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25

1319-1357

1794-1800

ARTHUR MERVYN

1799-1800

The first volume of Arthur Mervyn¹ was published pseudonymously by H. Maxwell of Philadelphia in 1799 shortly after February 15 and because of dissatisfaction with Maxwell,² volume two was brought out pseudonymously by George F. Hopkins of New York in 1800. A notice in the Monthly Magazine³ for August--probably issued in September--says the second volume was just published.

The first nine chapters of ~~Arthur Mervyn~~ had appeared as early as 1798 in the second and third volumes of the Weekly Magazine.

The numbers dated June 16, 23 and 30, July 7 and 14 give five chapters. The number for 27 July ^{gave} had a note stating that the

1 Vol. I contains twenty-three chapters. Vol. II does not number them in continuation, but like later editions, but as an independent volume. Our references are to the first edition.

2 The name of ~~Arthur Mervyn~~ was been used for the hero of The De Burghos by W.R. Ancketill, Belfast 1875. ~~The~~ A catalogue of books sold by S. & E. Butler, Northampton, Mass., 1804 spells it Mirvin.

3 Brown's letter to James Brown, April 1800.

3 Vol. III, p. 156.

distance at which some of our correspondents reside or their
indisposition was the only excuse the editor had to offer for the
temporary suspension of Arthur Mervyn. The number for 28 July also
~~failed to~~ ^{did not} continue it; but it was resumed in the numbers for August
4, 11, 18 and 25. ~~On account of~~ ^{The} death by yellow fever of its
editor James Watters ~~the paper was then~~ ^{entirely} ~~suspended~~ ^{publication} until 9 February
1799. No more of Arthur Mervyn appeared, ~~in periodical form~~. The
text of ~~the nine chapters~~ as there printed is the same as ~~it~~
~~appeared~~ in the first edition and the instalments ~~in the magazine~~
conform to the respective chapters. ~~As is to be expected~~ ^{There} was
no prefatory remarks, which made their ~~earliest~~ appearance when the
first edition of volume one was published.

h. 9 ^{Likely} It appears ~~quite probable that~~ it was Brown's intention to pub-
lish the first volume in the magazine, ~~but as we have seen the~~
~~death of the editor and the destruction of his papers put an end~~
~~to any plan he had for~~ Arthur Mervyn ~~as well as for~~ Sky Walk.
~~To preserve the chronological order and at the same time make~~ ^{to complete}
~~the~~ ~~our study of the whole story complete we have deferred it until~~
~~the present when the two volumes had been issued.~~

1
According to Griswold Arthur Mervyn was written at Perth Amboy
1 Prose Writers of America, p. 109, of any early edition.

fever practise of Dr. Rush but though Brown's character ~~of the~~
~~name~~ is represented as having a particular cure, it is not in-
 consistent with that of ^{Rush} ~~the more famous man~~ and is only mentioned
 once in a very casual way. Other than these three possible instances

no further traces of real personages have been found.

^{Irish army} Mervyn could of course have come from the Colonel Mervyn (sic) of Cromwell's
 the same as Colville from Lord Colville. ^{came}
 Whether Brown took the name of Welbeck from the noted impostor

^{or}
 Perkin Warbeck ~~and~~ whether he had ever heard of Mervyn's Tower

and the Lords of the Manor at Beckford's Fonthill Abbey is not

~~It was in the list of names in the Wieland note-book~~
 known. ~~The name of Welbeck~~ may also have been derived from the

~~famous Welbeck Abbey with its subterranean passages and rooms.~~ Acts a

~~built by the Duke of Portland's~~

was probably derived from the
 daughter of Caleb (Joshua XV, 16-18,

Judges I, 12 and Chronicles II, 49).

~~The name of Lodi a variation of Lodir and Welbeck~~ ^{may} are to be

found in the list ~~of names~~ in the Wieland note-book. Williams

is one of ~~several instances of his using~~ ^{the} names connected with the

Brown family. Mrs. and Eliza Hadwin were used in the Series of Orig-

inal Letters in the Weekly Magazine. ~~As~~ ^{we} have seen in our proof

of Brown's authorship of those Original Letters the Berriton

people were taken bodily from the earlier work and merely given
 X Rather than from the ^{travels} ^{of} John ^{Columbo} ^{of} Idem IV, Part II (IV, iii) or the 17th Century wizard

2 In our study of the Weekly Magazine.

1 Lodi may have come from Bowney's Travels in Germany, etc.,

London 1773, Vol. I, p. 147. Another possible source is the Loda
 which is common in Macpherson's rendering of Ossian. And still
 another in the title, hero of Lodi for Napoleon

the new name of the Villars in Arthur Mervyn. If Villars came from the Maréchal, the friend of Voltaire, it is possible Brown used the name to slap at French morals. Sophia Wentworth had been used in Julius and Wentworth was also used in Ormond. Lesher's Tavern may have been derived from the "Harp and Eagle" in Third street which was run by George Lesher who, according to Brown's Literary Magazine, died Wednesday 18 November 1807 or it may have come from the inn-keeper of that name who, according to Elizabeth

in other cases the idea of having a story told within a story is a weakness which confuses the reader in identifying the first person narrator.

Brown's purpose is only partly suggested by the secondary title Memoirs of 1793¹. According to the preface the reason for writing the story is to save from oblivion the account of the condition of affairs at the time of the yellow fever of 1793. But, as we shall see presently, Brown was saving more than the 1793 epidemic. In the second volume² the reason for the story is laid to the request of Mrs. Wentworth who asked Mervyn to write out his experiences, but what she wanted the narrative for is left unexplained.

The preface is important and worthy of full quotation. It reads as follows.

"THE evils of pestilence by which this city has lately been afflicted will probably form an æra in its history. The schemes of reformation and improvement to which they will give birth, or, if no efforts of human wisdom can avail to avert the periodical visitations of this calamity, the change in manners and population which they will produce, will be, in the highest degree, memorable. They have already supplied new and copious materials for reflection to the physician and the political economist. They have not been less fertile

1 Knapp's American Biography gives it as the Miseries of 1793.
2 Chapter XXIII.

of instruction to the moral observer, to whom they have furnished new displays of the influence of human passions and motives.

Amidst the medical and political discussions which are now afloat in the community relative to this topic, the author of these remarks has ventured to methodize his own reflections, and to weave into an humble narrative, such incidents as appeared to him most instructive and remarkable among those which came within the sphere of his own observation. It is every one's duty to profit by all opportunities of inculcating on mankind the lessons of justice and humanity. The influences of hope and fear, the trials of fortitude and constancy, which took place in this city, in the autumn of 1793, have, perhaps, never been exceeded in any age. It is but

just to snatch some of these from oblivion, and to deliver to posterity a brief but faithful sketch of the condition of this metropolis during that calamitous period. Men only require to be made acquainted with distress for their compassion and their charity to be awakened. He that depicts, in lively colours, the evils of disease and poverty, performs an eminent service to the sufferers, by calling forth benevolence in those who are able to afford relief, and he who portrays examples of disinterestedness and intrepidity, confers on virtue the notoriety and homage that are due to it, and rouses in the spectators, the spirit of salutary emulation.

In the following tale a particular series of adventures is brought to a close; but these are necessarily connected with the events which happened subsequent to the period here described. These events are not less memorable than those which form the subject of the present volume, and may hereafter be published, either separately or in addition to this.

C. B. B. *

Though it contains an opening for a continuation the text does not do so in the same sense as it did in Wieland for Carwin.

The second volume is therefore ^{a perfectly} legitimate continuation; ~~just such~~
~~a one as is~~ common in literary annals.

The preface shows Brown had the intention of making Arthur Mervyn the most important of the characters mostly ^{to serve as} ~~for the pur-~~
~~pose of finding~~ a peg on which to hang a varied train of adventures which would present in all its pitiable aspects the ravages of the yellow fever and the lessons it taught. He had, indeed, good

cause to picture the plague faithfully in the fact of his own experience.

¹ William Cobbett, after his usual cantankerous manner, did not consider the 1793 yellow fever as a plague at all; probably because he did not experience it himself. He laid it to the detestable country and thought it merely one of the ailments with which it was cursed. McMaster² almost confirms this opinion by noting all the usual occurrences of the time of 1798 as if he were Procopius setting the fashion of recording the supernatural signs which were said to have preceded the plague. Latrobe³ sensibly explains the epidemics as due to the polluted source of all the water drawn from pumps. Though not then recognised as the real source of the infection the presence of mosquitoes is noticed by the account of some unidentified foreigner in Brown's Literary Magazine.⁴ Warnings were so frequent in the newspapers that few heeded them until too late.

1 6 July 1794 to Rachel Smither, Vol. I, p. 87 Life and Letters of William Cobbett by Lewis Melville, London, 1913.

2 History of the United States, Vol. II, p. 411.

3 Journal, New York 1905, p. 93 ff.

4 Vol. VI, p. 262.

* We need not meddle with the various theories of the origin or prevention and cure of the kind of disease. Pest is pest so the ~~description~~ ^{for prose fiction} has no characteristic whether the plague be in Athens or London, in Marseilles or Philadelphia. ~~epidemics~~ Pest is pest always and everywhere.

~~As a preliminary it is necessary to explain that~~ ^{did} Brown ~~was~~ not pic-
 turing ^{the} epidemic of 1793 ^{only}. The secondary title says so and
 the preface ^{claims} ~~suggests~~ it ~~pp~~ but neither is to be relied on. It is
^{clear} ~~probable~~ that he was in Philadelphia when the 1793 visitation happen-
 ed ^{and} ~~but there is no certainty about it even though the preface says~~
~~he saw it. On the other hand~~ it is not necessary ~~that~~ he should have
 waited until he ^{was} ~~came near to dying~~ in New York in 1798 to experience
 all the plague's horrors. He surely was in Philadelphia in 1797 and
 not only could have secured all his information at that time but
 most important of all he then appears, in one of his letters, to have
 happened upon the idea of his distinctive method of treating the
 plague material. His mention and description of Bush Hill is one of
 the details which indicates the story was based on the Philadelphia
 1793 epidemic, but the use of the life of Scandella under the name
 of Maravegli ~~must have~~ come from New York in 1798. ~~Therefore it~~
~~seems clear that~~, though located in Philadelphia in 1793 for purposes
^{literary} of unity, the actual foundations for the ^{plague} ~~details~~ are to be traced to
^{his} Brown's experiences in 1793, 1797 and 1798.

When ^{he} ~~Brown~~ came to put the pestilence in his story of Arthur Mervyn, ¹ he had a practised hand and a Mervyn he not only had tried his hand in Ormond but with his mind full of all the various details of the historical accounts ^{so that} and with he could not fail to ~~the~~ a developed literary power which has been generally recognised by most critics, ~~he presented the material in a distinctive manner.~~

Henry Colden, Sudden Impulses, and Memoirs of a Spy, ¹⁷⁹¹ in the Weekly Magazine; Mary Selwyn, the Portrait of an Emigrant, the Household, ~~a fragment~~; Gossiping, ~~a dialogue~~ and the article on the Philadelphia Water Works in the Monthly Magazine: all have faint touches of it. Ormond has ^{a lot of} it and so far as ^{the pestilence} it is concerned may be considered as Brown's practise piece for Arthur Mervyn. The Man at Home use of it is the same as ~~the Ormond use of it.~~ But the important point is that in all these ^{instances} ~~cases~~ Brown used the method which is the easiest, ^{as literature} the most obvious and common ~~the~~ incidental, while ~~here~~ in Arthur Mervyn he created a method distinctively his own.

1 Baker in his History in Fiction, London, Routledge, n.d., Vol. II, p. 32 lists four of Brown's works making two mistakes in their dates of publication and does not mention that Arthur Mervyn deals with the yellow fever. He does however index ~~the work~~ under the heading of Philadelphia.

investigations into the American contribution, which would at least lead him to become acquainted with Elihu Vedder's gruesome painting of the Florentine plague¹ in which the horror is greater than usually

presented by being ^{only} ~~merely~~ suggested, ~~he~~ might go far enough to learn

^{when treating the yellow fever as litereary} that Brown ~~for one~~ took his color from nature and his method from

^{experiment and} inspiration and owed nothing whatever to De Foe or any other antecedent author.

Besides Procopius the historical accounts which supply the material for most authors are as follows.

Thucydides' account of the plague in Athens ~~as given~~ in his History of the Peloponnesian War² has nothing of the fulness of Procopius

though the usual details ^{are} ~~may be found~~ there. The plague pamphlets of

Thomas Dekker³ give the usual details especially those commonly credited to the invention of De Foe. Pepys' Diary belongs to the class which is the first ~~of which~~ we shall treat. In it ~~the author~~ gives a true account ~~of the plague~~ but it is important to notice ~~that~~ he pictures the city as not so deserted as ~~it is~~ usually described; that the sickness did not cease suddenly; and that a busy pleasure-seeking man

1 The full account of its composition should be read in Digressions of V., Boston, 1910, p. 28 ff. The picture is reproduced opposite p. 30. If we could see its color the power probably would be more than doubled.

2 Book II, year II.

3 Edited by F.B. Wilson and reprinted in one volume Oxford 1925.

could go about the common affairs of life without seeing much of it. Somewhat similar in method ~~are~~^{are} Hodge's Loimologia, mainly interested in the medical study of the visitation; Vincent's God's Terrible Voice in the City and Allius's letters in the Archeologia both of which emphasize the religious possibilities of it; Λοιμωγία, an Experimental Relation of the Plague, principally as it appeared in 1665, by William Boghurst, Apothecary, in St. Giles's in the Fields¹ which gives the lie to many of the details given by others; and Evelyn's Diary which touches the subject lighter but shows he was less selfish and more observant than Pepys.

What we ~~are pleased to collect~~^{have}~~are~~^{as} into the first group or class which is the most obvious, may be termed the incidental; that is, the plague comes in merely as one of many incidents which the hero may have a part in but which never assumes the importance of a principal motive.

¹ British Museum, Sloan Mss. 349. Reviewed Metropolitan Magazine London October 1831, pp. 153-6.

The most inconsiderable use of the details may be found in the opening book of the Iliad where during a ten day's pestilence-- probably the shortest on record--the Greeks offered prayers to appease the Far-darter Phoebus Apollo and burned the victims of the plague which is an interesting variation though it robs the motive of ^{as} much of its ~~picturesque~~ ^{the dramatic} as it adds to it. Not another detail was given by Homer.

Equally as slight is Sophocles' Oedipus the King which opens with Thebes plague stricken. Crops fail, cattle die in the fields and births are premature but otherwise the pestilence is not detailed and immediately becomes a mere metaphor of the problem of the tragedy.

Virgil in Georgics III (line 470 et seq.) deals only with the plague among the cattle. Ovid's Metamorphoses (VII, v) puts in the mouth of Aeacus when describing the Aegina affliction the usual classical details but makes ^{further} no use of them.

incidental

Probably the best known fiction of this class is Manzoni in I Promessi Sposi in which he uses from the plague at Milan all the customary details but emphasizes none, weakening rather than increasing the effect by also introducing a famine. His hero Renzo crosses the city but it never occurs to the author to use that action as a method of picturing the plague,

and with the pestilence everywhere he, is done with it in a few

the same as Rider Haggard's She,
sentences; ~~Since Brown~~ Kingsley's Two Years Ago, in which the cholera

sweeps through Aberlva; Burchell's Daniel Herrick and the Carved

Cartoon of Clare Austin have joined this group. ^{Harnett Martineau in} ~~At the same time~~
Deerbrook uses all the details to establish hope in his profession.
Most of them are, slightly modelled on the method made known by
De Foe. ^{works} however

~~As we could emphasize again and again~~ Artistic merit is very
often negative ^{being} ~~and sometimes best indicated~~ ^{per shown} by what the author
omits ^{than} ~~as well as~~ by what he includes. ^{is} ~~To see~~ this most ^{emphatically} ~~glaringly~~
^{when} true we ~~have only to~~ compare the handling of the plague motive
by Brown in ~~the first volume of~~ Arthur Mervyn ^{with} ~~and~~ William Harrison
Ainsworth's ^{most emphatic} ~~in~~ Old Saint Paul's, which is one of the ~~best~~ modern
examples of the incidental type.

^{glutted his pages with}
Ainsworth ~~gave too much of the~~ revolting details, ^{ins} and dwelt on
them until they lost ^{all} ~~what~~ artistic significance ~~they had, until~~
and they failed to rouse the ^{satiated} ~~satiated~~ reader, ^{with} and ~~become more~~ sickening
sensationalism. His story thus becomes a hideous and revolting
picture. ~~frame for loathsomeness and cruelty.~~

^{Our}
The second class is that which uses the plague ~~mostly~~ as a setting.
The historical origin is ~~to be found~~ in Thucydides. He gives what

is considered a model account of the ^{but it} ~~plague in Athens~~ ^{which} does not compare with Procopius' account of the Byzantine. The point which impressed him ~~the~~ most was the Epicurean attitude of the people--they saw their end near and gave themselves up to pleasure. Very similar, perhaps an imitation, is Lucretius in De Rerum Natura.

This class is best illustrated and known by the classic example of Boccaccio's Decameron. In the introduction he uses the 1348 Florentine ^{visitation,} ~~plague~~ ^{frame to enhance} ~~merely as a setting for the story telling.~~

His description follows the usual details and he even introduces the effect on the outlying districts in the country, but makes no attempt at any narration, ~~of the plague.~~ His only interest is to

^{after} ~~that~~ form the fascinating group of his immortal ten story tellers / and that is done ^{no reader} ~~no~~ remembers the pestilence.

Another example is Frank Barrett's A Set of Rogues, a story of

the adventures of a band of strolling players driven from London.

George Eliot's Romola uses the Florentine plague of 1492-1509 in a ~~by the plague~~ neighboring valley with as little interest in its horrors as if he were in another ~~oriental country, like Cairo, where their only effect was to hasten the crumbling of the~~

The third class is the one which seems to have become almost

universally known, De Foe's. With all the insignificant details

such as have been supplied by the ~~historical~~ ^{old} writers and such as

have been used by all writers of plague fiction to give their

works an air of truth De Foe ~~has~~ ^{is} become one of the articles of

~~One of the touchstones for a library used to be to see whether De Foe's Plague was catalogued as fiction or history.~~

~~* at King's College London Library~~

Braddon the nearest is Amelia E. Keeling's Andrew Golding in which the hero comes up to London but like Pepys keeps his eyes shut until they start with horror in the midst of the plague. Max Pemberton's A Puritan's Wife is another example of the so-near-and-yet-so-far. He brings his wounded hero on horseback up to London but he has spoiled all his chances of being Brownish by having already dragged all the details into the country. Then too his hero is no more than in the city when he is snatched off to the country again. Ralph Redman's Atonement by Herbert V. Mills¹ sends his hero to the town of Kendal on a penitent religious errand. With a similar motive, Caleb Field by Mrs. Oliphant has Edith and her father go to London and the details are not seen on the way but condensed into one paragraph after their arrival there. James Rees' Mysteries of City Life² contains a story of the yellow fever of 1793 entitled Dark Days of Philadelphia³ which plunges the reader into the midst of the epidemic. It appears to be a composite of Lippard's Mysteries of Florence, Monks of Monk

1 In Lake County Romances London 1892, p. 179 ff.

2 Philadelphia 1849, pp. 257-97.

3 It introduces Stephen Girard and the service rendered by him during that fateful time.

Hall and Brown's Arthur Mervyn but probably derived its customary plague details from some of the sources which use the same method.

There is no trace of Brown's peculiarities. Bulwer-Lytton's Rienzi came very near to Brown's method when he gives ~~up~~ the four chapters of Book VI to the plague, in which Adrian rides into Florence and goes through the usual shocking experiences in his search for his beloved Irene. The work is dedicated to Manzoni and has more of Boccaccio than most authors would dare to appropriate.

~~It came very near to Brown's method.~~

Brown's method of having Mervyn come ^{on foot} from the country where rumors of the plague have reached, and by ~~slow deliberate~~ logical steps, have ~~his~~ progress from the faintest suggestion of the existence of

the plague to the ^{final} ~~very~~ maelstrom of its ravages has ^{never} ~~rarely~~ been

surpassed by any other scheme of presentation in plague fiction.

As a method it is ^{dramatic,} simple, natural, from ^{a single} ~~one~~ point of view, and has a

power of impressing the horrors ~~of the plague~~ as inevitable as the

^{old} ~~ancient~~ torture method of producing insanity by the slow dropping of

water on the head of ^a ~~the~~ victim. It may be characterized as ^{unique and} ~~the~~

^{named for identification as the}

method of approach. None of the other writers who have made use of

the plague motive ^{has} ~~have~~ ~~so~~ skillfully ^{and completely} developed ~~such~~ a sequence of the details ^{so} that they come to an overwhelming climax. It is peculiarly his own.

That ~~this method of Brown's~~ ^{it} was a deliberate piece of ^{literary} construction evolved ^{by experience} from many uses of the ^{same} material ~~for~~ is to be seen from the second sentence of the fifteenth chapter when the scheme is being put in motion, which reads:

"In proportion as I drew near the city, the tokens of its calamitous condition became more apparent."

^x ^e method ^{evident}
This is doubly ~~forceful~~ when we remember that Brown took his hero

out of the city before the plague began. Notice the steps of

the method: First, a rumor reaches the country;

then the correspondence of Susan Hadwin and Wallace adds

The secret of the method is in the ^{two} opening words in proportion. ~~Possibly, indeed very likely,~~ Brown knew that no painter could ever use it. The very limitation of pictorial art which he must have learned ^{by word of mouth} from Dunlop if not from ^{reading Sir Joshua} Reynolds' lectures may have suggested it to him. Groups could give all the factual details even ^{to} the rats and the effluvia of putrefaction in Poussin's Plague of Ashdod; panoramas could represent them successively, but only one pair of eyes ^{seeing} ~~describing~~ them as they came in view could describe them ^{developing} in proportional sequence.

^x Fuseli discovered these original contributions in the picture. See Johnston Knowles: Fuseli London 1831, Vol. I, p. 271.

to it; then Arthur Mervyn starts out and encounters fugitives on foot and in vehicles ^{first singly and then in numbers} and finally enters the outskirts of the city at night.

*

Compared to the pestilence ~~as found~~ in Arthur Mervyn De Foe's Plague is too realistic to be interesting to fiction readers; in fact it is now definitely settled ¹ that it is ~~really~~ history ^{and} ~~it is~~ ^{has found} ^{place} ~~sooner or later bound to seek~~ its real level in English literature. Too much of its reputation in the past ^{was merely} ~~has been~~ due to an acquaintance with it because it was in the required reading of schools and colleges. Unassisted ^{in that way} it ~~will probably~~ ^{has} join ^{ed} the group it belongs to--the historical writers--so that the ^{old} library joke ^{and touchstone} of its being catalogued as history ^{has} ~~will prove~~ a boomerang ~~of unpleasant sting~~ for the joker ~~who~~ ^{thought it fiction.} ~~Thus the good point of De Foe is likewise a bad point, that is, the supposed verisimilitude is so exact that the narrative becomes~~ ^{to the fiction reader} ~~tedious all the sooner.~~

~~On the contrary~~ Brown maintained the fictional attitude throughout.

His scheme of approach; his time for the experiences of Arthur Mervyn, such as the refusal of a lodging at two inns at night and the closer examination of the closed houses in the daytime: are details of the use of the plague material which distinguish

1 Watson Nicholson has demonstrated the facts by his Historical Sources, Boston 1919.

Brown's work from all others and stamps it as the product of a master. On the score of faithfulness it also is not wanting; for, though never classed as history ~~by an ignorant cataloguer~~ and always ~~elassed~~ as fiction still we know that as far as the plague is concerned ^{it} ~~Brown~~ has as much of the bone and sinew of the history as De Foe or Thucydides or even Procopius the greatest

source. ~~Thus the Portfolio of June 1814~~¹ ~~praised it as a true~~

~~picture. Danlap, not bothering to make the distinction in the~~

~~methods used, dubbed Brown another De Foe. Brotherhead~~³ ~~excellently~~

~~puts the matter in a striking light by saying:~~

"This is in every sense of the word an historical novel, and one which depicts with great power and force the ravages of the yellow fever in the memorable year of 1793, which occurred in this city. If there is one book in the whole circle of American literature that has more claims on Pennsylvanians, and more especially Philadelphians, it can certainly be claimed for this. Here is portrayed with the hand of a master the effects of a plague, which make the heart sick even to think of..."

~~Peasecock in his account of Brown's influence on Shelley says~~

~~"no descriptions of pestilence surpass these of Brown."~~

~~1 P. 573.~~

~~2 American Theatre, p. 93.~~

~~3 American Notes and Queries, Philadelphia April 1857, p. 153.~~

and even the modern historian has found his picture worthy of citation in a note. All of these writers were only expressing what any one can find by reading the first volume of Arthur Mervyn.

Vol. I,

- 1 Schouler: History of the United States, Washington 1882, p. 238n. In the Biography of Stephen Girard by Stephen Simpson, Philadelphia 1832 (second edition) p. 51 there is a note reading: "The novel of Arthur Mervyn, by C.B. Brown, gives a vivid and terrifying picture, probably not too highly coloured, of the horrors of that period." The Philadelphia Book 1836, pp. 204-8, selected the description of the pestilence, (Vol. I, chapter XV omitting the first sentence) "In proportion as I drew near" to (seventeenth paragraph from end) "most precipitate flight" as an example of Brown's work, thereby setting the style for selections. Beers: Century of American Literature, New York 1878, pp. 36-50 added to it by carrying the quotation to include twenty-two paragraphs of Chapter XVI.

Attention ^{must} ~~should~~ be called ^{by repetition} ~~to the fact~~ that Brown's presentation

of the yellow fever as here studied was, with the slightest exception, confined to the first volume¹--the volume¹ issued in Philadelphia in 1799. In the second volume ^{the epidemic has passed and} it is so slightly used

it is practically nothing.

~~Certain~~ ^{side of Arthur Henry} writers who have shown Brown's influence ⁱⁿ this particular ^{his} may be cited when studying ~~the~~ position of ~~Brown~~ as precursor; ^{and} ~~but~~

nothing is to be gained by listing their names here. Since Brown's days the possibilities of the material have been better appreciated and the novels based on the plague motive have been worthier artistically, but very few ~~seem to~~ have realized that in this line of work the same as in that of the Indians, Brown opened up a veritable new mine.

¹ The modern editions likewise issue the work as two volumes.

is not the only

~~As was to be surmised when we saw the relation to Brown's life~~

~~of the yellow fever material~~ Arthur Mervyn ~~contains many other~~

passages of an autobiographical ^{origin} ~~character in~~

among others

Walt Most important ~~of these~~ is the character of Arthur Mervyn. He is accustomed to the pen; he has ^a tendency toward consumption; he ~~has a~~

love^s ~~for~~ books; he writes verse; is acquainted with the law of

guardianship; he ^{disapproves} ~~does not like~~ what is commonly considered the sport

of the rod and the gun; ~~his existence is composed of thoughts~~ ^{he has more interest in} rather

than ^{action} ~~motions~~; he ^{understands} ~~knows~~ French well enough to ^{be able to} quote ~~that of~~ the man

with the monkey on the stage coach; and his greatest ^{passion} ~~interest~~ is a

knowledge of human nature.

~~Though these traits conform to, if they do not indeed~~
~~inspire the traditional picture of Brown himself~~ ^{they should not lead us to represent}
~~Arthur Mervyn as~~ ^{They are autobiographical but not comprehensively so.}

The opening and chapter XIV recall Brown's letters to his brothers

when they were anxious for his safety. The remedy for the yellow

fever is likewise the one which Brown recommended and ^{may have} ~~probably~~

practised. Welbeck, had invested his fortune in a shipping venture

as we know ^{the} ~~James~~ Brown ^{brothers} often did. ^{like} Some of the characters of other

Brown stories, such as ~~Jessie~~, ~~made~~ like investments. Medlicote

1 As in Edgar Huntly.

2 David Lee Clark: C. B. B., (New York 1923) p. 31 recalls the tradition that Brown acted as Arthur Mervyn did - but it is mostly a tradition. V. L. Parrington: Romantic Revolution in America New York 1927, Vol. II, p. 190, repeats the same plausibility.

follow

Arthur Mervyn could have had these characteristics

In chapter III the weird description of the oil lights, ~~in the~~

Philadelphia streets, which can be seen in the Birch view of

"Morris' Folly" in Chestnut street, is suggested by the passage

which in Paradise Lost reads:

"Pendant by subtle magic, many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
With naphtha and asphaltos"....

The omission by Brown of the subtle magic in the quotation as he gives it from memory is carried over into his text and applied to his hero's wonder at his progress as if it were caused by miracle or magic.

Townsend Ward in A Walk to Darby says

"The novelist, of whom Philadelphia has such good reason to be proud, Charles Brockden Brown, in his Arthur Mervyn, a Tale of the Yellow Fever of 1793, brings his hero across the Upper Ferry, and then makes him say: "I adhered to the miracle or magic"³.... The old "Water Works" which were once at Centre Square were erected not long after the imaginary walk of Arthur Mervyn...."

The Upper Ferry was near the later location of the Fairmount Water Works and had been crossed by Brown any number of times.

1 Book I, lines 727-9.

2 Pa. Mag of Hist. & Biog., Phila., 1879, p. 153-5.

3 Chapter III, omitting five sentences.

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The quotations from Paradise Lost, ¹Romeo and Juliet ²and Comus; ³
the reference to the story tellers of Shiraz and Bagdad; and the
print of the Apollo and the Sibyl of Salvator Rosa, over the mantle: ⁴
all have a suggestion ~~that~~ they are ~~intimately~~ related to the author's
life rather than merely ~~the~~ details of the ~~stage~~ setting of the story.

Among ~~other~~ defects in the work are those ~~which are~~ common to
almost all novels of adventure: a lack of unity, an unavoidable
confusion, for the most part due to a number of details all of
which the reader tries ~~in vain~~ to disentangle and an absence of
climax which weakens the structure.

The poorest piece of writing in the whole work is the overdone
modesty and innocence of Mervyn. It is hardly consistent to picture
~~the individual~~ ^{one} who as an inexperienced boy was not to be deceived
by Betty Lawrence and later was capable of coping with the cleverest
of deceivers, the Villars woman, as innocent as ~~he is~~ pictured in
his love scene with Achsa Fielding.

Another bad piece of construction is ~~found in~~ the abrupt shift-
ing of the point of view in the last chapter of the first volume
wherein the narrative of Mervyn is unnecessarily broken ~~in upon~~
by the doctor's pause.

1 Lines 727-29, Book I, in chapter III. 2 Act 5, scene 1, in chapter V.
3 Lines 141-44, in Vol. II, chapter XXII. 4 Vol. II, chapter XI.

~~However~~ ^{It} points on which they widely differ are not wanting.

Brown's intention is ~~always~~ ^{higher} ^{morally} than Godwin's; his story structure is better though far from excellent; he has no recurring grievance against society ^{and} ~~or~~ the established government; he has no so-called philosophy to preach except good morals and the success of virtue over vice; the adventures through which he ^{leads} ~~puts~~ his hero are confined within one city and its purlieus; he never ~~for an instant~~ excites sympathy for a criminal ^{and yet} ~~unless~~ ^{temporarily} when ^{any} ~~the~~ good ^{in him} asserts itself ^{he presents it}. ~~to his reader.~~

Splitting up the name of Caleb Williams giving the Caleb to an old servant of the Hadwin's and the Williams to a sea captain ~~is~~ ~~Arthur Morwen~~ may have been an unconscious association of ideas ~~of~~ ~~Brown's~~ / or it may have been ~~a~~ hasty snatching.

When Brown read Caleb Williams is not known. It was written in 1793 and published in London 1794, being reprinted by H. & P. Rice, 50 Market street, Philadelphia ~~on the~~ 30 March 1795; So ~~that~~ ^{it} ~~the story~~ was easily accessible to him. ~~Just~~ ^{he} ~~Because~~ ~~Brown~~ considered Caleb Williams superior to Jessica, or whatever story ^{the} ~~that~~ quotation referred to, is no reason why he should be handed on ~~and on~~ to posterity as a shadow of a man to whom he was far superior from every point of view. His indebtedness here is undoubted but it is only conclusive instance, all other Godwinian traces

The Jewish element of this work is remarkable as an example of Brown's toleration and justice. The character of Achsa Fielding is as beautiful as the famous Rebecca Gratz who not only inspired the Rebecca of Scott's Ivanhoe¹ but also probably was ^{likely} the inspiration of Brown's heroine. She was charitable, an unusual singer and a remarkable beauty. Brown ~~presents her as an individual but~~ does not hesitate to ^{have} ~~put in~~ her ^{express} ~~mouth~~ the commonplace slanders on ^{her} ~~the~~ race and to make her ashamed of her birth. She was not religious and deserted the faith of her fathers.

Brown's principles would not tolerate injustice to the Jew any more than to any other race so ~~that~~ he expressed himself strongly through the lips of Arthur Mervyn:

"Her nation has suffered too much by the inhuman antipathies of religious and political faction; she, herself, has felt so often the contumelies of the rich, the high-born, and the bigoted."

^{should} We cannot emphasize ~~too strongly~~ that Scott's character of Rebecca was more due to Brown's influence than is commonly recognised.

1 David Philipson: The Jew in English Fiction, Cincinnati, 1889, p. 86.

The reception of Arthur Mervyn ~~seems to have somewhat~~ encouraged
Brown ^{and his} ~~in the~~ preface to Edgar Huntly, ~~in the "To the Public,"~~
~~it is~~ ^{speaks} ~~spoken~~ ^{it} of as flattering. ~~As we have seen~~ [^] This reference ~~of~~
~~must~~ ^{refer} be to volume one. For the whole ^{work} we ~~only~~ ^{result} have the ~~fact~~ that
Brown continued to write and publish prose fiction. That is a
guage of ~~the~~ literary success ~~of the book~~ from the author's point
of view but it is confirmed by several laudatory periodical
notices of that day and ever since ~~down to the present~~ it has been
held in esteem. ~~The truth of the matter seems to be that this~~ ^{IX}
~~book~~ had just enough of ~~blatant~~ realism to affect the sensibilities
of the ^{general} reading public, ~~of its time~~ Atkinson's Casket for 1835
~~is a witness testifying that~~ ^{says} it created a sensation. Everything
else praiseworthy ⁱⁿ it ~~contained~~ was ~~in its own day~~ passed over
so hastily ~~that~~ it was soon forgotten. What sort of a financial
success it had is ^{uncertain} ~~not known~~, but the letter to James Brown of April
1800 which speaks of the possible sale in England ^{shows} ~~would seem to~~
~~indicate~~ the whole of the first edition had not been sold. How
many copies were printed is not definitely known. Probably five
hundred would have been considered a large edition.

~~As we have seen in the April 1800 letter Brown's Arthur Mervyn~~
Copies of ^{were probably} ~~in the first edition~~ was taken to England, ~~probably~~ in sheets, a

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call on Mrs. Wentworth from chapter VII of the first part. The second illustration is from the Boston Globe 19 October 1924. It ~~was drawn~~ by ~~Dwight C. Sturgis~~ and represents the scene between Achsa Fielding and Mervyn from chapter XXI of the second volume.

As a step in ~~Brown's~~ literary development Arthur Mervyn is significant. It shows ^{Brown} ~~us our~~ author taking up a work ~~distinctively~~ new in type. To turn in the course of two years from a psychological drama like Wieland to a story of adventure like Arthur Mervyn was no mean attempt ~~on Brown's part~~ to exhibit ~~his~~ mastery in the handling of his medium. He saw the moral side of the picaresque novel and presented the evil doer in such a light ~~that~~ his conduct should never be attractive, ~~to others as a pattern~~. In this connection there is an amusing anecdote¹ of a pious lady to whom Arthur Mervyn was read, ~~and speaking of the author~~ She exclaimed "My dear sir, what a noble preacher he would have made, what a pity it was that he had not studied divinity." What she might have said if she had read Wieland is not to be imagined!

1 Knapp: American Biography New York 1833, p. 42.