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CHAPTER VIII

BROWN'S BEST FRIEND

1794 Aetat.23

Though Brown was intimate with William Wood Wilkins and Joseph Bringhurst the best friend he ever had was the man with whom he now formed an intimate personal acquaintance, Elihu Hubbard Smith. ~~In~~ During the winter of 1790-1791 he had ~~not~~ only introduced to been Smith who was in Philadelphia studying medicine × and his acquaintance with him, up to the 11th. of June 1793 had been ~~only~~ an epistolary one probably encouraged if not brought about by his early versifying. With Brown such an acquaintance must have been pleasant and attractive and ~~thorough for~~ it only needed the more favorable circumstance of ~~an actual~~ meeting in Connecticut to cement their friendship firmly.

and Smith's publication of the American Poems.

× The notes he kept of Dr. Rush's lectures on the Theory and Practice of Medicine are in the Surgeon Generals' Library at Washington under the erroneous name of Elisha H. Smith. (L.G. Goodman: Rush, Philad., 1934, p. 381.)

Elihu Hubbard Smith was the first child[1] of Dr.Reuben Smith and Abigail Hubbard who were married 23 October 1770. He was born at Litchfield 4 September 1771,about eight months later than Brown. His schooling was received at the Litchfield primary schools until he entered Yale College in 1782, at

1 A sister of his was said to be Mrs.Skinner who in July 1822 ran a boarding house in Utica,N.Y., Cf.Dunlap:Arts of Design,Vol.I, p.292.

2 Dr.Smith had an extensive correspondence with Oliver Wolcott. The Litchfield Weekly Monitor of 28 May 1787 contains an advertisement of Reuben Smith Apothecary as wanting an apprentice. The 14 July number advertises some land for sale. His gravestone at Litchfield reads:In memory|of|Docr.Reuben Smith|who died|on the 25th.day of August|1804|aged 67 years.

the age of eleven. At fifteen he received the degree of A.B. under President Ezra Stiles, but being so young he ~~was placed~~ took advanced studies in Dr. Dwight's Seminary at Greenfield, where he remained for two years. Following this he studied medicine in Litchfield under the direction of his father until in the autumn of 1790 he went to Philadelphia to attend the medical lectures given at the University of Pennsylvania. On account of the absence of proper records it is not known whether he took his degree in 1791. It is possible that he did ~~not~~, though on the title-page of the Medical Repository his name is not followed by the "M.D." as the two other editors' names are; however medical biographers and others always give him the degree. The medical studies and lectures left him some ~~plenty~~ of leisure and in March of 1791 he wrote his Edwin and Angelina[2]

1 Everest: Poets of Connecticut, Hartford 1843, p.105 says he received his degree after attending the full course of lectures—which was the usual method of the time.

2 This was the original title of Goldsmith's Hermit.

as a prose drama in two acts. In 1792 he removed to Wethersfield, Connecticut, where he practised medicine, lodging with a minister by the name of John Williams, but finding little practise in such a rustic town in the autumn of 1793 he went to New York. Meanwhile, in June of this year he had edited what is called the first collection of American poetry,[1] to which Brown and Bingham subscribers and probably contributors. In 1793 he also added to and prepared Edwin and Angelina for the stage, enlarging it to three acts and rewriting it in verse. In 1794 with Samuel Lathan Mitchill and Edward Miller he established at New York the Medical Repository.[2] Edwin and Angelina was again revised this same year. The 1796 ~~New York~~ directory gives his address as 13 Cedar Street, and in the same year he was appointed one of the physicians of the New York Hos-

In New York he lived first at 2 Golden Hill Street (John Street) and later at 23 Maiden Lane (then Market Street). ×

1 American Poems, original and selected. Vol.I.(all published) Litchfield, Collier and Buel, (1793). In his letter dated 17 January 1796 to Theodore Dwight he speaks of his plans for the second volume. It was to be edited on his own risk and among others was to contain a poem by him on Indian manners. For an earlier collection see our note in preceding chapter.

2 His principal contributions to this periodical are listed in Thacher's Medical Biography Boston 1828, Vol.II, p.90.

× M. E. Bailey: A Lesser Hartford Wit, University of Maine Bulletin June 1928, p. 82.

pital. His series of letters to William Buel on the fever of New York of 1795 which was afterwards published in Noah Webster's Collection of Papers on Bilious Fevers was written this year. The 1795-6 Minerva contains several notices of a Manumission Society of which Smith was the secretary. This anti-slavery organization was publishing two papers,one in the country and one in the city--The Herald and The Minerva--in which advertisements for slaves were not printed. Its meetings were mostly held at the City Dispensary or at the Society's School Room in Cliff Street. The 17 May 1796 Minerva announced that Smith's letters to Buel on the Yellow Fever were in press. The issue of the same newspaper for 17 December 1796 announced the first performance of Edwin and Angelina;or the Banditti, as having taken place the evening before. This opera contained songs from Goldsmith as well as some original by the author;the music was by Pelisier;and the Old American Theatre Company,with Mr. and Mrs. Hodgkinson,acted the piece. It was published in New York by the Swords in 1797,the preface being dated 15 February. In the post-script to the preface Smith acknowledges his indebtedness to Goldsmith and the ballad of "Edwin and Angelina". It is a beautiful piece of book-making and

The guide to truth corrupted, or destroy'd,
A passage foisted, or a painful void,
The work of ignorance, or of fraud more bold,
To blast a rival, or a scheme uphold;-

are acknowledged in a note to have been "supplied by a friend"--probably that friend was Brown.

This same year Smith delivered a discourse before the Manumission Society,which was published.[1] In the Weekly Magazine there is an address of the Society to the Public,signed by Smith as Secretary of the American Minerological Society. On 4 September Brown,Johnson and Smith addressed to Dunlap a letter,which later is to be given in full. At that time Smith was not well but he was cheerful and hopeful. Fifteen days later,after four day's sickness,he died of the yellow fever. He is listed in James Hardie's Malignant Fever[2] among the burials thus: "Smith,Elihu H. Physician,45 Pine Street." He was buried in the yard of the Brick Presbyterian Church, in Wall street. Our illustration is a photograph of the portrait painted by Sharpless, said by Dunlap[3] to be "very like";a copy of which was presented to Dunlap by the artist's son.[4] According to the Arts of Design[5] Dunlap

1 Vol.III,p.83. 2 N.Y.,1799,p.131.
3 In his manuscript journal in the New York Historical Society, 1 October 1797.
4 Arts of Design,II,p.72. 5 I,p.268 and II,p.69.

and Stuart also painted portraits of him. Dunlap says the latter was engraved by David Edwin.[1] Sharpless' portrait was engraved by Leney appearing originally in the American Medical and Philosophical Register for March 1814. Letters of administration were granted to his friend William Johnson 14 December 1798.[2]

Smith was a man of noble character and to be intimate with him must have been a treat to Brown. His stability, his sanity, his unselfishness, his industry, endeared him to the weaker man. It is high recommendation of Brown that they were drawn together.

The opera of Edwin and Angelina has details that show a similarity of literary tastes. The disguise of Angelina, the hermit, the Hamlet-like Sifrid, the wild nature of the bandit leader, the woman who preferred death to disgrace must have appealed to Brown; in fact, the last detail he used later as a motif in his Ormond.

It will be seen how strongly Smith encouraged Brown in his literary attempts and he was not one of the friends who made it difficult

1 It is probable Dunlap confused our Smith with Dr. Smith the Provost of Pennsylvania University.
2 New York Historical Society Collections, XV, p.256.

for him to keep away from the law and commerce. Smith found the practise of medicine no hindrance to an occasional literary effort but he well understood how the law would have been an impediment to Brown.

When Smith went to New York in the autumn of 1793 it is more than probable Brown accompanied him. According to Dunlap,[1] shortly after, when Brown had returned to his parent's home, he made a walking tour to the Blue Mountain section of Pennsylvania visiting Bethlehem and Nazareth at the former of which there was a society of Moravians and a good tavern appropriately named "The Sun" run by one Albright. Very soon after he again visited New York where he was introduced to Smith's circle of friends. Notable among them besides William Dunlap was William Johnson, the law reporter famous in those days, who was a native of Middletown, Connecticut, and a Freshman and Sophomore at Yale while Smith was a Junior and Senior. After stopping a short time with Smith Brown returned to Philadelphia. According to one authority[2] he lived during this year with Wilkins at 119 South Second street, probably next door to his family.

1 Vol.I, pp.57-8.
2 A.C.Clark: Dolly Madison, Washington 1914, p.21.

Though it is ~~probable~~ likely[1] the next letter ~~of Brown's~~ was written from the the South Second street house there is no certainty of it. It is

(addressed William Johnson, Esquire. No.5. Hanover Square, New York.)

Philada. (Thursday) February 13th. 1794.

My dear Sir.

Mr. Smith, the pleasure of whose company I have enjoyed for these few days past, flattered me with the hope that I should see you also. This hope, however, has been disappointed, and I am left to regret at leisure that any obstacles arose in the way of this excursion. Besides charging your good friends with my warmest respects to you, I shall venture one step further from the beaten track and the limits of vulgar ceremonial, and take[2] the liberty of assuring you in person how sincerely welcome your visit would have been to me.

My pen will never be quite as communicative as my tongue. I should however, if circumstances permitted, be inclined to send you a much more loquacious letter, than this will prove. The purpose of which, indeed, is rather to provoke an answer than to indulge a talkative propensity, and to procure the pleasure of one or two lines from you.

Were I not fearful of the imputation of vanity, I might urge claims to your confidence and friendship, yielding only to fraternal ties. I should be deterred from bestowing applauses on another whether direct or indirect, from the persuasion, not merely of their insincerity on my own part, but of the incredulity of my friend. The last sentence is somewhat enigmatical I fear. I shall however leave the solution of it to you, provided you remember to include the first motive from having any application to you (yourself)[3](a)nd believe that I am in simple truth. Your affectionate an(d) (obliged)

C.B.Brown."

1 In the Etting collection of the Pennsylvania Historical Society. ~~The late Dr Jordan the Librarian kindly permitted us several years ago to take a copy of this letter.~~

2 Carelessly written, taking.

3 The words and parts of words supplied in brackets were torn by the breaking of the seal.

× The triangle at the north-west corner of William and Pearl streets.

Therein we see that Brown has given up his old idea of single friendship and was now reaching out to grasp the hand of any friend of his friends whom he could meet.

One of the most interesting and at the same time the most unsatisfactory records of this time is that of the Hardie 1794 Philadelphia directory which gives Charles B.Brown as the Master of the Friends' Grammar School at 117 North Second Street. So far as any published records are reliable there was not another person of the full name living at that time. The number is a remarkable coincidence for the home of Brown's parents was 117 South Second Street. It is improbable that the two details, name and address, were based on error; and there is no reason why both were not correct.

and we are left in doubt as to whether he neglected the social custom of a call for a dinner. It is probable he would call..

The five hundred and thirty-two heroic pentameters entitled Devotion--An epistle--To Calista which appear in the American Register[1] have internal evidence which points to Brown as the author. The diction is strikingly like his with such things as the "forthright path" only differing from the Wieland verse in that it is applied to conscience instead of virtue; in fact, the selection of most of the adjectives is decisive. The ideas are all his.[2] The writer pictures himself as very much like Brown--he had "tried the studious path", was wont to stray and dream by day and night along the banks of the Schuylkill, had written verse in his youth, had found "nothing in the metaphysical wilderness", was living with a dark and dreary soul, and was particularly interested in friendship in the year 1794. Recollections of ~~what will appear in~~ Ormond may be found in the unseen witness and the similarity to the situation of Helena. These slight

2 The name Acasto ~~probably came~~ may have come from Freneau's Rising Glory of America but Brown's use of it did not.

1 Vol.III, p.567 ff. ~~I, p. 571.~~

traces ~~of Ormond~~ are of greater force ~~than they appear to be~~ when we notice that Brown had ~~likewise~~ used the name of Calista in the thirteenth chapter.[1] Speaking of how Ormond treated ~~her when~~ Helena, his mistress, when she was in a fit of anger Brown says:

> "His pupil personated the victims of anger and grief, and poured forth the fiery indignation of Calista."

Because of its meaning the reference appears to have been to the ruined Calista of Rowe's tragedy[2] The Fair Penitent which also seems to have reflected her dutiful devotion to her father in the title of Brown's poem; otherwise there is not ~~the slightest~~ trace of Rowe. The tragedy was produced at the New Theatre of Philadelphia 26 March 1794 and ~~probably~~ quite likely was seen by Brown for there is no ~~record~~ ~~to~~ suggest that he had merely read the play.

The name could have come from Pope's Moral Essays (ii,31) or from Margaretta V. Faugères ?. Ethelinde (1794) with Calista, melting song? In fabulous history Calista was one of the nymphs of Diana, loved by Jupiter and ~~was~~ transformed into a bear becoming Ursa Major in the sky while her son by Jupiter became Ursa Minor. The name as applied to Helena is ~~particularly~~ appropriate in view of the similarity of the positions of Helena with Ormond and Calista with Jupiter.

1 Is it possible Brown read the famous Spanish drama La Celestina and wished his lady to recall Calisto in that work? We know he was interested in Lope de Vega and he may have had ~~more~~ acquaintance with other Spanish authors, ~~than we have found suggested.~~ Similar speculation may be indulged by connecting Calista to Célide's Caliste. Boswell's flame was an affinity of Benjamin Constant, who we know Brown read Constant

2 The name Rowe appears on the third page of the Wieland note-book list of names to be used for characters.

Parts of the poem read as if it were addressed by Brown to Helena, many of the peculiarities being adapted to those related of the character of that fascinating and misguided beauty; and then again other parts make it appear as if the whole poem, with its glowing imaginative pictures and metaphysical pondering were after all but a versified form of one of the epistolary appeals such as he had addressed to Bringhurst.

The date Philadelphia September 1794 is a very strong point of circumstantial evidence. Brown was in Philadelphia at that time, his letters show him to have been particularly interested in verse at that time, and the appearance of a 1794 poem as "original" in an 1808 periodical under his editorship is significant to us even if

its fourteen years of age meant nothing to the editor. The erring steps, led astray, warning voice, whispering "beware" and divine behests all occuring within as few lines with are strikingly reminiscent of the same details used in Wieland. The bowers canopied by intertwined and verdant branches and ~~with~~ their echoes ~~are likewise harbingers of Wieland.~~

The verse as verse has Miltonic echoes in its metre, inversions and nouns with their adjectives but is often ~~not so~~ more meritorious than the Pope couplets Brown had formerly written. ~~used.~~ Except for occasional groups or parts of groups of lines which sometimes stumble along unrythmically as if the writer were severely handicapped by the unrhymed character of the pentameter he had chosen, there are many fine passages and frequent alliteration, ~~and~~ assonance and variety of feet.

The demerits are at first glance liable to lead the reader astray and cause him to miss what is enjoyable as verse and well worth seeking. Therefore attention will be directed to many passages by harmlessly breaking up the continuity of the poem so that the reader may form a just opinion ~~of Brown as a versifier~~ and became ~~having~~ many of the delights that come to the appreciator of unusual versi-

Adorn'd with all her stars,or with the moon
In peerless majesty,or star of Eve,
The bridal lamp,in modest pomp arrayed;
While,with the vocal lapse of streams,that chide
The busy resonance of sandy shores,
The solemn grove her stilly murmurs mingles,
And pipes,and strings,and voices sweet unite
To form the spell;but she of earthly mould
And mortal mother is,earth-born,earth-doom'd;
But thou,enshrin'd in starry tabernacle,
Of heavenly origin,the darling art
Of dread eternity! what wonder then
"Thy notes the soul,her's only charm the ear?"
Thou standest at the door of Bliss,and guard'st
The holy vestibule from all profane
Intrusion:me,no wayward thought conducts,
Of pride and vain imagination bred;
No curious eye,that in its boundless range
Must needs look in and see what strange or new
Religion's house contains;and whether those
Of elder times speak true,who hither call
Each way-farer,and urge his tardy step
By hanging in his view the token high
Of hospitable invitation fair,
With golden characters inscrib'd,that all
May read who list. "Lo! the abode
"Of Happiness;whoe'er is wise will knock;
"The porter ready stands to open;all
"Who ask will find."
There is,who joys to find,
What,e'er he look'd,he was resolved to find,
The hope that leads to heaven,a flitting dream,"

Following this we have a very fair example of Brown's appreciation of plain poetic simile.

"A meteor of the intellectual night;
A wild phantasm,child of a feverish brain,
Nursling of ignorance,the gilded toy
Of doting Age,Age faultering and aghast,
That eyes the oblivious night,which lours at hand,
As children,fancy-struck,look on the void
Of cheerless dark,with thousand spectres throng'd."

The same desire for religious freedom which Brown had leads on to a passage that shows how much his very beliefs relied on a friend's devotion for their existence,thus:

" Full freighted with discoveries, back he hies;
Of monkish dreams talks loud, and priestly craft;
Of miracles which none believ'd who saw;
Of mystic prophecies, a knotted maze,
Inextricate, obscure, inscrutable,
That must be first fulfilled, ere understood;
Of Fate, that made a world, and Fate that rules.
Not madly thus, and impiously, do I
Beyond the sphere of sense extend my view.
Without thee, mild Devotion, what on earth
Can give me aught but momentary ease? "

The next eighteen lines give us the old familiar picture of our author studying and wandering along the banks of the scenic Schuylkill.

" The studious path have I not tried, and found
Joys bright, indeed, in prospect, but, alas!
Tasteless or bitter found, when to my lips
I fondly lifted the enchanted cup?
In Fancy's fairy land, my steps have long
Been wont to stray, where Schuylkill pours her tide
'Twixt unaspiring banks, low-brow'd, and rich
In naught but waving rushes, sight deform'd
And indelectable; o'er downs that stretch
On either hand, for many a weary mile,
By many an ox and many a ranging steed
Depastur'd, scenes that sober thought abhors;
Scenes unakin to beauty, health estrang'd,
But deck'd with orient charms, when Fancy wav'd
Her wand, and rent the veil which hides
Her soft retreats from vulgar gaze, and op'd,
In genial hues array'd, a prospect wide,
And scenes dear only to poetic eyes. "

This is followed by his picture of his youthful historical study

" Not unattempted too th' historic page,
Fraught with the spoils of hoary Time, and with
Th' accumulated lore of ages fraught.
Oft have I ranged the spacious round, and long,
In wonder wrapt, have listen'd to the tale
Of other times; of kings and heroes fam'd
For virtue, warlike or pacific; great
In fighting fields, or bickering senates, arm'd
In panoply of eloquence or steel;
The checker'd narrative of life and death
Political; "

Running off to a picture that adds nothing to that already given.

" the pedigree of states,
Trac'd high, and branching out a thousand fold ;

Of cradled Greece, and Rome's infantile years ;
Or when, the noon of life attain'd, she look'd
Proudly from her hill-top, and upward threw,
Exulting loud, her all-subduing arms ;
Or rushing down the deep descent, when Time
The signal gave, th' abyss of death at last
Receiv'd her and her cumbrous train, a world.

The love for botany and its part in a normal appreciation of the beauties of life is concluded with a peculiarly Brownish reference to his religious doubts and debates.

Plain Nature, in her flowr'y paths, has long
Detain'd me, lost in her enchanting maze
Awhile ; anon, delighted more to trace
The footsteps of Linnean guide, and out
Of such sweet prison wind me by the clue,
Spun by Upsalian hands, conducted safe
Through pleasant paths : and long has been the march
And weary, through the thorny tracts that lead
To *nothing* in the metaphysic wilderness.

The lines following have some excellent touches on the sophistry of just such logic as Godwin fed to a too-receptive world.

To trace the secrets of mysterious mind ;
To tame the offspring, frolicsome and wild,
Of Fancy, in unwonted fetters bound,
And captive to the analytic power,
And fleeting Memory's capricious train ;
Or thoughts, of dubious stock, and stubborn kind
(Link'd and unlink'd at random, starting now
A thousand leagues awry ; eluding long
The yoke ; which to impose my task enjoined ;)
To teach to range, in firm phalanx, and form
The mystic dance spontaneous, and to move
Their files in beauteous order, quick to spy
Error, their lurking foe, or ardent wield,
In war with Sophistry, indignant arms ;
To beat, with indefatigable heels,
Th' highway which Reason's oracle directs
The traveller to tread, who meditates
A journey from his own to other worlds,
Has oft been mine ; nor have I fail'd to march
Newtonian banners under, war to wage
With Prejudice, intrench'd behind the mound,
Of old Opinion, arm'd
With subtilties, whose force is known to all
And which a thousand victories attest.

> At length, grown weary of the task, I left
> Old Mathesis, his problems, and his scales,
> To those who list, and sped to scenes of gay
> And wild exuberance, where Fancy sports
> At freedom, doating on the specious worlds
> That (mimicking Omnipotence) she builds,
> Strengthens, embellishes, admires; anon,
> Diverted by a newer freak, o'erturns
> With headlong haste what she with equal haste
> Had built; prone to abolish as create.

The four lines that wind this up are recognised as Brownish when we remember his use of mathematics in drawing all sorts of architectural plans. They are especially characteristic.

> "' 'Twas then I linger'd in the bright retreats
> Where forms august or beautiful advance,
> Called by the pencil's magic from the bounds
> Remote of an ideal universe."

Introduced by four indifferent lines which read:

> " Oft in poetic I stray'd,and pluck'd,
> With wanton hand,wreathes that disdain'd a date
> Less than immortal;wreathes,by Phrenzy deem'd
> (What less than Phrenzy could?)reserv'd for me."

we come to a memorable passage of appeal and lament such as often haunts the mind of any author who considers his work as something more than a common trade.

> "Such is the fond delusive dream that haunts
> The dream of youthful poet,far too prone
> To banquet on futurity,and gild
> His twilight with the splendour of renown,
> And slow the glittering honours to resign,
> Though snatch'd to decorate more worthy brows,
> For his unfit."

This leads to an extended vision of Brown the dreamer which in the end returns to his serious contemplation,endeavors to turn away but

inevitably falls to Brown's cry of despair.

"Oft has Achaia's tower'd pride
And Roman grandeurs fill'd my eager eye.
The dome 1that,rear'd aloft,repos'd in air
Sublime as Heaven's high arch,in tranquil state,
Majestic as a slumbering deity;
Or,springing upward2,seemed averse to yield
Obedience to the power that check'd his flight
Audacious,and confin'd his foot to earth.
How while I gaz'd aloft has wonder crept,
Slowly at first,with stealthy pace,along
My bosom,till,anon,the rapture rose
To dizzy heights:the eye too narrow seem'd
To grasp the vast design,the brain too small
To harbour the gigantic thought,that grows
At every glance;till,staring from my dream
Of ecstacy,the beatific dream,
Child of Vitruvian,and Paladian art,
The boast of ancient days,I hie me straight
To classic fields3,where many a nodding tower
And crumbling arch remain to tell the tale
Of empires,time-engulph'd,and grandeurs fall'n,
The prey of barbarous rage,remain to charm
Th' enthusiastic eye. To Tedmor's wild
I bend my way,to ponder,where the hills
Hide in their mighty bosoms forms of old
Creation;such as giant arms have built;
Or,as the rover of the desert dreams,
The work of more than mortal hands;of sage
Enchanters,destin'd to survive the wreck
Of nations,and to stand while nature stands;
Proof against every shock but that which sounds
The signal of the general doom,the shock
That into primitive confusion hurls

This beauteous world. Here strayed I, while my soul
Revolv'd the mutable and transient state
Of things made up of mortal elements.
The witcheries of music too, have oft,
Too oft, in chains of sweet enchantment led
My captive soul, too wise to spurn the yoke,
But with such thraldom pleas'd, while, far aloof,
The thoughts that brooded o'er disastrous scenes
Obeyed the melting voice and fled away;
Or ghastly Reminiscence ceas'd to haunt
My footsteps, sure to shun the forthright path.
But what avails it now to court the vain
Expedients, once indeed of force to lead
My thoughts astray from anguish, potent once
To charm the weariness of pilgrim steps?
But now the spell has lost its power; no more
Fancy breeds wings to reach celestial heights.
Supernal spirit, thou must show the way;

1 Brown's note:Pantheon 2 Brown's note:St.Peter's dome.
3 Brown's note:Balbeck.

and with a Browningesque passage which reads:

"scornful she reject
Thy humble lay,and blast the infant hope
Erewhile so blithesome. Here,oh,most rever'd
And gentlest of thy sex! oh,most belov'd!
Though with such love as angels smile to see
In those whom sex distinguish not,the love
That boasts participation with divine
Existences; soul thraldom; reason leagu'd
With reason,to improve the structure fair
Of knowledge; heart with heart allied to nurse
The plants,whose golden fruits,transplanted when
To heavenly ground,shall smile with orient hue,
And shed eternal fragrance."

we have eight lines that are so characteristic we might say that they may be said to sign Brown's name to it.

"Here thy friend
(For such himself will deem whate'er decree
Thy sternness shall pronounce),thy pupil here,
In not untremulous suspense shall stand,
Till thou,in thy own time,transmit the pledge
Of peace,or enmity: nor leave thou him
Bewilder'd long in doubtful maze,and lost
In fears,that his audacious lay has come
Too soon,or late,and no acceptance found."

On the whole this Calista poem is as valuable as if we had the same material in the expanded form of a letter superscribed and signed. It may take more than one reading to grasp its full relation to Brown's biography but we will venture to suggest that it has in it so much of our author it would be impossible of composition at that date by any other living human being.

The next letter we have of Brown's is one to Dunlap. It is here reprinted exactly as it appears in the Dunlap memoir,[1] and it should be

1 Vol.II,p.91 ff.

noticed that Paul Allen did not give it in the one volume biography.

(To William Dunlap.)

Philadelphia, (Friday,) Nov. 28, 1794.

My Dear Friend,

How many weeks have elapsed since you left us, and since you requested me to write to you some comments upon both your performance and the representation of it. Better late than never is an excellent adage, and when men have delayed the performance of their duty, instead of prolonging the breach by elaborate apologies, they had much better apply themselves forthwith to the discharge of it, that being the best reparation that can possibly be made for past neglect.

But what my friend, shall I say upon this interesting subject? you yourself were present at the performance of the piece,[1] you know how little the theatrical people are entitled to encomiums; what, therefore, could justify your friends here publishing their sentiments upon the acting: the public could judge of the intrinsic merits of the tragedy only as it was performed. How defective must their judgment therefore be, since their knowledge must be so imperfect.

My imagination is too undisciplined by experience to make me relish theatrical representations. I cannot sufficiently abstract my attention from accompanying circumstances and surrounding objects. Custom, or a differently constituted fancy enable others to distinguish and separate with ease the dramatic and theatrical.

My sufferings during that evening were such as to make me unalterably determine never to be an author.[2] That, indeed, was not before scarcely possible, but if every other circumstance were favourable, the dread of being torn and mangled by the play-house gentry, either of the stage or pit, would sufficiently damp my ardour.

You cannot expect that I should say any thing about the play itself. Undistinguishing encomiums must be as disagreeable to you to hear as fruitless in me to utter. Not having the piece before me, I can recollect only the general impression; that indeed would give just occasion for panegyrick, which, however delightful it would be to me to bestow, it would perhaps be unpleasing to the delicacy of my friend. Particular animadversions would require me to recollect particular lines and passages, for which purpose I confess my memory is not sufficiently tenacious.

1 The Fatal Deception or the Progress of Guilt, produced at New York 24 April 1794, published as Lord Leicester, 1807.
2 Of dramatic pieces.

I suppose you proceed with your wonted celerity, in the career of composition. Has epic poetry been entirely neglected? and has no progress been made in the song which you have consecrated to the fame of Aristomines?

It used to be a favourite maxim with me that the genius of a poet should be sacred to the glory of his country; how far this rule can be reduced to practice by an American bard; how far he can prudently observe it, and what success has crowned the efforts of those, who, in their compositions, have shown that they have not been unmindful of it, is perhaps not worth the inquiry.

National songs, strains which have a peculiar relation to the political or religious transactions of the poet's country, seem to be the most precious morsels, which do not require a dissatisfying brevity, nor preclude the most exalted flights of genius, for in this class I rank the Iliad and Eneid, and Orlando (the last is a truly national song, since the streets of every Italian city, have re-echoed with it for this hundred years or two) as well as Chevy Chase or the song of Roland. 1

Does it not appear to you that to give poetry a popular currency and universal reputation, a particular cast of manners and state of civilization is necessary? I have sometimes thought so, but perhaps it is an error, and the want of popular poems argues only the demerit of those who have already written, or some defect in their works, which unfits them for every taste or understanding.

Remember me affectionately to your family, and I will write speedily to Elihu. Tell him he must not be offended by my long silence.

Yours affectionately,

C. B. B.

1 The song of Roland translated from Norman French by Dr. Burney was afterward inserted in the Monthly Magazine, Vol. III, pp 79-80. The reprint is taken from the History of Music Vol. II, pp. 277-80.

In this connection an extract from Brown's Alcuin[1] should be noticed as probably autobiographic.

> "At five o'clock I shut up my little school, and changed an alley[2] in the city,--dark, dirty, and narrow, as all alleys are,--for the fresh air and smooth footing of the fields... Eight hours of the twenty-four were consumed in repeating the names and scrawling the forms of the alphabet, or in engraving on infantile memories that twice three make six."

Later he speaks of the "hum of a school" taking away his peace, and the truth of the directory designation seems thereby corroborated.

If our Brown was indeed a school teacher a great deal of his life would be easily explained. He was well fitted to teach not only any primary grade as pictured in Alcuin but even any grade up to and including the college curriculum. That he was unusual as a scholar, that he was a favorite of Proud's, that later in his life he remembered his old schoolmaster with affection, that he was inclined to classical studies: all would be perfectly consistent with an experience in teaching. His interest in maps and geography, in history, in distinctions of diction expecially those traceable to their Latin origin, his arguments for the education

1 1798, First edition p.10 and 11 or Dunlap Vol.I, p.73.
2 The alley may be either of those known as Drinker's or Elfreth's.

For Dunlap to ask Brown to write him what he thought of the tragedy seems to indicate that they did not go to the theatre together and did not see each other after the performance or before Brown left the city and returned to Philadelphia.

While Brown undoubtedly wished to please Dunlap it seems clear that in the matter of a criticism of Lord Leicester he was not able to do so. The Quaker strain in his nature seems to have been still in force at this time, for like those good people he had a hatred of the theatre. That his experience with the play house had been limited is true and it is quite probable that had it been more thorough he would have had different ideas of the theatre as an institution; in fact, in later life, as is shown by his comment in the memoir on John Blair Linn in Valerian, he completely changed his attitude.

However, it seems the opening of that letter to Dunlap was not entirely due to his antipathy. A tragedy that has all the echoes of Macbeth and some of King Lear and Othello, with too much of the realism of the day, was hardly the food for Brown at this time. His interest in Dunlap's work was more concerned with his friend's efforts at epic poetry.

Evidently the acting was very poor, in fact, Brown showed a judgment unusual for him at this time, and on the whole "hit the nail on the head" when he called attention to the impossibility of judging its merits when so badly acted.

The next letter was carried to Bringhurst by messenger. It is (addressed Joseph Bringhurst, Junr. Wilmington. I. or T. or J. Bader bearer.)

Phila. December 20 something.[1]

Je ne sais quoi

My dear friend,

I was sitting in the humble apartment appropriate to domestic purposes. The clock had given notice of the finished hour, and his finger had begun to point to the decennery X. and give the signal that "demurely waked the sleepers"[2] and reminded the watchful of retirement. My eyes were fixed upon the glowing embers. The neck-encircling muslin was removed. My knees, unbuttoned and ungartered, my feet half-unslippered were basking at the fire their cotton-covered soles. Expectation which had long been casting an impatient eye towards Wilmington, being now o'er-wearied and over-watched, Fancy weary of contemplating forms of sable hues and weeping aspect; turning with knitted brows from the dreary survey of a flat, stale, unprofitable day, endeavored to rescue a few moments from the power of unquiet melancholy, by straying far beyond the confines of the visible world, and gazing on the brighter models of moral and intellectual, of social and political perfection, which a lunar region, a planetary hemisphere may exhibit, when the welcome voice and well known footstep of our friend recalled me from my reverie, and converted my visionary raptures into real satisfaction.

Your philosophy is able to perform wonders. Malignant Chance or unpropitious destiny can hardly muster a troop of disasters sufficient to vanquish it. I am therefore not very anxious on your account, and doubt not but you will find resources in your own company, that will preserve you from melancholy till our Samuel[3] returns to you.

It is inconceivable to me how you preserved yourself from freezing the day on which you left us. The cold

1 Saturday, the 26th.

3 Probably a cousin of Joseph Bringhurst. See Leach: History of the Bringhurst Family, Philadelphia 1901, p.36.

2 Antony and Cleopatra Act IV, scene 9. However, drums not a clock.

was excessively severe with us. The wind which was keen, beyond the power of a Razor-maker to equal it, reminded me of the description in the Revelations 1 of a gigantic figure from whose mouth there issued a sharp two-edged sword. I could not but admire the consternation and hubbub which a sudden and powerful blast produced in a crowd of sapless leaves (the spoils of Autumn), which the vagrant winds had driven for protection into a corner of the State house Mall. "He blew with his wind and they were scattered."

Samuel gives a strange account of the effect of the cold upon you, and of your first appearance on your arrival at Wilmington.2 The very juices of your hair were frozen. Each one was coated with frost, and standing bolt upright and separate from his nearest neighbor, made it a task infinitely below omnipotence "to number the very hairs of your head." You indeed endeavored to speak, but as to your words it was impossible to hear them until he had thoroughly warmed them by the fire, and that he actually saw them dangling from your lips in the form of Icicles. The very sight of you, bound, as you were, in icy fetters, and absolutely petrified with cold, would have converted the beams of Sirius into drops of snow.

Here the letter was broken off and resumed in an entirely different tone, on 8 January 1795.

1 Chapter I, paragraph 16.

2 Bringhurst had gone there to open up a business.