applauded. He condemns himself,but his auditors never heard a more skilful performer. He has heard a thousand:They both judge from comparison and both are right. They are equally sincere,one in his applause,the other in his censure.Now the applause of one and the censure of the other are resolvable merely into this: that the player has heard better performers,which his admirers never heard,but if their judgments be <u>not</u> founded on comparison,they cannot disagree. They both see with what degree of swiftness and dexterity he moves his fingers over the keys,and the testimony of their senses must be the same.

As we generally esteem ourselves by comparison,so we impute to others the same principle of judging. Hence our errors,by which we sometimes draw upon ourselves the imputation of vanity, and at other times acquire the reputation of modesty,are errors in knowledge and not in judgment. They arise from ignorance,not of ourselves,but of others.

Suppose I should affirm that I am a correct and elegant talker. What is my standard of excellence? Suppose the best models of composition. Then I must recant my opinion. In listening to myself I discover nothing of the Style of Addison and Hawkesworth. Now others will differ from me in proportion to their difference in point of knowledge,and taste. One whose taste and knowledge are the same as mine must form the same opinion as I do myself. What is valuable to me or desirable may not be so to others. I may value and admire brilliancy of wit,another solidity of understanding. If I am able to display wit,I shall expect to be applauded by those by whom, I know wit to be admired,but I shall not expect the same applause from others by whom

I know it is despised. In proportion therefore to the exactness of my knowledge of the characters of others must be the accuracy of my conclusions with regard to their opinions of me.

It is common for men to suppose that others love and hate, applaud and condemn, in the same manner with themselves, and that not only their taste but their knowledge is the same. This error induces us to impute to others sometimes an higher and sometimes a lower opinion of ourselves than they really possess. But as men as much differ in these respects, (taste and knowledge,) where is the Sagacity that can accurately perceive in what light we are regarded by another. At least no uniformity of opinion can be expected. Scarcely any two men, agree in their estimation of a particular character. But though we cannot deduce their opinions from ratiocination yet we may hear it from their mouths. If I have a friend on whose sincerity, I can implicitly rely, may I not expect to hear from his own mouth his own opinion of me, and the opinions of others from whose mouths, he might, as a third person be supposed to receive them?

But what advantage can this afford? His actions show whether he hates or loves, admires or despises me. I can surely perceive when I please or displease others, and by what means. What then can prompt my curiosity but a foolish fondness for applause? Why should I lay my friend under the necessity of dissembling and prevaricating? His words will not tell me more of his opinions, than his actions.

I therefore my friend leave it to your own discretion (I know how that will decide) to answer my questions or not or rather I forbid you to answer them.

I said that I wanted encouragement. Vain and foolish saying! I am sorry thou ever escapedest from my lips for what is it but a formal demand of flattery? I am well enough acquainted with my own powers. I know that unless there be a very great and unexpected revolution in my heart, I never shall exert them. Until my Zeal, my ambition, are excited, all exterior motives will be ineffectual. This of all motives, is the most impotent and trifling.

I will end my letter by a picture of myself. I will deal seriously with you. I will set you an example of sincerity and tell you in what light, were I a spectator, I <u>think</u> I should appear to myself.

But here I must pause. I am afraid I have, in this letter, miserably banged and buffeted propriety--of Style and penmanship. <u>She</u> (propriety as well as beauty has a prescriptive right to the feminine gender) seems this moment ruefully to stand before me, complaining of the effects of my impatience in a bloody nose, black eye and aching forehead--but such as it is receive it in haste from

C.B.B.

Of all these letters to Bringhurst that one is probably the frankest Brown wrote. It has a great deal of the character of a confession and while it is not at all complete it is remarkable for its approach to completeness. In it we find that Allen was not far wrong when he gave his explanation of Brown's virtuous character,only instead of tracing it to his physical weakness it is by Brown explained by the mere doctrine of chance. Had he been oftener tempted Brown is conscious that he might have fallen oftener than he did. But considerably related to this is the fact that Brown in his youth had a strength of purpose unusually developed. Some would call it obstinacy and it may have been a great deal that. However it shows us our author determined in relation to the vital things in his life. He was determined to pursue the career of a seeker after knowledge and he was determined to love who and where he saw fit. Of course he was often discouraged and it was probably Bringhurst alone who helped him to tide over the dreary days. Had Bringhurst been unsympathetic it seems as if he would have at least renounced his calling,even if he did not go so far as to commit suicide.

Perhaps one of the details of Brown's confession that stands out most prominently is his statement that literature and women were both passions with him. That fact so far as it applies to the former has been always recognised by Brown's biographers but in relation to the latter it is not only new but most interesting. That he had a great love for women is not to be condemned. As it is with all men in Brown's case it is a trait for him to be proud of. A man who has no ardent love for women is a man to be shunned.

The next letter, enclosed in a blue envelope wrapper improvised by Brown, has one phase that demands especial notice. The Shakespearean quotation in the second paragraph is not at all necessary for the completion of the sense so that we suspect that when he was writing the letter he may have been reading the second part of Henry IV. With its clanging bell of doom to rebellion it was peculiarly of interest to Brown at this rebellious time of his life though it undoubtedly was far too free in its grosser scenes such as those in the Boar's Head tavern, the recruiting and other scenes laid near Justice Shallow's and the street scene in London. The whole picture of the writer from the

"firmly textured paper" to the "uncurtained mind" is redolent of Shakespearean study. It is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst, Junr. Wilmington, Delaware.)

(Philadelphia, Tuesday 11 December 1792.) 1

Dear friend

You impose the task of writing upon me in very urgent terms. You are indeed right in esteeming the maintainance of an epistolary intercourse between absent friends, as one of their most indispensable duties, ++but let me stop a moment. Am I not unwarily running into declamation on a topic the most trite, threadbare and commonplace? The propriety or nature of letter writing?

You must do me the justice to believe that I did not introduce this topic on this occasion, without deducing from it some personal and interesting conclusions, which however a little reflection convinces me would be improper and unseasonable,--you must therefore excuse me for ushering in this old fashioned tedious and insipid visitant, on account of the motive of his introduction, and the use to which his presence was intended to be applied, but this motive though sufficient for this purpose, I find on a nearer inspection to be in itself suspicious; and therefore I shall forbear to mention it--

What think you of this preamble? I more than half

1 The date is from the post mark of the envelope and from the end of the letter. The blue paper of which the envelope was made has a watermark of a shield with a powder horn, the screen is one inch.

suspect that you will not understand it,and will at length,be convinced that the writer has indeed lost his powers of entertainment,and ought to forswear henceforth the use of the quill;when,in an unoccupied unbusy hour with firmly textured paper,unsullied and unblotted, ink commodiously disposed,transparently pure,and brilliantly sable,with no impertinent intruder,to bewilder and perplex with pen neatly unfeathered,symmetrically slender and delicately nibbed "with all appliances and means to boot,"[1] he is unable to uncurtain his mind, to draw his ideas out of their primitive obscurity, reduce them to intelligible order,or cloathe them in suitable array. What can I say to you? I find pleasure in writing to you. There is a pleasure in opening my mouth in your company though I have nothing to say, and moving my pen from left to right,when I knew that the figures which it portrays however unpregnant with meaning,and the characters which it sketches,however barren of Significance will be honored with a few of your glances,and recall to your remembrance the idea of the writer.

But will what I have written serve my turn and answer this desirable purpose? I am afraid if I could overhear your thoughts,I should find you far from being perfectly contented. I must therefore deny my pen the rest, for which it seems to supplicate,and force it onward till its career be stopped by the green baise which covers the scene of its exploits;I mean the table on which I write.

What shall I say to thee my friend? Is there any thing within my knowledge,of an interesting,and momentuous nature,which is unknown to thee,and of which the communication would afford thee pleasure?

If I could depend upon my promises of diligence,upon the favor of time,and the smiles of cheerfulness, I would promise thee,a most exact and picturesque narrative of all the proceedings of the Society of which thou and I have the honor of being members. A topic this would be whose fertility only could be apprehended to be troublesome,and on which it would be delectably easy to display copiousness without prolixity,to be witty on the credit of others,and learned at another's cost.

Would not this,thinkest thou be a very laudable and practicable undertaking? fertile of amusement,rich in instruction,and pregnant of variety? How could I expatiate on the political or moral theme,and repeat to thee,with captivating truth and scrupulous fidelity, the sprightly raillery of Wilkins and his wiley Rhetoric,the copious effusions of the thunderous and torrent-like or the strategem and subterfugefull Farris,[2] the exquisite sagacity of Cope [3] or the enlightened judgment of Paxon? [4] With what orient pearls and sparkling

1 King Henry IV,Part II,act iii,sc.1.
2 None of the references to him give his full name. It is also not clear whether the name may not be spelled Ferris.
3 Thomas Cope. 4 Timothy Paxon.

Add to note on Cope

Thomas P. Cope's ~~had~~ married with Mary Drinker was announced in the Columbian Magazine for June, p. 383.

diamonds would their generosity enrich my letters,and with what pleasure might I not anticipate my friend listening to the wild music of mellifluous elocution or pondering on the rugged and unpolished beauties of the foresaid pearls and diamonds. But I must first have thy opinion on this scheme,accompanied with the assurances of thy welfare and of the safe accomplishment of thy Sunday expedition.[1] I must first be informed that my letter finds thee in the bowers of Contentment, though not in the Elyzium of Happiness. I would outjourney a pilgrim to Mecca or Jerusalem,if my better genius would direct me to a fane,the seat of some oraculous power,from the lips of whose mysterious and inspired priestess I should be informed that ere another solar revolution[2] is accomplished,my friend should be nuptialized[3] and domesticated,that his personal protectress should become an household deity,and instead of fluttering her pinions in perpetual motion and incessant instability should thenceforth haunt the chambers of his peaceful mansion,or alight upon his hospitable hearth and joyfully close her wearied wings.

Let my impatience be gratified as soon as possible, and think of me as still thy

faithful and affectionate

C.B.Brown.

December. Tuesday morning.

I expect to see S.R.B.[4] before this letter reaches thee,if not,my love to him and as much of this letter as thy wisdom or thy friendship pleases to disclose to him.

The next letter though undated closely followed the previous one. It is not signed though there was plenty of room to sign it and it is not addressed.

(To Joseph Bringhurst)

(Philadelphia,) Thursday morn. 10 o'clock.(13 December 1792)

I must solicit your forgiveness for thus delaying my answer to your last letter;it was occasioned by accidents that could not be prevented or avoided. How infinitely and inexpressibly agreable is this correspondence amd what pleasure shall we not hereafter derive from reviewing it! I hope nothing but necessity will ever put an end to it.

1 Bringhurst had gone to Wilmington for the week end. It was sometime during this year that he opened a store in Wilmington.

2 Compare this expression to the one in which he says he had been wedded.

3 Bringhurst was not married until 1799.

4 ~~This is possibly intended for S.B.B.~~=S.R.Baders,referred to in 11 June 1793 letter infra,q.v.

What a child of sensibility is my friend! and in what forcible and lively terms do you describe your emotions! I, in this respect, am very different from you, and my soul resembles a toad enclosed, alive and active, in the centre of a rock. My body is never very powerfully affected by the emotions of my mind, but your soul is more extensive in its influence, and appears to pervade, with equal energy, every part of your frame. If fictitious representation of distress can produce so strong an effect upon you, how would you be torn and rended by the violence of genuine passion, or by scenes of real Calamity. What would be the influence of blasted hopes or disappointed love, on one of so susceptible a mind, so universally and "tremblingly alive"! and what power might not (be) ascribed to a pathetic or descriptive pencil wielded by such a hand!

Every person pants after excellence, but how few are there who are acquainted with the force and extent of their own faculties. What we are able to perform we can discover only by experiment. To judge of a person by his former exploits, is palpably absurd and unreasonable, nor is it possible to know whether we be able to accomplish any enterprise otherwise than by resolutely and actually engaging in it, and by marking the event of our exertions. Never let the ardor of Juvenile ambition be damped by cold presepts of diffidence and moderation, but let us believe every thing within our reach until experience shall have rectified our error and shown us what is, and what is not attainable. No spectacle is to me more deplorable than a rigorous understanding neglected and uncultivated and I feel the pity of a superior being, on comparing the present state of a man thus eminently and unavailingly endowed, with that in which his perserverance and ambition might have placed him. I lament the tyrrany of prejudice or the capriciousness of fortune.

Need I intreat you my friend to believe me superior to the sordid and despicable meanness of flattery! Of what adulation am I guilty in assuring you that whether you shall become a luminary, in which the rays of Milton and of Bacon shall be blended, appears to me to depend wholly on yourself? Such men as these did once most certainly exist. Is there any physical impossibility that they should again exist? How is it to be known but by experiment, whether Heaven has appointed us their rivals and competitors? How can it be esteemed a proof of vanity, to suppose it possible for ourselves to equal them? or at least to believe that our attainment of their elevation is sufficiently doubtful to justify the attempt? Milton and Bacon were, like ourselves, inhabitants of earth, had all the attributes of humanity: They possessed no natural essential incommunicable superiority to others of the same species, and in fine, whether we were born to equal or excell them is a question with respect to which, no regard is to be paid but to the verdict of experience, and you will therefore permit me to indulge the hope of one day viewing, in my friend, a second Locke or Newton, Milton or Bacon.

To the attainment of uncommon excellence, the resolution or desire to attain it, is evidently and indispensably necessary. What lustre think you would have environed those celebrated names, had they, in the beginning of their career, relinquished their pursuit, and sunk, like you, in "horrible apathy"? 1 but how does my friend delight me with the information that he has shaken off his lethargy; that his hopes and his industry have revived, that his Entusiasm (Noble and generous Entusiasm! nurse of genius! Mother of excellence! Parent! Patroness! Conductress of the sage, the hero and the bard!) has returned? That the consciousness of innate worth has triumphed over bodily infirmities, and that you are determined to acquire the love and admiration of Wilkins, of Brown and of Mankind. Have I been in any manner instrumental in recalling to their ancient seat those elevated thoughts? In rousing from her couch your slumbering ambition? If I have I shall have reason to congratulate you on your knowledge of me, and shall yield with less reluctance to the impulses of vanity.

You talk, my friend, just as I have always wished you to have talked. How acceptable would the same assurances be from our common friend. When I consider what Wilkins might, at this time, have become by early and judicious application to the pen and book, by profiting by early opportunities of deep reflection and incessant composition, by enjoying even in childhood, the dignity and independence of manhood, and the company of those superior to himself in age experience and capacity, I am struck with reverence and admiration at his <u>possible</u> excellence. What effects would have been produced on his mind by the influence of female excellence. He declares that he was once enthralled by love. To be susceptible of love is a proof of mental superiority, but what additional superiority must he acquire, the object of whose passion is distinguished by extraordinary virtue and exalted talents? It is impossible to explain, in suitable terms, the effects of virtuous love upon a youthful mind. They may sometimes be <u>conceived</u>, but, O! my Bringhurst, adequately to <u>describe</u> them is impossible.

You will easily perceive, in these remarks, an allusion to myself. Why should I not be candid with you? Of what use is dissimulation in the intercourse of real friendship? I will act, on this occasion, with scrupulous sincerity. In force of penetration, in vigor of fancy, I do not aspire to an equality with W.W.W. I am conscious of an original and inherent inferiority to Wilkins, but I must alas confess that this inferiority would, in <u>my</u> opinion, have been <u>more</u> manifest and obvious had <u>my</u> situation been, in all respects, the same with his, or had <u>his</u> situation been the same with mine. On reviewing my past life, I observe, with abundance of self com-

1 This time was a critical one in the life of Bringhurst, for he left Philadelphia and returned to Wilmington.

placency,that the talents whether great or little,with which nature has endowed me,have been cultivated and improved in their utmost extent,that I have no reason to condemn myself for negligence or inactivity. Could the same assertions,be,with equal propriety,put into the mouth of Wilkins. Had he had all my obstacles to surmount,and encountered them with the same intrepidity and success,with what a blaze of intellectual glory would his temples be environed. What musical oratory would flow from his gestures and his lips! What is meakness,diffusion and effiminacy in me, would, when united to his strength of understanding and vigor of Imagination,be superlative beauty and resistless energy. Had I possessed his mind, I should,indeed,have been greater,but without his intellects what am I? I do not think myself an object of contempt but am equally far from claiming any admiration. I can justly boast of being always enamoured of the truly beautiful,that the want of associates never impeded my pursuits,that my perserverance was superior to every obstacle,and that amidst the pity of ignorance and the scorn of Rusticity, I experienced no diminution of my ardor or relaxation of my diligence,and accomplished my end in spite of opposition and discouragement. Thus far,and thus far only have I found heaven beneficient. Nature has,as far as it was possible,furnished me with the power of supplying the want of that which she has denied me.

The next letter continues a former subject--moral and intellectual excellence.

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst,Junr.Front street.)

(Philadelphia,)Friday Decr.21,1792.1

What abundance of absurdity and impertinence is there in this wearisome and worthless world. He whose passions have decorated some real object with imaginary charms, and exalted moderate excellence into absolute perfection,is happy as long as his delusion lasts,but surely miserable when it is at an end,and more deplorable in his condition than if he had never been deluded.

How intolerable is the insipidity of common characters to him who has been accustomed to uncommon? Such for the most part is at present my irksome situation.

I pretend not to any kind of excellence. I consider as peculiar in a great degree peculiar to myself,nothing more than higher conceptions of excellence,than a capacity to derive greater pleasure from the observation of intellectual accomplishments than others seem to possess,and a greater susceptibility of disgust and

1 Bringhurst's docket that this is Brown's gives the date as Dec.1st.1792. This is probably a careless slip,but it shows that he is not to be too strongly relied on for the dating of letters. This letter was enclosed in a much worn improvised envelope made by another sheet of the paper.

disrelish from odious or despicable qualities.

How little are those who surround me, capable of exciting in my breast that most pleasing of all emotions, admiration? Who can lay a just claim to any portion of that excellence which constitutes the perfect character: who with whom I am acquainted?

You know my friend, that the present company, and our Correspondent are always tacitly exempted on occasions like this. This, in general, politeness requires, but more than politenêss, justice requires an exception to be made, on this particular occasion.

Who is there who displays in his conversation genuine wit and classic elegance. Whose manners and address are unexceptionable. Who is not to be influenced by example or by ridicule. Whom it is as impossible to divert from that path of rectitude, as to thrust a planet from its orbit, who displays every valuable and amiable quality and combines the morals of a saint and the manners of a gentleman?

Alas! where is such an one to be found?

What is the duty of man? To know what ought to be. To form a clear idea of moral and intellectual excellence, and then to employ all his faculties to realize that idea in his own character.

We may prate as we will of the powers of diligence; but though we cannot absolutely deny that any thing is beyond the force of perserverance to accomplish, yet it is certain, that the same end will be effected by different degrees of diligence, in different persons. That there is an original and indisputable inequality, from whatever cause, in human minds; that though certain intellectual eminences be acceptable to all, yet to some the means of attaining them are so tedious and laborious that the attainment may be safely pronounced to be morally impossible.

That genius is indispensable to the success of some pursuits; that genius is the gift of nature: that it is a gift entirely witholden from some; that all deficiencies may be supplied by diligence; that perserverance is all-powerful, are positions, neither of which it is easy to confute, but which are yet perhaps, irreconcilable with each other.

Every man, however, may derive consolation from reflecting, that diligence only can bring into light his national 1 endowments! That every man may raise himself, at least above his present level. That though some and, possibly, his chief defects, at present arise from the unkindness of nature, yet the greater number are produced by indolence; that diligence and application, however useless to a particular end, will always amply reward themselves, and if they do not make us what we wish to be, will at least make us better than we are.

Are not these observations true of the moral as well

1 Probably intended for natural.

as intellectual character. Is not sublime and heroic virtue naturally beyond the reach of some? Is there not a virtuous propensity, a generous ardor, a benevolent enthusiasm, which is bestowed by nature, and which is not indiscriminately bestowed, and by which only we shall be enabled to reach the summits of piety and virtue? How this question is determined is of no great importance, because I am willing to believe that Bringhurst and Brown want not this glorious instinct, this heroic enthusiasm, and that the heights of virtue are, at least to them, inaccesible.

But by what means? What an important and interesting inquiry is this.

Friendship is the chief source of happiness, because it is the most powerful instrument of virtue. Why are our notions of moral excellence influenced by the actual depravity of mankind? Shall we form no other idea of friendship, than that for which it is possible to produce some known example? If we have found no man perfectly sincere in his intercourse with others, shall we exclude, absolute sincerity from our definition of friendship? Let it be the chief article in our creed, that no instance of disinterestedness or magnanimity is romantic or impossible.

True friendship subsists upon this single principle: The promotion of another's true interest, by all honorable means, but virtue is his genuine interest. As a friend therefore, it is our province to promote his happiness by cherishing his virtue.

Friends therefore ought to treat each other with absolute sincerity. Reprehension and advice ought to be mutually exacted and given;[1] for they can never cause displeasure, when we are convinced of the integrity and disinterestedness of the giver; when we are convinced of the purity and generosity of his motives.

Cannot a friendship like this subsist between us? Wilt thou, my Bringhurst, be my enlightened and impartial monitor. I cannot select my guide, philosopher and friend from fools. His knowledge and sagacity must claim my reverence. His mental principles must be just, his heart unblemished, his love of virtue ardent and unquestionable, though his resolutions may sometimes yield to habit and temptation. With pleasure therefore do I regard you as my friend. But it is necessary that affection and esteem be mutual. And do you discover in me the same qualities, which I imagine myself to perceive in you? This question I must not presume to answer? Shall I doubt that I possess them? I defend not my conduct. That I cannot resist habit and temptation, that one of my passions can be subdued only by another, is unhappily, not to be denied, but my heart is pure, my principles are uninfected; I will--yes, I will believe myself not unworthy of your friendship.

How feeble is humanity! It is not sufficient to know what is virtue, but our frailty requires many artificial incitements and encouragements to the pursuit (of) it, precepts are of use to rectify our principles, example to regulate our conduct. The lives of virtuous men more

1 This is the Quaker doctrine which had been practised on Brown when he abandoned the law.

often injure than benefit the reader. So few characters are merely virtuous;vice,when connected with virtue, loses as much of its deformity,we are so much inclined to shorten the road to excellence,and to believe those qualities inseperable which we do not find separate, that the life of an eminent man,is seldom an instructive lesson. There is but one exception to this rule, at least so far as my knowledge extends. Shall I not say that the life only of one perfectly virtuous man has been recorded for the instruction of mankind. I can only mean that of the divine Son of Mary.

That he actually lived there is no doubt. That all his sentiments and actions,which can be comprehended, are patterns of the highest degree of moral excellence, is indisputable. What then is incumbent on us,as lovers of virtue,but to imitate this pattern,and are we not perfect,in proportion as we resemble him?

But the circumstances of his situation were peculiar to himself. Virtuous examples are useful to us in proportion as virtue is exhibited in circumstances similar to our own:where the application is most obvious and direct,and least requires the exertion of sagacity, and the light of reasoning,the lesson is most profitable because it is most certain,and affords least room for the fallacies of ignorance and the Sophistry of passion to intrude.

That rule for the regulation of our conduct,in all circumstances,may be deduced from the Conduct of Jesus, is perhaps true,but all are not equal to the task of thus deducing them,nor will this inability be wondered at,when his peculiar situation,the manners and opinions of his age and country,so widely different from our own,are considered. The benefit of his example therefore is not so great as if he were our Countryman,our brother.

It is surely not presumptuous to point out the imperfections of the gospel history as a lesson of Instruction; to imagine that,as such,it would have been infinitely more useful to me;had it been a later and more authentic composition,were not its text embarassed by the obscurities of a foreign language,and unintelligible idiom.1 Had the narrative been more accurate and uniform,were it accompanied with fewer metaphysical refinements,and mysterious circumstances,had it passed through the hands of fewer transcribers and had there been fewer incitements as well as fewer opportunities,to debase the purity of the text,and destroy the perspicuity of the narrative,by careless,ignorant or artful interpolations and omissions.

Let not these be considered as objections to the genuineness of those writings in their original state, (Indeed these objections arise only because they are genuine,) for they are no more than reasons why they are defective as lessons of particular instruction.

These then are the defects,the unavoidable defects of this performance. Cannot these defects be supplied?

1 This seems to show Brown had no reading knowledge of Greek,despite his quotation at the end of the 19 May 1792 letter.

Cannot I find one whose actions are perfectly and uniformly virtuous. Who more nearly resembles me in language,country,rank and other incidental circumstances? Whose life is more minutely and accurately displayed? Into whom,supposing the soul of Jesus to be merely human,and so far only as this supposition is admitted, is the story of his life useful as a moral leasson, that soul appears to be transfused?

I know of no real personage that answers to this description,but it is sufficient if such a being,and such a narrative can be found,whether it be real or fictitious. It would be absurd for a lover of virtue, and one that aspires to Christian perfection,to deny that a man make himself a faultless character. I mean with respect,not to understanding,but to morals. That the character therefore is faultless is no proof that the tale is fictitious,but there are other proofs of its fictitiousness. That it should be a fiction,in order to be as instructive as possible,is rendered necessary by the nature of human actions and human testimony. There is a necessity not physical but arising from circumstances,that fancy and not truth should inculcate this important lesson.

Is there such a tale as this? What painter has drawn a picture of moral perfection? He is now before me. The painter is Richardson,and the picture which his masterly skill,and wonderful invention (has)[1] produced, is that of Grandison. Be not startled my friend. Let it not offend your piety that I draw a parallel between an English Novel and the evangelical history,for is not the parallel just? Does not my reason compell me to give the preference to the performance of Richardson?

That one is truth and the other fiction is of no importance to me who considers both as moral lessons, or rather it is to fiction that the English work is indebted for its superiority to the Greek,since,as I before observed it is,as a work of invention,more accurate and uniform,and consequently more instructive.

Is not the character depicted equally perfect? equally amiable and attractive? Is not every motive to imitation urged as powerfully? If I ask what is the gospel history more than a Romance,will you not be startled? But why should a question startle you which,however it be answered,is of no importance. As a lesson of instruction it is indifferent to me whether this subject of this narrative be a real or fictitious being.

This question would be indeed important,if it related to one who is supposed to have lived in my own time, and within the reach of my own immediate observation; because if it were true,I should then be a witness of those actions,and consequently,be more benefitted by the example,but since this narrative is the only proof of his existence,since he is seen and known by me only as he is represented here,the truth of the tale is in reality an objection to it,for this narrative is useful to me,only as it furnishes incitements to,and sets before (me) an object of imitation,were it a romance,the

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Men are incited to resist temptation and persist in the path of virtue, by the rewards which finally await their fortitude and perserverance. These rewards are either conferred upon us in our present state or reserved to bless our future lot. The virtue of Jesus encountered and triumphed over pain and ignominy. Did the virtues of Grandison meet with trials less severe? They were only of a different kind, and how much more strongly do the Catastrophe of his three inimitable tales incite us to persist in a virtuous course than that of the sacred narrative?

It must be observed that I lay out of this question the doctrinal or mysterious parts of Christianity. I do not disbelieve what I cannot comprehend, but what is incomprehensible, in whatever direction the tide of mere opinion, flows, cannot possibly have any influence on the practise, and the ancient and modern works are compared on this occasion, merely as they influence my actions.

To be deterred from vice is nearly of as much importance as to be incited to virtue. In the life of Grandison it appears that virtue is the parent of present and eternal happiness, but the woes of Clarissa like the sufferings of Jesus, terminate only in death, and their virtues find their reward only in another Region. While the wickedness of Lovelace and his fellow profligates is punished as it deserves. If glory be the Recompence of actions beneficial to mankind who shall venture to dispute the palm with Richardson. If he who teaches wisdom be inferior to him who inculcates virtue, Socrates must look down on Plato and Richardson on Newton. If the grandeur of sentiment, if moral sublimity, excell every other kind; if the genius of Eloquence tower above every other, who is there who can stand in competition with the writer of Clarissa; the sublimest and most eloquent of writers? Nor can I have the least doubt that it (is) of more advantage to mankind, that those celebrated works have been written, than that Galileo invented the telescope or that Newton surveyed the heavens through it.

But whither has this subject led me? I intended not a formal panegyrick on Richardson. I mentioned his performances because as a lover of virtue and admirer of true greatness, they occupy the second place in my library, and because I esteem him inferior to none that ever lived, as a teacher of virtue and the friend of mankind, except 1 the founder of the Christian Religion.

Let these, my friend, be our teachers, and let the examples which they set before (us) inspire us with emulation. That this world and all that it contains is a perishable transitory shadow; that the souls which burn within us are immortal; that benevolence and piety only are the parents of solid happiness and lasting glory; and that virtue is rewarded both here and hereafter, are the articles of the creed of every reasonable being.

1 Written but.

Be they the sole articles of ours.
Friday Decr. 21,1792

o o o o o o o

Sat. Morn.

I wanted to write an essay,and have done it you see in the epistolary form. It was read under feigned names. My compositions have of late been always the product of idleness. When I am weary with myself,and dissatisfied with all the world,I generally betake myself to my pen. Writing is an employment which always proves to me a source of soverign consolation,because it forces me to think,and a rapid current of ideas washes away a thousand muddy cares and vexatious impediments.

Those glowing sentiments which filled your letter, are not,I hope,peculiar to yourself. You will find me, my friend,(shall I not say?) as capable of admiring true glory;as fully conscious of the emptiness and vanity of selfish and vicious schemes,as yourself. Look upon me as the friend of your soul. Sufferings have taught me also to feel. Whatever secrets you shall repose in my bosom,shall be as faithfully preserved, as if lodged in your own. I need not add that grief is lessened by participation or that any new instance of confidence,will only attach more strongly to you

Your affectionate
C.B.Brown.

It seems impossible to believe that the reader will consider that letter as anything but important,and to the present writer it is so for more than one reason.

Brown's idea of an opposition of passions rather than a control of them is probably more truly founded in human nature than it first appears. While not recommending it entirely we believe that it deserves more attention,and the more it is noticed the more it will be found in many cases to be the real basis of much of what is generally termed control of the passions. In that particular it appears that Brown's conduct was not one to be condemned.

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picture would probably have been more accurate and uniform, and this it is, that renders it less instructive to me, than the history of Grandison.

Men are incited to resist temptation and persist in the path of virtue, by the rewards which finally await their fortitude and perserverance. These rewards are either conferred upon us in our present state or reserved to bless our future lot. The virtue of Jesus encountered and triumphed over pain and ignominy. Did the virtues of Grandison meet with trials less severe? They were only of a different kind, and how much more strongly do the Catastrophe of his three inimitable tales incite us to persist in a virtuous course than that of the sacred narrative?

It must be observed that I lay out of this question the doctrinal or mysterious parts of Christianity. I do not disbelieve what I cannot comprehend, but what is incomprehensible, in whatever direction the tide of mere opinion, flows, cannot possibly have any influence on the practise, and the ancient and modern works are compared on this occasion, merely as they influence my actions.

To be deterred from vice is nearly of as much importance as to be incited to virtue. In the life of Grandison it appears that virtue is the parent of present and eternal happiness, but the woes of Clarissa like the sufferings of Jesus, terminate only in death, and their virtues find their reward only in another Region. While the wickedness of Lovelace and his fellow profligates is punished as it deserves. If glory be the Recompence of actions beneficial to mankind who shall venture to dispute the palm with Richardson. If he who teaches wisdom be inferior to him who inculcates virtue, Socrates must look down on Plato and Richardson on Newton. If the grandeur of sentiment, if moral sublimity, excell every other kind; if the genius of Eloquence tower above every other, who is there who can stand in competition with the writer of Clarissa; the sublimest and most eloquent of writers? Nor can I have the least doubt that it (is) of more advantage to mankind, that those celebrated works have been written, than that Galileo invented the telescope or that Newton surveyed the heavens through it.

But whither has this subject led me? I intended not a formal panegyrick on Richardson. I mentioned his performances because as a lover of virtue and admirer of true greatness, they occupy the second place in my library, and because I esteem him inferior to none that ever lived, as a teacher of virtue and the friend of mankind, except 1 the founder of the Christian Religion.

Let these, my friend, be our teachers, and let the examples which they set before (us) inspire us with emulation. That this world and all that it contains is a perishable transitory shadow; that the souls which burn within us are immortal; that benevolence and piety only are the parents of solid happiness and lasting glory; and that virtue is rewarded both here and hereafter, are the articles of the creed of every reasonable being.

1 Written but.

Be they the sole articles of ours.
Friday Decr. 21,1792

o o o o o o o

Sat. Morn.

I wanted to write an essay,and have done it you see in the epistolary form. It was read under feigned names. My compositions have of late been always the product of idleness. When I am weary with myself,and dissatisfied with all the world,I generally betake myself to my pen. Writing is an employment which always proves to me a source of soverign consolation,because it forces me to think,and a rapid current of ideas washes away a thousand muddy cares and vexatious impediments.

Those glowing sentiments which filled your letter, are not,I hope,peculiar to yourself. You will find me, my friend,(shall I not say?) as capable of admiring true glory;as fully conscious of the emptiness and vanity of selfish and vicious schemes,as yourself. Look upon me as the friend of your soul. Sufferings have taught me also to feel. Whatever secrets you shall repose in my bosom,shall be as faithfully preserved, as if lodged in your own. I need not add that grief is lessened by participation or that any new instance of confidence,will only attach more strongly to you

Your affectionate
C.B.Brown.

It seems impossible to believe that the reader will consider that letter as anything but important,and to the present writer it is so for more than one reason.

Brown's idea of an opposition of passions rather than a control of them is probably more truly founded in human nature than it first appears. While not recommending it entirely we believe that it deserves more attention,and the more it is noticed the more it will be found in many cases to be the real basis of much of what is generally termed control of the passions. In that particular it appears that Brown's conduct was not one to be condemned.

The comparison of Christ with Richerdson's hero is a very good instance of Brown's love for debate and like his argument for the justification of suicide it bears his early faults and none of his excellencies of later times.

The train of the argument is the greatest fault. It starts the comparison with Grandison, there finds something lacking, moves on to take in the whole three romances by Richardson, dodges off to Clarissa, then sees that Richardson's work is what he really had in mind, then (much to our surprise) gives Richardson second (!) place in his library and leaves the Bible, just where it was when he started to replace it by a fiction, in the place of highest esteem. His argument is logically defective and a failure. It was merely another exhibition of the youthful Brown doing his thinking in his correspondence--not actually presenting any formed opinion.

Any one who is fascinated by the Heloise of Rousseau, who prefers the sort of narrative Brown used in these letters to Bringhurst may follow his train of thought so as to prefer the Grandison of Richardson to the narrative of the life of Christ. Leaving out

of the question altogether the ideas of reverence and ~~one's~~ belief in divinity it is certain that ~~no judge of any critical ability would find the natural and simple narratives of the Bible excelled by the verbose and forced account of Grandison.~~ The one detail that the Bible is history dealing with a very human man and Grandison fiction dealing with an idealized automaton whose machinery is too noisy and evident is the reason why one is preeminently superior and always will be so.

~~On the whole it seems clear that~~ at this time of his life Brown had developed no critical ability. With an intensely vivid imagination, ~~perhaps over-stimulated~~ intoxicated by brooding over ~~and studying all~~ the ramifications of his wide experience, he was more attracted by the excellencies of fiction of ~~the~~ a verbose and discursive kind than ~~he was affected~~ by the ~~grandeur and~~ simplicity of ~~big~~ fundamentals of life and philosophy. ~~For that reason he went through his process of reasoning and arrived at the wrong conclusion~~. Overlooking the failure of his logic was true of this time of his life. Later we shall see him showing signs of having a critical judgment which would have been the first to discover this weakness.