

**ARTHUR MERVYN; OR,  
MEMOIRS OF THE YEAR  
1793. IN TWO VOLUMES,  
VOL. II, PP. 1-215**

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**CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN**

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THE  
NOVELS  
OF  
CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN,

CONSISTING OF

WIELAND; OR, THE TRANSFORMATION.  
ARTHUR MERVYN; OR, MEMOIRS OF THE YEAR 1793.  
EDGAR HUNTLY; OR, MEMOIRS OF A SLEEP-WALKER.  
JANE TALBOT.  
ORMOND; OR, THE SECRET WITNESS.  
CLARA HOWARD; OR, THE ENTHUSIASM OF LOVE.

*With a Memoir of the Author.*

COMPLETE AND REVISED EDITION.

VOL. III.



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OR,

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BY

CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN.

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## ARTHUR MERVYN.

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### CHAPTER XXIV.

HERE ended the narrative of Mervyn. Surely its incidents were of no common kind. During this season of pestilence, my opportunities of observation had been numerous, and I had not suffered them to pass unimproved. The occurrences which fell within my own experience bore a general resemblance to those which had just been related, but they did not hinder the latter from striking on my mind with all the force of novelty. They served no end, but as vouchers for the truth of the tale.

Surely the youth had displayed inimitable and heroic qualities. His courage was the growth of benevolence and reason, and not the child of insensibility and the nursling of habit. He had been qualified for the encounter of gigantic dangers by no laborious education. He stepped forth upon the stage, unfurnished, by anticipation or experience, with the means of security against fraud; and yet, by the aid of pure intentions, had frustrated the wiles of an accomplished and veteran deceiver.

I blessed the chance which placed the youth under my protection. When I reflected on that tissue of nice contingencies which led him to my door, and enabled me to save from death a being of such rare endowments, my heart overflowed with joy, not unmingled with regrets and trepidation. How many have been cut off by this disease, in their career of virtue and their blossom-time of genius! How many deeds of heroism and self-devotion are ravished from existence, and consigned to hopeless oblivion!

I had saved the life of this youth. This was not the limit of my duty or my power. Could I not render that life profitable to himself and to mankind? The gains of my profession were slender; but these gains were sufficient for his maintenance as well as my own. By residing with me, partaking my instructions, and reading my books, he would, in a few years, be fitted for the practice of physic. A science whose truths are so conducive to the welfare of mankind, and which comprehends the whole system of nature, could not but gratify a mind so beneficent and strenuous as his.

This scheme occurred to me as soon as the conclusion of his tale allowed me to think. I did not immediately mention it, since the approbation of my wife, of whose concurrence, however, I entertained no doubt, was previously to be obtained. Dismissing it, for the present, from my thoughts, I reverted to the incidents of his tale.

The lady whom Welbeck had betrayed and deserted was not unknown to me. I was but too well acquainted with her fate. If she had been single in calamity, her tale would have been listened to with insupportable sympathy; but the frequency of the spectacle of distress seems to lessen the compassion with which it is reviewed. Now that those scenes are only remembered, my anguish is greater than when they were witnessed. Then every new day was only a repetition of the disasters of the foregoing. My sensibility, if not extinguished, was blunted; and I gazed upon the complicated ills of poverty and sickness with a degree of unconcern on which I should once have reflected with astonishment.

The fate of Clemenza Lodi was not, perhaps, more signal than many which have occurred. It threw detestable light upon the character of Welbeck, and showed him to be more inhuman than the tale of Mervyn had evinced him to be. That man, indeed, was hitherto imperfectly seen. The time had not come which should fully unfold the enormity of his transgressions and the complexity of his frauds.

There lived in a remote quarter of the city a woman, by name Villars, who passed for the widow of an English officer. Her manners and mode of living were spe-

cious. She had three daughters, well trained in the school of fashion, and elegant in person, manners, and dress. They had lately arrived from Europe, and, for a time, received from their neighbours that respect to which their education and fortune appeared to lay claim.

The fallacy of their pretensions slowly appeared. It began to be suspected that their subsistence was derived not from pension or patrimony, but from the wages of pollution. Their habitation was clandestinely frequented by men who were unfaithful to their secret; one of these was allied to me by ties which authorized me in watching his steps and detecting his errors, with a view to his reformation. From him I obtained a knowledge of the genuine character of these women.

A man like Welbeck, who was the slave of depraved appetites, could not fail of being quickly satiated with innocence and beauty. Some accident introduced him to the knowledge of this family, and the youngest daughter found him a proper subject on which to exercise her artifices. It was to the frequent demands made upon his purse, by this woman, that part of the embarrassments in which Mervyn found him involved are to be ascribed.

To this circumstance must likewise be imputed his anxiety to transfer to some other the possession of the unhappy stranger. Why he concealed from Mervyn his connection with Lucy Villars may be easily imagined. His silence with regard to Clemenza's asylum will not create surprise, when it was told that she was placed with Mrs. Villars. On what conditions she was received under this roof, cannot be so readily conjectured. It is obvious, however, to suppose that advantage was to be taken of her ignorance and weakness, and that they hoped, in time, to make her an associate in their profligate schemes.

The appearance of pestilence, meanwhile, threw them into panic, and they hastened to remove from danger. Mrs. Villars appears to have been a woman of no ordinary views. She stooped to the vilest means of amassing money; but this money was employed to secure to herself and her daughters the benefits of independence.