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CHAPTER VII

FIRST VISIT TO THE "HARTFORD WITS"

1793 Aetat.22

Though he lived alone in the Vine street house

During the early part of this year Brown's position in Philadelphia ~~if not at home~~ became insufferable, probably because he could not escape ~~was again~~ being nagged to resume his study of the law. He was discouraged in his literary efforts, his health was none too good--though it should not be assumed it was seriously affected--and his prospects did not appear encouraging. Of course his religious irregularities and a situation ~~Perhaps his~~ lean purse entered somewhat into his ~~calculations~~. Be that as it may, he was certainly unhappy, several of his friends were setting the example by contemplating ~~some~~ travel, ~~so~~ Wilkins had gone to Trenton, Bringhurst was thinking of going to Wilmington, so feeling the need of exercise and having clearly in mind Proud's advice of his school days, he planned an extended walking tour the first stages of which included a visit to the scenes familiar to the lost wife of his youth. ~~possibly with the idea that the tone of his mind would be thereby heightened quicker than if he stayed and fought his depression in Philadelphia~~. Like most young men of his age he was tempted to try his fortune under the glamor of a new set of surroundings. As we shall see presently he did not take his family into his confidence, merely telling them he was going off on a jaunt to see New York, but in his own mind he had every ~~anticipation~~ expecta that the parting would prove permanent.

The earliest letter of this year is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst.)

(Philadelphia,1793)1

Dear friend;

I said truth,when I said that my silence|2 arose principally from the silence of the weather,for this serene|and lightsome atmosphere has had a corresponding effect upon|my intellect. "Ah! 'tis a revolution hero!"|3 Does not unhappiness frequently arise from the want of a|resolution to be happy? and why has Philosophy been for so many|ages the subject of encomium,if she fails to afford|assistance to those who apply to her for consolation?|But if Philosophy avail nothing,there is surely in Religion an|infallible asylum? and is it not my own fault if I do|not put its salutary powers to the test? Indeed, my friend,|I am determined to be henceforth,if possible, a votary of a mild4 and|heavenly Religion,and no longer to be the slave of useless Melancholy. I will follow the assembly and grow wise by the|wisdom of my friend. Adieu for the present.

Charles B.Brown.

That letter is important for what it implies rather than for what it states. While most readers prefer the long and full letters we have had during the past year it is true they are often examples ~~of a character~~ of making too much out of matters that are in their essentials very simple. They constitute what ~~we have emphasized by~~ may be called brooding.

Turning to the actual material of the letter it appears Brown's boyhood idea of changing from one study to another as a recreation was proving

1 The date is probably before 22 April. The internal evidence indicates it was a long time before;for,though tinged with a reference to melancholy,there is no indication of ill health such as is evident in the 22 April letter. The peculiarities of the shorthand corroborate this.

2 The lines are marked off for the student of stenography.

3 This is not clear though translated as it is written. ~~Perhaps it~~ It is apparently a playful reference by Bringhurst to Brown, who meant by it merely a change. Of 25 Jul Letter

4 The character reads mil,the d not written being an oversight due to haste. Brown's Epistle I,18th.line from the end,uses another strange adjective--plain--in connection with religion. The Rising Glory of America (l.58) had used the adjective with the same noun.

its falsity by practise. He was working and living too strenuously. What he needed for clear thinking and healthy living was actual diversion from study--not a semblance of it. Naturally if he did not brood over every trivial detail his letters would become brief and to the point.

In the latest of the shorthand letters which follows, the stenography is much smoother and the characters more accurately formed. The letter contains Brown's earliest allusion to Elihu Hubbard Smith and no more than ordinary sagacity is needed to perceive that the tone of our author is healthier because he reasons so clearly when he contemplates visiting the scenes rendered dear to him by the wife of his youth. It will also appear that for some time he had done little writing. The letter is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst, Front street.)

(Philadelphia, Sunday morning 21 April 1793.)[1]

My dear friend:-
I have so long been unaccustomed to this work that I| scarcely know how to begin. Writing or reading is surely not the business|of human life. I, for my part, can not[2] any longer read|nor write.
That a studious is an unhealthy life, is very certain, and this|fact is produced by Rousseau as a proof that nature did|not design us for study; that the care of

1 Docketed as received 22 Apl.1793 and at the end as written on Sunday morning.
2 Surmised to be the word but indecisive.

his1 own subsistence| and that of those connected with him by the ties of mental (?) | and political relationship ought to engross all his time and attention;|but the art of reading is in itself wholly superfluous,and is|rendered necessary only by the corrupt customs of societies;that|writing is,even in the present state of things,necessary only|as it enables us to affix our signature and to indite a letter.

I expect in a short time to see our admirable friend| Smith.

Connecticut! Connecticut! thou source of all| my joys and all my sorrows! With what conflicting2 emotions of anguish and delight shall I traverse thy fields--those| fields which the footsteps of my beloved,3 the fairest of thy daughters,|have rendered sacred! One of my wishes is to find a grave|within thy precincts,and if the hour of my death could be foreseen I would hie with speed to thy maternal arms;and thy assurance that| ,thou would'st furnish an asylum to my ---- remains would|irradiate my parting hours with one bright gleam of comfort--a gleam| that would shoot far into the bosom of that dim night into which I was|about to enter.

O! my friend! I am very wrong,very very wrong|indeed, in desiring to visit Connecticut. I am afraid I am so,| but it is too late to think of relinquishing my design. This|journey will either confirm me a wretch forever, or restore me to|some degree of tranquillity,and either4 I think is better than my present|state.

I shall leave at the end of this or the beginning|of the next week. If therefore your friends have|any letters to transmit to New York,Boston,Hartford,|or Newport,I will with pleasure take charge of them,and|the sooner you write the better.

I intended to have written much more largely in this letter|about both writing and reading but writing5 hath become intolerably irksome to me,|and what else I have to say I can better say by word of mouth.

You need not let my family (?) know that I intend going|farther than New York,or staying longer than a fortnight|or three weeks.

I am ever thine

Charles Brown.

From their brevity and from the fact that they were written in shorthand,these letters show us our author mentally quite different

1 Written <u>this</u>,evidently a mistake. 2 Written without the "l".
3 This is a vague reference to Brown's first wife.
4 Surmised to be the word but indecisive.
5 "But writing" supplied as the omitted words implied by the context, though stenographically indecisive.

from what he ~~was before~~ had been; in fact it appears that he was not able to adopt a happy mean--either he must brood much and write long or think and write none.

However, his idleness was not to last ~~long~~. In the letter following we shall see that he has gone on his long-contemplated trip to Connecticut.

This visit is not to be explained by the obvious and simple reason of a desire to visit friends or to travel. ~~Probably~~ That was his excuse, but it was only an excuse. We have seen the state of his mind as it was in 1792 ~~and it is more than probable that~~ when his home ~~and his position in it was unhappy.~~ the only pleasant thing about it seems to have been his occasional calls and conversations with Bringhurst and Wilkins and others of his friends; so that it is not surprising to find him planning not only to visit Connecticut but if he found the surroundings as he imagined them to settle there forever.

On the other hand his frame of mind may have aroused the anxiety of the family, for it seems a suspicious coincidence that the friends most tolerant of his ~~dangerous state of mind~~ were both practising physicians. Perhaps the family's hand is to be seen in that peculiarity

and,if it is,it would not be anything out of the ordinary. ~~The~~ he

fact ~~seems to be~~ that when he was showing signs of ~~a possible~~ desperation that as it may, the

~~insanity,or at least when he was almost on the verge of suicide,~~

the one man who stuck to him through all his eccentricities was

Bringhurst a physician and when he left Philadelphia,~~probably~~

believing ~~that~~ he had succeeded in concealing his real reason,

he came under the ~~surveillance~~ influence of another physician,Smith.

The next letter is the earliest we have from Connecticut and is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst.) 1

Litchfield,Wednesday,May 22nd.1793. 2

My dearest friend
You have doubtless been concerned at my long silence, but my life has been so wandering and unstationary---I am now fixed for a short time at Litchfield. I stayed only one day at New York. That place,on more accounts than one,proved even,in that short space,intolerably disagreable. I thought it better to defer the delivery of your letters till my return,if I should then be inclined to make any stay there. I reached Weathersfield, on Saturday morning,but,on enquiry found,to my great disappointment,that our friend 3 had some time previously, left that place,and returned to Litchfield. M.Williams,4 one of his friends,and at whose house he used to lodge, introduced himself to me the next day,accosted me by my name,and insisted upon my making his house my home until Elihu's return. I have been treated with the most unparallelled hospitality,have been introduced to the most extensive acquaintance,composed of the first people of Connecticut. The recommendation of this admirable young man has operated like magic in my favor,and

1 This letter bears no post marks or address,and must have been enclosed and sent by some friend or messenger.

2 Dated from the end of the letter.

3 Smith had settled at Wethersfield to practise medicine.

4 John Williams mentioned in Smith's diary 9 September 1795. The M.=Mr.

whithersoever I have gone I have found friends and a home. The election,as they term it,was a splendid festival. All his friends were assembled at it,and received me among them as their brother. I have been some time with M.Alsop 1 at Middletown,one of the most delightful places,and situated in the midst of the most enchanting scenes!--The family of my M.Alsop is composed of Angels!--but I should never be weary of descanting on this theme. I shall have enough to tell you when we meet. I was surprised to find that among this caller's friends you and myself were almost as well known as in our native city. I long to know how you do and the rest of my friends. Let me receive a letter from you as soon as possible. I think very often with melancholy pleasure on the musical,social and literary delights which I have left behind. I hope your friendship for Russell Bader 2 continues to increase. I charge you,in every holy name,do not let him go from among you. I cannot receive a higher Satisfaction than from seeing your attachment to each other increasing--Your brother Edward,3 I hope,is again in health. Present my warmest respects to every one of your family,to whom you think I am of importance enough to warrant such a liberty.

I have had various schemes in my head,but I know not whether any will be accomplished. With a little more money,I fear I should be irresistably tempted to pass into Canada,and defer my return till next summer. This however is,at present,impossible. Some other time, I hope to perform that and every other journey in company with my beloved friend Russell. This resolution however is taken: never,but in compliance with necessity to set my foot in a stage again,or to travel otherwise than on foot.

Dartmouth College,Boston,Newport,Nantucket,have all their attractions,but I am uncertain,whether I shall see them this time. Money! Money! is the Spring of my machine,the want of which is the first of miseries. My dearest friend. Do not forget to write to me. Direct to Litchfield,as soon as possible,and believe me to be, with the utmost affection, your

Ever obliged and affectionate

C.B.B.

Remember me affectionately to Wilkins.

On the outside of this letter is the following note.

1 Richard Alsop one of the famous "Hartford Wits" was now thirty-four years old. According to the old map of Middletown given by Barber (Conn.Hist.Coll.p.508) he was a merchant and ship owner and lived on the north-east corner of Main and Parsonage streets. He died at Flatbush,L.I. 20 Aug.,1815. The M.=Mr.

2 The same as mentioned in the postscript to the 11 December 1792 letter.

3 B.16 Dec.1770,d.26 Sept.,1794 unmarried. Cf.Leach:History of Bringhurst Family,Phila.1901,p.32.

> As this letter will be sent (possibly) from N.Y. by post,I could not pay the postage here. Excuse it therefore. I shall owe it to you. Answer me by post, if as speedy a conveyance otherwise can not be procured. (both of my friends.)

There we have a detail that has not hitherto been presented by Brown to our notice:Money. We have already suggested that one of the members of the family supplied him with funds,but it is now clear that they had either been stopped,had been curtailed,or had given out. How he managed to obtain the necessaries of life is not clear. Perhaps he had received pay for his literary efforts,perhaps he had borrowed from his friends,perhaps being of age his father had given him a little capital of his own. With his character,his desire for independence and his hatred of trade the last is most consistent for he had some sum which he later calls his "little store" and which probably represented his modest capital. With it he appears to have had sufficient when he was living in Philadelphia but it made small provision for any extensive or expensive travelling.

When we find Bringhurst offering him a loan to make possible that projected journey suspicions are aroused and we naturally wonder if

that. At least it fits this time of his life better than any other.

The next letter is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst,Junr.Philadelphia. No.131 South Front Street.

Hartford. June 11th.1793.[2]

My dear friend

I have just received your most acceptable letter. How very good you are. I merit not the friendship of the good. O my friend,social ties,the bond of amity are strong. I can testify their strength. What balmy spirit is there whispering consolation in the accents of a friend. It is you alone that induce me to return to Philadelphia. You only can make it tolerable. Parents! Brothers! Relations! Alas! they ought to operate on my affections with irresistable energy,and their influence is indeed strong,but without the additional force of those ties which arise from the pleasure of your society, they would not be sufficient to outweigh the motives for deserting it.

The intelligence of S.R.Baders intended departure has filled me with sorrow,but if it be for his advantage,God forbid that I should not wish it.

I am too much obliged by my friends of Connecticut. Their kindness is painful to me. I shall be obliged to leave them in order to avoid their favors. I left Litchfield last Sunday.[3] I spent the night at Farmington, with a very amiable young man Dr. Todd.[4] He exacted from me next morning a promise to spend some days with him before I leave Connecticut. I have made the same promise to two other persons,and should perhaps comply with their invitations,would they give me nothing more than their company. Mr.Alsop,when I left Middletown invited me with peculiar warmth to return and spend some time with him.

Nothing can exceed the charms of that romantic spot. Sicily or Switzerland can afford nothing that surpasses it. You can form no conception my friend of the general beauty of this charming country,and particularly of that spot. From each bank of the river the ground gradually ascends to an heigth from which there [5] open to the eye the most delightful prospects before,beside and on either side. The town itself is a pattern of elegance and neatness. Mr.Alsop is a man of fortune,wholly devoted [6] to literature and poetry and lives in high taste.His wife--you will think me perhaps extravagant,if

1 The postage is indicated as "Paid 51 cents Hartford June 11."

2 Dated from the end of the letter.

3 June 2nd.

4 Dr.Eli Todd was almost twenty-four years old.

5 Written their.

6 He had given up his prosperous business and devoted himself to literature. Cf.note on Alsop in preceding letter.

I venture to express my real sentiment of her,but surely, surely,I shall never meet on earth with a woman more truly angelical. Mr.Alsop has four or five sisters,most amiable and accomplished women. There are delightful walks and retreats,in the environs and along the banks of the river. He has an extensive library,chiefly composed of critical and poetical authors. I am certain that my company would give them pleasure,and yet--it is with reluctance that I shall accept their invitation,even for a few days. Not to take up my residence with them would be an affront,though there is nothing which I more ardently desire than the liberty of boarding at my own expense.1

When I left Litchfield I chalked out this plan of future proceeding. I purposed to stay at Hartford till I received your letters. Then to equip myself for my pedestrian expedition to journey at the rate of thirty miles a day,up the Connecticut River,(the banks of which are covered with towns and villages and abound with the most romantic scenery,) as far as Dartmouth college,near two hundred miles from hence;then to leave the River to the right2 and pass the Green mountains from which the name of the Country (Vermont) is derived,to Tyconderoga,then embark on the lake (Champlain) and go by water to Quebec. From Quebec go up the river3 through Montreal and Frontenac. Then cross Ontario,and take a view of the great Cataract of Niagara,and return by land4 to Boston,from Boston to Providence to Newport to N.London and at length to Middletown. I want neither strength nor resolution to execute this enterprise,but that, I find,on examination,is wanting which is most necessary in this world.

If I propose to stay any time in N.York,and Elihu is desirious that I should be introduced to his numerous circle of friends there,I shall be obliged to relinquish5 Boston and Newport.

I shall relate to you with singular pleasure,all that I have done and seen in Connecticut. My time will not allow me to journalize as minutely as I wish.

I hope my friend there is a degree of confidence established between us,which raises us far above such nice punctilios. The indifference with which you say you parted with me, the seeming indifference was not observable to me,nor will appearances,however strong,ever induce me to doubt for a moment the warmth and sincerity of your friendship.

Your <u>pecuniary</u> offers claim from me the utmost gratitude, but you must forgive me if I make no use of them. A loan to me is a gift, since I shall never have the power of repayment,and your <u>charity</u> would be better employed in relieving the <u>necessities</u> of others,than

1 Cf.<u>Traveller's Letters</u>,<u>Literary Magazine</u>,Vol.VII,p.29.
2 Going from Hanover to Ticonderoga would leave the river behind him.
3 Probably walking along its banks so far as possible.
4 By way of the old turnpike roads through the Mohawk Valley to Albany,Pittsfield,Lenox,Springfield and Worcester.
5 Going from Albany down the Hudson to New York,either on foot or by sloop.

in furnishing me with the means of amusement.

How dreadful an evil is poverty! Magnanimity is least my boast. I confess to you without defending it, my pride. You doubtless recollect our conversation on the pride of poverty. Were you not too severe in your strictures on that occasion? Did you not say that you should despise the man, to whom this defect is imputable? Nay!: my friend, equally beloved and revered, withold your contempt at least from me. Reserve your scorn for those who glory in their faults. I am sufficiently mortified by my own contempt, and tortured by my own disapprobation.

This letter is more serious than I wish it. I knew not how much I valued our common friend, till threatened with the loss of him. Every thing smiles around me here, but this news has somewhat embittered every enjoyment. It has for the present at least, completely damped the spirit of enterprise, with which my bosom beat high a week ago.

Let me know whether you purpose to come hitherward this summer. Not to find you at my return to Philadelphia, and to enjoy the sweet solace of your society, would indeed be disastrous.

Franklin 1 talked of travelling eastward after his admission. I hope, if he prosecutes his intention, he will not fail to hunt me out. If he inquires for me at Mr.Woolsey's 2 at N.Y., Mr.Alsop's at Middletown or Mr. Theodore Dwight's 3 at Hartford he will certainly either see or gain some intelligence of me. Direct your next letter to Middletown to the Care of Mr.Alsop and let them I beseech you be as copious and as speedy in their conveyance as possible. I am anxious to know R.Bader's scheme more particularly. Your letters I read over and over again and they will constitute my chief pleasure. Does the Society flourish. How does Farris 1 in his private and oratorical capacity. How does the present state of Europe affect him. My best love to Wilkins. Make my affectionate compliments to Farris and Poulson 1 and the rest of them, and

Adieu

C.B.B.

Evidently Brown was generally received in the circle of the "Hartford Wits." His couplets would undoubtedly make him persona grata had he not had the additional recommendation of being introduced by Smith.

As a contribution to the history of American literature the

1 Has already been mentioned in the letters of 1792.
2 W.W.Woolsey.
3 There was no earlier mention of Dwight's at Hartford.

letter has an importance perhaps as great as its picture of Brown's visit to Hartford and its adjacent towns. The "Hartford Wits" have been somewhat appreciated by the literary historian and among them Alsop held no mean place. Being the only one of the group who had devoted himself wholly to literature,[1] as a host to Brown he could not have been bettered. Undoubtedly Brown missed a rare opportunity in not forming a strong friendship with Alsop, but with Smith and Bringhurst in mind and because of his erroneous idea that friendship should confine itself he did not form a lasting connection with Alsop. Another thing that foolishly stood in his way was the feeling that he should pay for his lodging, which of course Alsop and all others under the circumstances would not consider at all.

At first it may appear surprising that his friend Smith did not settle at Hartford but upon further examination it will be clear that he did not trust too much in the lasting qualities of the friendship of the "Hartford Wits". The truth of the matter is that Smith was about to publish his collection of American Poems at Litchfield and in that collection he had included the

1 It is not generally known that he was the printer of the Middletown History of Chili translated by him under the pseudonym of an American gentleman and published by I.Riley 1808.

verse of most of the Hartford group. Inasmuch as the collection was one of the earliest[1] of its kind in the United States any great display of friendship for Smith and his protegee Brown was possibly not considered by them entirely unselfish or well founded.

It appears from these letters that it was a load off the shoulders of Bringhurst when Brown went away. When Bringhurst knew that he could safely do so he did not spare the feelings of our author, especially when Brown was inclined to revive his "blue devils" and melancholia. His judgment was sound in disliking overstrained theatrical imitations of Rousseau.

In the study of the year 1799 certain extracts ~~as~~ given in the Literary Magazine[2] are from Brown's journal of 1799. Save for the remarkable instance of his standing on the edge of an abyss, undaunted by his old spectre and untempted to suicide, a fact which even in 1799 terrified his friends, the extracts of 1799 are not particularly remarkable as descriptions of Highby's mountain,

1 Bibliographers have neglected to notice, as an earlier collection John Park's Lyric Works of Horace ~~Philadelphia 1784~~, Carmen Seculare ~~Philadelphia 1785~~, ~~and~~ Translations from the Greek and Latin ~~Philadelphia 1786~~, which collect the work of about twenty different authors. Evans, no. 19717.

2 ~~Vol. III, p. 295 ff. The D---, A---, and W--- in these descriptions are to be explained as Dwight, Alsop and possibly Williams from Wethersfield or Woolsey from New York. "My friend" is Smith.~~

and Virginia a pastoral drama, Philadelphia 1786

issued bound in one volume

Powder Hill and Job's Pool. However they are the only guides other than these 1793 letters to show us how he spent his time in Connecticut; walking and talking with cheerful company, climbing hills and picnicing. In 1799 when on Powder Hill he was willing to sit and gaze in wonder at the distant New Haven harbor until the sun set, but evidently his friends had learned from the year of 1793 what to do to bring him back to a healthy tone of mind so that they compelled him to give up any such dreaming and return to the town.

~~Before the next letter~~ We should give some attention to Brown's projected journey. With the plan of walking thirty miles a day it would have taken roughly ~~about~~ two months for. So far as the distance can be estimated it totals ~~about~~ fifteen hundred miles. For the purpose of seeing most of the natural beauties of the eastern part of ~~our~~ the country the plan was fairly complete,[1] ~~taking in~~ including the Connecticut Valley, the Green mountains, Lake Champlain, Quebec, Montreal, the Thousand Islands, Lake Ontario, Niagara Falls, the Mohawk Valley, the Hudson River, the Berkshires, Boston, Providence, Newport and Long

1 The omission of the Catskill and White Mountain regions is a glaring defect.

The next letter is not addressed and not dated. It is probably a fragment because of the beginning and the end.

(To Joseph Bringhurst)

(Hartford, July 1793) 1

I reflect upon my present situation with a surprise that time has hardly yet subdued. On considering that two months ago, Connecticut was utterly a stranger to me.2 That the only person 3 in it to whom I was known knew me scarcely otherwise than by letter, that our personal acquaintance was short, accidental, superficial, and such, as with any other person would scarcely have given me a right to accost him at a distance, and that in less than a fortnight I should be personally introduced to almost every considerable person in it, be treated by ten or fifteen most amiable men with the affectionate familiarity and confidence of a brother, to be adopted as it were, to be admitted into the bosom of many perfectly respectable and enlightened families, is surely wonderful. I know not whether I can give you a just idea of my situation. It is in romance only that I can find any thing like it. You have read Eloisa. You recollect the situation of St. Preux in Walmar's family. Such 4 believe me, my friend, is mine in this 1(Mr. Theodore Dwight's) in Mr. Alsop's at Middletown, and the father of Elihu at Litchfield. Rousseau's Julia was indeed a bright phantom, but her beauty and accomplishments are, in my opinion, more than realized in Mrs. Alsop. O my friend, if you ever see her you will fully concur with me.--I can never speak of her without breaking out into raptures--Nor is Mrs. Dwight far behind her.

I used to esteem the "Pays de Vaud" in Switzerland, 5 the paradise of this earth, but now I begin to doubt whether some part of Connecticut may not claim that character. I am certain however that the lake of Geneva washes no shores more luxuriantly beautiful than these of Connecticut river, than Middletown and its environs, nor is a witness to scenes of greater happiness or more abundant fertility. O that I could spend a year or two in this charming retirement. In the midst of lettered elegance and domestic refinement, in the midst of such exquisite enjoyments, with all the means and opportunities of study, conversation, composition and reflection the restoration of my tranquillity would be almost certain and what progress might I not hope to make in every branch of elegant knowledge. And would not a behaviour running in one constant tenor of gentleness and affa-

1 The statement concerning two months ago would indicate that Brown wrote this letter in July for he had not gone to Connecticut until May. The this, referring to Dwight's, helps to date the letter at that place.
2 This is not inconsistent with the suggestion that Brown's first wife came from Connecticut.
3 Smith. 4 Not true in all the details.
5 Brown had only been there in imagination. Cf. letter 16 May 1792.

bility,a strong and invariable desire to please,the devoting of a great part of my little stock to benevolent purposes,(for to live here would cost scarcely anything) acquire the esteem of all,and the affection of the chosen few.

Half of my work is already done. Many families with whom I every grace and virtue reside,already open their arms to me. The recommendation of my partial and beloved friend has operated in my favor like enchantment. I am sometimes actually in doubt,whether I am not dreaming. Had I come hither without a previous acquaintance with Elliha,no length of Residence would have given me the same advantages. His circle seems as if selected by design,and to appropriate to itself all the virtue, genius and knowledge of Connecticut.

To determine on our own character is sufficiently hard, and the treatment which I have received,sometimes fills me with mortification and sometimes perplexity. The consciousness of being valued and caressed on my own account,would give me inexpressible delight--but Alas! I have no reason to flatter myself with that as yet.

My taste has long ago been decided. At a very early age I began to reason on a plan of study and to make some preparation for gratifying my literary propensities,with advantage,but I had scarcely formed a plan before passions; violent,absorbing passions,interfered, equally detrimental to study,in their gratification and disappointment. Now I doat upon the scene which now presents itself to my imagination! With what transport would I hale the return of tranquillity! My heart melts within me at the prospect of residing in Connecticut. At the soothing consolations,the enchanting enjoyments of social and studious retirement. Not more grateful to the sight of the lost,benighted,and despairing traveler,would be the orient dawn,whose light reconducts him to the well known path. Nor to the watching mariner, the sight of his native harbor,stretching out its protecting arms and opening its peaceful bosom to receive him from the perils of the midnight storm and the fatigues of excessive labor. I doubt not,but that in a short time the remembrance of past sorrows would leave an impression not less pleasing than mournful to my soul. That the recollection of past joys would dwell upon my fancy,like a delicious dream,shed around my steps a soothing and precious melancholy,a chaste yet voluptuous languor which would constitute the truest and most lasting happiness,because it would arise from the incidents and experience of the past,which are now fixed and immutable.

With what success might I not expect my studious endeavors to be attended,with what rapidity might I not run round the circle of the bookish languages,and vary my delights incessantly,by ranging from poetry to history,from America to Europe,from Europe to Asia,and

1 The with whom is supplied by us as a substitute for the senseless whose,as written.

> studying with equal diligence pleasure and success the oriental tongues and the teutonic dialects. While my friend, if we could not live together, should be the repository of my written thoughts, the speculation[1] of my proficiency, the reader and the judge of all my performances. Once more would I resume[2] the study of shorthand, ascend the Heaven of invention, and riot at the banquet of the muses, and in the sweets of fancy. Then would I envoke the genius of Bach and Handel and anticipate the ecstacies of heaven in the joys of terrestrial music.
> What a picture is this! but yet I am sure that I could realize it.

That letter gives us an excellent picture of the hopes and aspirations of our author. When he was well treated and received without questioning he was given one of the nearest approaches to happiness he ever was fated to experience. And being well treated he could not help but find a real womanly woman to have such an unusual number of good qualities that she was looked upon as a veritable angel.

With such a full and honest opinion of the happy home circle of the "Hartford Wits" it is to be lamented that he did not settle within reach of them for the rest of his life. At least such is the inevitable conclusion if we believe that he judged them correctly.

To Brown, however, the matter took on its real semblance. As long as he was in doubt as to their ultimate treatment of him it was just as well that he followed the example of the amiable Smith,

2. This indicates his having abandoned it.
1 Johnson's meaning (2) examiner, spy.

and gave up the attractions of the Hartford circle for those of[1] New York.

The next letter shows that a few weeks brought up the old troubles and made his temporary happiness disappear. It is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst,Junr. Second street.)

(Thursday) July,25th.1793. [2]

My dear friend

It is with reluctance that I take up the pen on this occasion not because you are my correspondent,for that circumstance can afford me only pleasure,but because it must in some sort furnish an answer to your last letter. I am utterly at a loss in what manner to answer it. There is no occasion of delay nor deliberation. The clor of my fate was fixed nearly six years ago. Six years experience has made me acquainted with myself: has enabled me to estimate my weakness and my strength. None of my hopes have been fulfilled,of those hopes relative to myself merely,all my apprehensions have been realized. What period will ever arrive:what state can possibly occur in which my present aversions and propensities will change? For during so many years has not time had sufficient opportunity to operate upon me? If the mind be influenced by outward circumstances why am I not affected by them? for no one has been more exposed to revolution and vicissitude. What then have I to hope from futurity,however long and full of changes!

I am not happy. It is useless to deny it,but if my unhappiness did not chiefly arise from the opposition between my conduct and my principles:from the disapprobation of my own conscience,my friend might justly regard me with abhorrence. No. No! My heart is hourly a witness, an agonizing witness to the contrary.

How beautiful is virtue! how amiable is prudence! how doubly beautiful and amiable is youth! O my friend! Franklin and Wilkins! How do I admire the uprightness, the magnanimity of your behaviour! How sweetly must the whispered approbation of your hearts sound in your ears. No phantoms of a vitiated fancy,no romantic or phantastic virtue,haunts your solitude. Yours is the serenity of virtue,the consciousness of well doing, the privilege of claiming the congratulations of your friend,of filling the parental bosom with joy. While I,alas! with all the sensibilities of virtue unimpaired,

1 Dunlap in Nat'l.Port.Gallery says Brown was introduced to his New York friends at this time.

2 Dated from the end of the letter. Probably at Wethersfield,Conn.where Smith was practising medicine.

am yet a poor and miserable reprobate whose bitter portion is anger from those he loves and scorn from those whom he reveres. Curses and lamentations in the room of affection and complacency. Sunk into the lowest abyss of self-contempt and weighed down by daily and extreme mortifications--but stop--the contrast is too dreadful. Why should I paint such distressful objests! What avails it to dwelll on each particular circumstance of unhappiness! Am I not already sufficiently unhappy! And what but pain can the relation afford to my beloved friend? How unfortunate, how very unfortunate have I been! Genuine felicity is only to be found in the arms of love, in the bosom of a wife and children. If this be not the universal opinion, it is (at) least mine, and, therefore whether just or not has the same effect upon my happiness; if this be not generally true, it is so at least, to me, who have had that supreme felicity within my reach and have seen it torn from me, in the exstatic moment of acquisition, by the hand of an inexorable destiny--That is past. What then remain? Is all the source of happiness or at least of contentment dried up?

No! Since I am cut off forever from the hope of nuptial enjoyments, which alone my heart is formed to receive, life indeed has lost its principal charm but is there no consolation to be derived from the society of the good, and the sympathies of friendship. Will not time soften the violence of grief into a tender and delicious melancholy, and will not the fountain of knowledge prove at length a fountain of pleasure. Shall I not regain my relish for the delights of composition and invention. I have speculated much on the bounds of human understanding, and the extent of human capacity. I believe that application will perform any thing. There are many experiments which I have already tried, and found to succeed beyond my hopes, of my own powers I hope (for) no contemptuous opinion, when well directed. Give me then the liberty of pursuing my own inclinations, give me leisure and independence and I shall no doubt become in time contented with my situation.

But that, it seems, is not to be allowed me. Occupation agreeable to my inclinations, would shut out disagreeable remembrances, or soften their asperities, or make them subservient to my peaceful and unambitious views, but alas!!

Yet why my friend should you be anxious on my account. While we live let us live. Let us be as happy as we can. I doubt not your will, but only your power to make me happy. Your letter has given me the sincerest pleasure because it is another proof of the interest which you take in my welfare. Advice and admonition cannot come from any one more forcibly or more acceptably. The obstacles to which you allude are certainly not in themselves, naturally insurmountable. They must always owe their strength to the weakness of him who encounters them. Perhaps it is reserved for you to see your friend carrying on the judicial contest, with all the eloquence

of Todd and all the steadiness of Armstrong.1 And who knows but that he may gain that amazing height of excellence and reputation before he reaches his fortieth year.

To speak seriously,I am convinced,my friend,that my present situation cannot long continue unchanged. I must of necessity form some determination. No change can make my situation worse:some fortunate accident may happen,unlooked for and unexpected. Such necessarily, at one time.or another (often) betide the most unfortunate of men. The continuance of my present state is the worst that can befall me. And now,dear friend, let us dismiss this most disagreeable subject,and believe me to be for this and every other instance of your affection, your

Most grateful and faithful friend,
C.B.Brown.

The inclosed was written at Hartford. They were the impulses of the moment,transient and momentary but as it was intended for you,you shall have it.

July,25th.1793

N.B. I cannot find it just now---

As we had suspected the kindly reception at Hartford and elsewhere in the purlieus of the "Hartford Wits" was not necessarily a precursor of perpetual happiness. Only a few weeks passed when we find him not only unhappy again but even wavering in regard to a possible return to the law.[2] He believed that some change must come soon,his life must be permanently settled amid happier surroundings. Thus the old spectre had crept in to look over his shoulder. But Elihu Hubbard Smith was the one exorciser to save him from his terror.

Between the letter just given and the next,Brown returned to Philadelphia,probably going with Smith as far as New York,whereto the latter was now transferring the sphere of his activities.

1 Not known.
2 Cf. letter 14 April 1795.

The next letter is the most important one of this year, because it presents another clear and full picture of Brown and summarizes his idea of study and composition--the idea that Life and Manners was now and would ever be his favorite study. As we shall see in the course of our work that idea was followed by him in all of the prose fiction of his life.

This letter also gives one of his early attempts in the realm of realistic fiction. It is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst, Second Street.)

(Philadelphia, Monday,) July, 29. 1793

> I cannot help regretting that I did not receive these invaluable letters while I was in Connecticut. They would have prevented abundance of anxiety, and uneasiness, and rendered the remainder of the time that I passed there infinitely more pleasing. However unreasonable as they are, they are highly acceptable.
>
> What pity that a man cannot become master of his destiny. He cannot indeed control the course of events. It was absurd and presumptuous to make that an object of his wishes, but he may reasonably hope, because it is perhaps within the bounds of probability, for power to control the influence of those events upon his happiness.
>
> How fascinating are the charms of glory! Of literary repute. But these charms are, of themselves, insufficient to afford any pure unmingled gratification, for what use, as to this pursuit are the most wonderful attainments, unless we have an opportunity of displaying them? And how rarely are these opportunities afforded to persons in situations like ours! Besides, when notice and distinction are the principal objects of desire, how often are we doomed to encounter chagrin and disappointment? How often must we struggle with malice and competition, and, in such a contest, in what imminent danger are all the finer and more generous feelings of being stifled.
>
> Let knowledge be sought for its own sake merely. Is it not sufficiently desirable, upon its own account? What need is there of foreign and extensive motives to urge us forward? The dexterity of wit, the brilliancies of fancy, the enchantments of a graceful elocution, a

solid judgment,retentive memory and powerful invention with the aid of universal Knowledge,are inexpressively delightful both to the hearer and possessor,but to whom has frugal nature allotted this precious portion? By whom is it attainable,and when attained,how and where and when shall we display it?

Give me independence. Give me one or two friends whom I can wholly love,and who enjoy like me the conveniences of life and leisure,with whom I may eat,drink, study,converse,travel,and whose dispositions are congenial and affection mutual. I shall be satisfied. I shall not pant after reputation,and yet such will be my progress in elegant and useful knowledge that reputation cannot but be obtained. Reputation which though not lamented when absent,is yet,when attained,by no means unacceptable.

What maxim can be juster than this? What ever be a man's knowledge or abilities,let him not be forward to display it. Policy will teach him this,because it is the surest method of obtaining applause,but it ought to be practised from a better motive,from the desire of making himself simply agreeable,of indulging the innocent ambition of others,with opportunities of being gratified.

Shall I tell you what kind of knowledge I would wish to pursue for its own sake? The history of Nations and of individuals,of life and manners. I hope you coincide with me in this opinion. It would be useful to enquire how this knowledge is to be obtained. Every thing that relates to man is of importance in the study of human nature. Every art and science. Every scheme of the understanding or operation of the senses wears a certain resemblance and possesses a sort of relationship when considered relatively to the faculties or powers that produced them.

In the history of man there is this great and evident distinction. He is either a solitary,a domestic or a political being. It is domestic history that pleases me beyond all others. So far as the characters of men are influenced by political events,political history is interesting,but it is not for me always to abstract my attention from the personages and find them as events, always to consider men,no otherwise than collectively, to employ my attention only in the consideration of general events flowing from general causes. The personal character of individuals,their usages,their dress,their accent,their language,their habits,manners and opinions: their <u>personal behaviour</u> I am desirious of knowing. <u>Life and Manners</u>, I must repeat,is my favorite science. These are the materials of conversation. These the objects of universal curiosity.

Lucullus was a noble Roman. He was born in an age when civil and military power was the general object of ambition. To this end was the education which he received,adapted. In due time he was invested with the toga,and sent to lead armies and govern provinces. He encountered Mithridates,vanquished his hosts in repeated

battles,obliged him to take refuge in the territories of a kinsman,besieged the capitol of his protector,returned after many exploits to Rome,built houses and gardens,decorated them with the spoils of Pontus and Armenia,and spent the rest of his life,in literary and luxurious indolence. These incidents are necessary to be known,but to know them only is not worth the labor. Lucullus must be painted in more accurate and distinct colors,describe to me his education,let me hear the precepts of his mother and his teacher,let the plan of his camps,his progresses,his houses,his gardens be laid before (me). Let his maxims of military behaviour and household economy be laid before me. Let me hear him speak and see him act. That is the knowledge which only is desirable and the knowledge of general and national events is useful only as it is instrumental in the attainment of this.

Thursday (1 August 1793)

I had gotten thus far in a very learned dissertation as you may well believe,when Wilkins arrival interrupted my progress and now,when an opportunity is again afforded of continuing my lucubrations I do not find much inclination to finish this letter in the strain in which I have begun it. I have,since,received yours.

I am far from thinking my friend that my abilities are adequate to the task which you impose upon me. However I will wave all unreasonable diffidence,and promise you to put my skill to the test. The region of possibilities is very wide,but I am convinced that truth has never yet been exceeded by imagination. Shall I try my hand immediately. The following story is strictly true. Only imagine that instead of happening seven [1] years ago,it happened yesterday.

March 20.1788

My dear friend

I know not what to write to you. A melancholy narrative which I have just heard at the breakfast table, has affected me so much,that I find myself unfit for any employment--unless (I wonder I had not thought of it before) it be to repeat to you the gloomy tale. I am in no disposition to moralize on paper though this story affords infinite subject of reflection,and shall without preface or comment,proceed to the particulars.

Some five or six months ago,the house opposite to us, it having been some time before untenanted,was taken by a man just arrived from Ireland. He brought into it,his wife and four daughters,none of them below eighteen years of age. His front room he filled with some goods,clothes and Irish linens. An inquisitive neighborhood,the defects of whose knowledge are always easily supplied by their invention,soon discovered that this man after having wasted a large fortune in the most expensive and pernicious amusements,had escaped from

1 If the date of 1788 is correct it would be five years ago.

his rapacious creditors with a few goods,the wreck of his fortune. Here he lived subsisting on the produce of his little store for some time,nor was the condition of his family or his character known till very lately.

This wretch was the slave of drunkenness. He would return late at night,seldom less than three times a week,raised by intoxication into a fit of madness,and exercise the most brutal cruelties on his innocent and helpless family. His wife was a woman of good family and excellent education,and the fear of exposing her husband was a sufficient motive with her to abstain from all public complaints. Her fortitude and prudence enabled her to conceal her domestic wretchedness for a long time. It was however at last discovered.

Mr.Waring,the gentleman who lived the next door to us,being engaged pretty late one evening in reading, heard,at about half after eleven o'clock,a confused murmur as of one in distress. He started and listened, and at length perceived a faint scream and an indistinct cry of murder and help. He immediately repaired to the place whither the sound conducted him,and found it to issue from Cooke's house. He went up the alley as the horrid work seemed to be doing in the back part of the house and stopped for a moment to listen,when he had reached the kitchen door. He there heard the sound of a lash. Every stroke was accompanied with a weak and stifled cry of anguish from some unhappy sufferer,who, at every interval exclaimed,in a tone of the deepest supplication "Oh,Jockey,don't expose yourself. Have pity on me for the sake of your own reputation. Oh! Mother. Mother. Had you lived to see this. This treatment from one whom your charity saved from starving. For God's sake,Jockey,don't expose yourself!" These expostulations had no other effect on the unfeeling monster,than to increase his rage,and he replied only by horrid and unmeaning execrations and a repetition of his cruelties. Mr.Waring did not long deliberate,but finding the door unlocked he rushed in and beheld Mrs.Cooke kneeling before her husband,intreating his forbearance,while he siezing her by the hair with one hand with an horsewhip in the other inflicted the most dreadful severities on her back and shoulders from which he had torn away almost all covering. The four daughters were standing in different parts of the room weeping and wringing their hands.

Mr.W. immediately interposed,at first mildly,but finding Cooke exasperated at what he called an insolent intrusion was preparing to turn his vengeance from his wife upon him, he seized him by the collar,and threw him with such violence against the door as to hurt him not a little,and sufficiently disabled him from doing them any more mischief for that night. His abrupt and unexpected entrance filled the daughters with surprise and consternation,but their fears subsided as soon as they recognised him. The sobbing and weeping mother raised herself with difficulty to a chair. Trembling and aghast she had scarcely power to replace her handkerchief and smooth her hair which was in the wildest

disorder. Her gratitude was overpowered by her shame, and she cried out as soon as she was able to speak "O Mr.W--- O Mr. W--- I would rather have died than you should see this! It was to this moment my only comfort that my sufferings were not known,but to be sure it was your goodness made you interfere,and I must thank you for it."

By this time the noise had roused the next neighbor who now entered the kitchen. This was a second shock to her delicacy and it was with some difficulty that they raised her from a state of violent grief,to some degree of Composure.

While this scene was transpiring,the husband had risen from the floor and finding that his strength was unequal to contend with his antagonist,he stalked, muttering curses,into the parlor. He there soon forgot his mishap and throwing himself upon a couple of chairs,a drunken slumber overtook him. The two gentlemen,carrying him up into his chamber,locked the door upon him,and,after promising the unhappy family all the relief and assistance in their power to afford them, left them to mourn in secret,over their own calamities. Their offers were received with a sullen kind of gratitude and unwilling condescension,nor did she even again apply to their compassion for succor. Some weeks after one of the daughters hurrying over to Mr. W--- in the dusk of evening,informed his wife that her mother was extremely ill. That she and her sisters would be glad if she would visit their poor mother and prevail upon her to send for a physician,and to take the necessary medicines. "But I pray Madam (added she) do not let my mother know that it was any of us who told you her condition,and desired you to come to her, but pretend, if you please,that you called in by accident,for she has strictly ordered us to let no one know her situation,but I could not help disobeying her in this."

Mrs.Waring was afraid of injuring the poor girl's feelings by any questions,but immediately accompanied her home. Mrs.Cooke appeared to be equally surprised and chagrined on seeing her enter the chamber and pretended only a slight indisposition,but her efforts but poorly seconded her inclinations. There were evident marks of blows on her cheeks and forehead,and by her stifled groans,and by putting her hand frequently on her stomach,it was evident that she had received a fatal blow somewhere about the body. She obstinately resisted all Mrs. W--- and her daughters importunities to send for a Physician,and rejected her offers of assistance,affirming that she was but slightly indisposed and that it would go off very soon. She at length however left her,determined notwithstanding her remonstrances to send a Physician to her in the morning. The eldest daughter followed her to the street door, and when she turned about to take leave,was requested to sit down for a moment in the parlor. She instantly complied. They both sat down in silence. The young lady made frequent attempts to speak,but her utterance

seemed choked and she frequently wiped away the rising tear. Mrs.W--- by the most soothing and tender treatment endeavored to remove her embarassment. She at length burst into tears,unable any longer to restrain herself, and sobbed out "O dear Madam. My father. My father. We do not expect home till 11 o'clock and then--dear Madam. My mother will want a protector. If Mr.W--- will be so kind--"

You may easily imagine how much Mrs.W--- was shocked at this intelligence. She was unable for a few minutes to speak and then hurried away to her own house to conceal her own emotions,promising however not to neglect her insinuated request.

Mr.W--- sat at his own door until he saw Cooke returning home,who by his wild and furious demeanor betrayed the usual marks of intoxication. He then went over the way and they entered the house together. When Cooke found who it was that accompanied him,the ferocity of his looks somewhat abated and he called in a milder tone than might have been expected for his wife and daughters. He received no answer but from Mr. W--- who told him that his wife and daughters had gone to their repose,and (added he, in a resolute tone of voice) I advise you to do the same." Cooke made no reply but looked askance at him,with a countenance full of rage and surprise. Mr.W--- found it necessary to be more absolute,and producing an horsewhip from beneath his coat,told him that he not only advised him but ordered him to go to bed,and that if he did not instantly depart, he would whip him to within an inch of death. This menace had a suitable effect,and Cooke thought proper without saying a word to walk very submissively to his chamber. Mr.W--- locked the door and went to quiet the fears of the family.

The wretch,the moment he was left alone,generally fell asleep,and left them no more to dread from for that reason. Mr.W--- finding no further occasion for his presence,left them,promising to pay them a visit in the morning and to bring a physician with him,but alas! his kind offices were rendered needless,for early in the morning Miss Ann (the name of the eldest daughter,) came over to inform them that her mother had died in the night. Mrs.W--- immediately hastened over and wept with the daughters over the cold remains of their unfortunate parent. Cooke rose about eight o'clock,and coming down stairs enquired sullenly why breakfast was not ready,and observing one of his daughters in tears, called her " a damned Minx,and wondered why she was eternally snivelling?"

When he heard the real state of affairs,he shewed some signs of remorse,and till a week after the funeral behaved with some degree of decorum and sobriety. They flattered themselves that the untimely end of his wife had produced a lasting reformation in him,but Alas! their hopes were quickly blasted. One night Mr.W--- was again summoned to their assistance,and found the eldest daughter in the same situation,in which he at first discovered their mother. Those friends,whom their

misfortunes had made, began now to think it time to remove them from this horrid tyranny. Their endeavors were hastened by discovering that the four daughters had in order to avoid the fury of Cooke, spent the whole of a wet and cold night in November, upon the platform of their house, with scarcely any thing to cover them, being unexpectedly driven from their beds.

But let me close this gloomy story, by adding that the father has been induced to give them up, and suffer them to procure a subsistence by their own labors. They are widely separated, some are no better than servant maids—some—but I cannot go on. This picture of human calamity has affected me more than I wish, and it is time to bid you

Adieu---

What think you of this story, would it not form the groundwork of a noble tale? I will think more of it hereafter only tell me shall I read this imaginary letter before the Society next Saturday---

C.B.B.

The story of Cooke and his family is of particular interest for several reasons. It shows the turn of mind now happening to Brown. Not only had he recovered the poise of his mind but from a versifier of indifferent couplets he turns to a simple story of common life. In entering what was to him a new field of literary activity he is not following a model but merely taking up the pen of the observant story teller, to picture again the same sad tale of the suffering at the hands of the drunkard. In this respect it forecasts the realistic fiction of his later life.

Bringhurst was greatly impressed by the tale and the next letter shows Brown drawing the obvious conclusions from his successful attempt. Thus after wandering and wavering he came back to his

normal health by resuming the occupation that he had chosen for his life work. The letter is

(addressed Joseph Bringhurst Junr. Second street.)

Franklin's Office, Friday 16th. Aug. 1793. 1

My dear Friend

Your last very curious and interesting letter ought to be answered. Your story is another proof (supposing the circumstances to be unquestionably true, and of that you have assured me) of the influence of passions and the occurence of events which the bulk of mankind, the various classes of the vulgar, are inclined to believe have no existence, or at least none in the degree which dealers in fiction are accustomed to describe them.

It is common to talk of excellence, beauty, deformity and so forth "as are only to be found in books." I never met with, in books, what I do not believe frequently to be discoverable in nature. Richardson's fictions have, I doubt not, been a thousand times parallelled or exceeded by realities. It is no proof of the contrary that such facts do not fall within the sphere of our own immediate observation, for how pregnant of strange events is our own domestic experience, and yet there are no two families, in which the same characters are displayed and the same incidents have happened.

I have already imagined the leading incidents and general outlines of a tale, suited to my purpose. In the execution of this design I have not the least doubt that I should, for the moment, please myself, but how long my complacency would last, and whether it would be an equally acceptible performance to the more and the less refined taste of others, I am extremely dubious. I have too much experience to imagine that whatever is fortunate enough to attain my own approbation is of consequence secure of the applause of others.

But these considerations do not interfere with the prosecution of this task, for though no one but myself should ever see it when completed, yet it would be highly useful to me, as a delightful recreation and a profitable exercise.

You highly flatter me by expressing your wishes that this wonderful design should be completed but in my present situation it is absolutely impossible to begin it. There is a certain tranquillity of mind and disembarassment of views which are absolutely necessary to such employments, and there have doubtless been persons who by violent efforts have disengaged

1 Dated from the end of the letter. The "Franklin's Office" is Walter Franklin's given in the 1793 Hardie directory as 63 S. 3rd. St. He was an attorney. Cf. letters 21 May 1792 and 11 June 1793.

2 Dunlap: National Portrait Gallery article says this was Sky Walk afterwards incorporated into Edgar Huntly.

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themselves from a certain degree of vexation and perplexity, but either my fortitude is less or my vexations are greater than those of such persons.

I cannot go with you to Woodberry ~~=~~ this afternoon. Do not ask me the reason. I cannot tell it, but believe me it is sufficient. If you go, forget not to present my best—but no matter. I will try to write. I received from him last a very strange Rhapsodical Epistle. I wish I could answer him in the same style but I am too well convinced that I cannot. Adieu.

C.B.Brown.

Stet

~~The misspelling of Woodbury, New Jersey was probably mere haste, but it may be also considered as symbolic.~~ Wilkins had gone there & may with the expectation of never returning to Philadelphia, so that he was ~~[illegible]~~ fading away from Brown's affections while Brinhurst was taking his place. ~~in Brown's affections.~~

The reference to the Rhapsodical epistle is curious—perhaps it has some relation to the influence of Brown's Rhapsodist, ~~which we may now turn our attention.~~

had
ten essays entitled Trifles which appeared ~~the following year~~
State
in the New Jersey Gazette, ~~because he had left Philadelphia for~~
~~having been admitted to the bar~~
~~with Richard Howell~~
~~Woodbury where he was reading law so as to practise in the~~
~~Supreme Court~~ during the last winter.
~~In general~~ It should be noticed that the first seven are signed
with the letters W.I.L.L.I.A.M. an imitation of Brown's method
in
~~of signing~~ his Rhapsodist essays of 1789. The eighth is unsigned,
perhaps to designate a space
and the last ~~remaining~~ two are signed W. ~~Thus~~ so that as a series they give
~~lettered~~ William W W— a rather good way of
designating their author.

They do not show any literary ability; indeed
~~fact~~ they are the merest "trifles" but they
deserve our attention because they contain
~~so~~ much that may have been intended by
Wilkins to refer to Brown, some of the
details applying to the past and ~~some~~ at least
one prophetic of ~~the immediate future~~ Clara Howard.
At this time it is only necessary to summarize
them after this manner:

~~The circumstances connected with~~ the earliest partial publication of Arthur Mervyn chapters were published before the ~~beginning~~ epidemic began make it impossible for Brown to have secured his first-hand information of the yellow fever by his experience of it in New York ~~so late as~~ 1798 so that he must have been in Philadelphia when the plague visited the city during the calamitous autumn of this year. x The deaths up to the time of Brown's letter had only amounted to 126, not ~~a~~ alarming ~~state of affairs~~ in a population of thirty-thousand; however September and October showed the seriousness of the epidemic and by November tenth four thousand had fallen victims. The death of Dolly Todd's husband brought Wilkins back to Philadelphia where he settled with Brown at 119 South Second street, east side. Brown's father's residence was next door at number 117; but the family had fled to Burlington.