



SURVIVING HER TIMES: The Writings of Ann Eliza Bleecker

“It is not our intention to recommend this volume by an elaborate display of its particular merits or peculiar excellencies: the best recommendation we can give it, is an attentive perusal: and when this is done, that the reader of taste and elegance will join in asserting, that though it is not faultless, yet that its merits preponderate, and entitle it to the patronage of every true American, is the candid opinion of

The PUBLISHERS.
New-York, September, 1793.”

In paging through the Duyckincks’ two volume *Encyclopaedia of American Literature* (1854-1875), and in an unhurried and more than merely casual way, it is no little astonishing the large number of unknown or relatively unknown early American authors, whether male or female, the work covers who are or might be due a reconsideration and reappraisal; and, that is, even if we were to restrict our selections to those born prior to 1800. Some will feel, quite understandably and no doubt in many cases rightly so, that many of these writers are eminently forgettable, and that taking the trouble to read through their writings would, for the far greater number of busy people, be time wasted. And yet, and it seems to me, (at least) two things ought to be borne in mind. First, that some of these writers may be of interest as a testimony and reflection of individual psychologies, while seeing such individuals within the context and culture of their times; so that reading or studying the author helps to expand or enhance both our knowledge of human nature and our understanding of a given era (and locale) in history. A second consideration is that the particular author’s writings may possess a good deal more insight, imagination, and talent than initially and on the surface we would be inclined to give them credit for; especially if we view them from a renewed perspective or in inspired light. Again, how much it strikes one, perusing entry after entry in Duyckinck, that there might be some real gems or treasures, say in the way of good poetry, short stories, or essays -- even if only as curiosities, that lie hidden away inside the sundry pages of a given writer’s output, including some material little (or not even) hinted at in Duyckinck. And yet who has the time and energy to pour through such a multitude of lesser known authors? No doubt few, and perhaps even none. Nonetheless, serious historians and surveyors of early American literature it seems ought to every now and then to contribute and make *some* effort in this; even if only to reassess, bring again to light, and thereby do justice to, *where merited*, one if not a greater number.

My own uncovering of the work of Ann Eliza Bleecker (1752-1783), by way of Charles Evans’ *American Bibliography*, was as much a matter of happenstance as anything else. I had not heard of her before and simply decided I would take a chance looking just to see if there was anything there. Not merely was my chance curiosity well rewarded, but indeed the find turned out to be something of a minor gold mine, on a number of levels; certainly and insofar as her writings pertained to my own peculiar historical and literary interests and researches. In what way and how specifically so, I will in due course endeavor to explain and impart. But before doing, let’s start by furnishing a brief profile and sketch of her life.

Born in Oct. 1752, Ann Eliza was the youngest daughter of prosperous, New York (city) merchant Brandt Schuyler, member of the famous Dutch clan of that name. Although not the most diligent student at school, from a very early age she evinced a deep infatuation for poetry and literature; with her subsequent writings, directly or indirectly, attesting a familiarity with Homer, Plato, Theocritus, Virgil, Plutarch, Tasso, Shakespeare, Pope, Dryden, Pope, contemporary novelists such as Samuel Richardson; as well as of course the Bible. As she grew older, the youthful author took up the pen herself, and with enthusiastic aplomb ended up producing a diverse variety of pieces, including poems, chatty letters, humorous sketches, moral reflections, and short fiction. All of which efforts was encouraged and seconded by New Rochelle attorney John J. Bleecker; whom she married in 1769. The couple first lived in Poughkeepsie for about two years; then removed to the quiet, bucolic community of Tomhanick, N.Y., located on the east side of the Hudson; roughly southeast of Saratoga and about an equal distance northeast from Albany. States Rufus Wilmot Griswold in his entry for her in *Female Poets of America* (1848), p. 28: "Mrs. Bleecker's mother, and her half-sister, Miss Ten Eyck, passed much of the time with her, and her husband saw the fruition of his hopes in the success of plans which had drawn him from the more populous parts of the colony. It was in this period that Mrs. Bleecker wrote most of her poems which have been preserved. Before her marriage, her playful or serious verses had amused or charmed the circle in which she moved—one of the most intelligent and accomplished then in America—and she now found a solace for the absence of society in the indulgence of a taste for literature."

This floral and halcyon period, of "perfect tranquillity," drew to a close at the time of Burgoyne's invasion of the state in the late Spring and Summer of 1777. No specific date is given as to when Tomhanick and villages in the general region took to alarm in the face of the British-Indian threat. But given the frenzy of activity shown in the civilian evacuation, it seems likely such took place in early August; following upon the murder near Fort Edward of Jane McCrea (allegedly) by some of Burgoyne's Indians (27 July.) Her husband flying to Albany to arrange in advance a more permanent safe haven for the family, Ann Eliza and her two very young daughters, along with a domestic servant, made their way southward amidst a swarm of frantic and sullen refugees. The experience, as later recalled, sounds in retrospect strangely nightmarish; as Ann Eliza and her children were only able to find a seat on a wagon after going on foot some four or five miles on foot. She came to Stony Arabia expecting be taken by the open arms of friends, but in this was cruelly disappointed; she and her daughters time again being coldly turned away. At last a garret, with a few blankets strewn upon bare boards, were granted her by a wealthy acquaintance. Mr. Bleecker then arrived the next day, took them to Albany and ultimately had them settled at Red Hook; while he, as a member of the New York militia, set off to help fight in the war. To cap her grief and misfortunes, her mother, sister, and eldest daughter, Abella, all died during this same period.

Following the American victory at Saratoga, the family removed back to Tomhanick and things returned somewhat to normal, and Ann Eliza resumed her writing, and which included two short novels, a few poems, and many letters. At one point in 1781, her husband was captured and taken prisoner by a small band of loyalists, Indians and a few British who had been lying in wait in the neighborhood (this sort of thing reportedly being a more or less usual occurrence in the area at the time.) However, much to her relief, the party was in turn taken by some Vermont militia as the former was escaping north, with Mr. Bleecker being subsequently restored to his wife and surviving daughter. To conclude this cursory portrait, we quote from Duyckinck: "In the spring of 1783 she visited New York, but time and the war had caused so many changes among her old associates, that the visit was productive of more pain than pleasure to her sensitive mind. She returned to Tomhanick, where she was soon after taken sick, and, her delicate frame offering feeble obstacles to the progress of disease, died on the twenty-third of November of the same year"¹ -- at the barely ripe age of thirty one; with her husband passing away in 1795.

None of the compositions of Mrs. Bleecker were published in her lifetime. A number of her poems subsequently made their public appearance in issues of *New York Magazine*. But the main body of her work came out in 1793 in a volume (reissued in 1809) put together by her daughter Margaretta V. Faugères

¹ Somewhat ironically, New York city was evacuated by the British on November 25, 1783.

(1771-1801), a gifted poet and essayist in her own right, titled *The Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker in Prose and Verse, To which is added a Collection of Essays, Prose and Poetical*.²

Mrs. Bleecker's most frequently cited effort, though far from being her best, is her epistolary novella "The History of Maria Kittle" (1779): a story set in one of the French and Indian Wars and based in part on Indian captive narratives; of which by her time there were already quite a number.³ The tone and style are melodramatic and naive, and the narrator is rather *too* preoccupied with herself and her own sufferings. Yet the tale otherwise is largely entertaining and in parts the prose imaginative and affecting. Of particular interest to historians are its authentic details; with many of the anecdotes seemingly based on real life occurrences. As literary historian Warren F. Broderick relates, the name of Kittle itself is drawn from one of the victims of a lurid massacre by French allied Indians that occurred in October 1711 in the Schaghticoke area where Tomhanick is located. Broderick further goes on to observe: "'Horror is piled upon horror,' and by using this 'local color' to achieve the effects of horror and mystery on the sensibilities of her readers, Ann Eliza Bleecker can truly be said to have been the creator of American Gothic fiction. While her *History* is far from a well-written or deeply probing piece of short fiction, it is somewhat more complex than merely a gory captivity narrative turned novel, as Roy Pearce suggests, and in the history of the American novel, it occupies a far more important niche than critics have indicated."⁴ Though "Maria Kittle" anticipates *Edgar Huntly* and *Last of the Mohicans*, telling as it does a tale of surviving in the woods with savage Indians threatening, it is questionable whether she was a direct influence on those two novels as some have suggested.

Bleecker's second novella is "The Story of Henry and Anne. Found on Fact" (date unclear; though evidently it followed "Maria Kittle.") It is the story of two rural lovers from Baden; who flee travails in Europe in order to find happiness in America. As with "Kittle," while the writing succeeds in parts, overall it comes across as an unfinished work much in need of correction and development.

² The .pdf text of which is at <https://archive.org/details/posthumousworks00bleerich>

³ The following is a list of Indian captivity narratives leading up to, contemporary with, and some dated shortly after Mrs. Bleecker's era. While an effort has been made to be thorough, this catalogue by no means should be assumed exhaustive. As well as military accounts like Robert Rogers' *Journals* or David Humphrey's *Essay on the Life of Maj.-Gen. Israel Putnam*, excluded (in most instances) are sermons where captivity accounts were spoken of or otherwise recounted: "A Narrative of the Captivity, Sufferings, and Removes of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, [etc.]" (1682); "The Redeemed Captive returning to Zion, A Faithful History of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Captivity and Deliverance of Mr. John Williams" (1707); "A Letter from a Romish Priest in Canada, to One [Mrs. Christina Baker] Who was Taken Captive in Her Infancy and Instructed in the Romish Faith, [etc.]" (1729, author Seguenot); "Memoirs of odd adventures, and strange deliverances, etc., in the captivity of John Gyles, esq., [etc.]" (1736); "A Narrative of the captivity of Nehemiah How, [etc.]" (1748); "The Redeemed captive, being a narrative of the taking and carrying into captivity the Reverend Mr. John Norton, [etc.]" (1748); "God's mercy surmounting man's cruelty, exemplified in the captivity and redemption of Elizabeth Hanson....taken captive with her children...by the Indians...in the Year 1724, [etc.]" (1754, author Samuel Bownas); "A Narrative of the sufferings and surprising deliverance of William and Elizabeth Fleming, [etc.]" (1756); "A Faithful narrative, of the many dangers and sufferings, as well as wonderful deliverances of Robert Eastburn, [etc.]" (1758); "A Journal of the captivity of Jean Lowry and her children, [etc.]" (1760); "A Plain Narrative of the uncommon sufferings and remarkable deliverance of Thomas Brown, of Charlestown, in New-England, [etc.]" (1760); "Narrative of the uncommon suffering and surprising deliverance Briton Hammon, a negro man-servant to General Winslow, [etc.]" (1760); "A Brief Narration of the Captivity of Isaac Hollister, Who was taken by the Indians, Anno Domini, 1763. Written by Himself" (1770); "A Narrative of the Capture and Treatment of John Dodge, by the English at Detroit, [etc.]" (1779); "Narrative of the Late Expedition Against the Indians, with an Account of the Barbarous Execution of Col. Crawford and the Wonderful Escape of Dr. [John] Knight and John Slover in 1782" (1783, edited by Hugh Henry Brackenridge); "Narrative of the Capture of Certain Americans, at Westmoreland by Savages, and the Perilous Escape which they Effected by Surprising Specimens of Policy and Heroism, [etc.]" (1783, author Moses Van Campen); "A Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Benjamin Gilbert and His Family...in the Spring 1780" (1784); "A Surprising Account of the Captivity and Escape of Philip M'Donald and Alexander M'Leod of Virginia...from June 1779 to February 1786, [etc.]" (1787); "An Account of a Beautiful Young Lady, who was Taken by the Indians [in 1777] and Lived in the Woods Nine Years, [etc.]" (1787, author Abraham Panther); "A Genuine and Correct Account of the Captivity, Sufferings & Deliverance of Mrs. Jemima Howe...In this Account the Mistakes of Col. Humphreys, Relating to Mrs. Howe, in His 'Life of General Putnam,' are Rectified" (1792), "The remarkable adventures of Jackson Johnnet, of Massachusetts; who served as a soldier in the western army, in the Massachusetts line, in the expedition under General Harmor, [etc.]" (1793), and "The Life and Travels of Col. James Smith, Lexington Kentucky" (1799). Of note, some of the above titles are included in Archibald Loudon's *Selections of Some of the Most Interesting Narratives of Outrages Committed by Indians in Their Wars with the White People* (1808).

⁴ "Fiction Based on 'Well-Authenticated Facts' Documenting the Birth of the American Novel," *The Hudson Valley Regional Review*, September 1987, Volume 4, Number 2. Broderick further relates how Mrs. Bleecker was an indirect witness to the James Yates family murders on which the central event in Brockden Brown's *Wieland* is founded, and argues with considerable plausibility that she may actually have been the author of the surviving newspaper account of that sad crime.

In fairness, these books were written both with a war going on nearby and not distant from a time when Bleeker herself underwent several domestic tragedies all at once; not to mention her own dying at a relatively young age. And these factors prove a major defect with respect to the body of her writings generally. But despite the too frequent gloom and pronounced anguish that clouds much of what she wrote, there are exceptions. What follows them are a selection of poems and three letters that display and reveal Ann Eliza Bleeker in better form.

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**To Mr. L\*\*\*\*\*.**

THE sun that gilds the western sky  
And makes the orient red,  
Whose gladsome rays delight the eye  
And cheer the lonely shade,

Withdraws his vegetative heat,  
To southern climes retires;  
While absent, we supply his seat  
With gross, material fires.

'Tis new-year's morn; each rustic swain  
Ambrosial cordials take;  
And round the fire the festive train  
A semi-circle make:

While clouds ascend, of sable smoke,  
From pipes of ebon hue,  
With inharmonick song and joke  
They pass the morning through.

You tell me this is solitude,  
This Contemplation's seat;  
Ah no! the most impervious wood  
Affords me no retreat.

But let me recollect: 'tis said,  
When *Orpheus* tun'd his lyre  
The Fauns and Satyrs left the shade,  
Warm'd by celestial fire.

His vocal lays and lyra made  
Inanimated marble weep;  
Swift-footed Time then paus'd, 'tis said,  
And sea-born monsters left the deep:

Impatient trees, to hear his strain  
Rent from the ground their roots:—  
Such is my fate, as his was then,  
Surrounded here—by brutes.

~~~~~\*\*\*~~~~~

On the IMMENSITY of CREATION.

OH! could I borrow some celestial plume,

This narrow globe should not confine me long
 In its contracted sphere—the vast expanse,
 Beyond where thought can reach, or eye can glance,
 My curious spirit, charm'd should traverse o'er,
 New worlds to find, new systems to explore:
 When these appear'd, again I'd urge my flight
 Till all creation open'd to my sight.
 Ah! unavailing wish, absurd and vain,
 Fancy return and drop thy wing again?
 Could'st thou more swift than light move steady on?
 Thy sight as broad, and piercing as the sun,
 And *Gabriel's* years too added to thy own;
 Nor *Gabriel's* sight, nor thought, nor rapid wing,
 Can pass the immense domains of th' eternal King:
 The greatest seraph in his bright abode
 Can't comprehend the labours of a God.
 Proud reason fails, and is confounded here;
 —Man how contemptible thou dost appear!
 What art thou in this scene?—Alas! no more
 Than a small atom to the sandy shore,
 A drop of water to a boundless sea,
 A single moment to eternity.

~**~

A THOUGHT on DEATH.

ALAS! my thoughts, how faint they rise,
 Their pinions clogg'd with dirt;
 They cannot gain the distant skies,
 But gravitate to earth.

No angel meets them on the way,
 To guide them to new spheres;
 And for to light them, not a ray
 Of heavenly grace appears.

Return then to thy native ground,
 And sink into the tombs;
 There take a dismal journey round
 The melancholy rooms:

There level'd equal king and swain,
 The vicious and the just;
 The turf ignoble limbs contain,
 One rots beneath a bust.

What heaps of human bones appear
 Pil'd up along the walls!
 These are *Death's* trophies—furniture
 Of his tremendous halls;

The water oozing thro' the stones,
 Still drops a mould'ring tear;
 Rots the gilt coffin from the bones,
 And lays the carcase bare.

This is *Cleora*—come, let's see
Once more the blooming fair;
Take off the lid—ah! 'tis not she,
A vile impostor there.

Is this the charmer poets sung,
And vainly deified,
The envy of the maiden throng?
(How humbling to our pride!)

Unhappy man, of transient breath,
Just born to view the day,
Drop in the grave—and after death
To filth and dust decay.

Methinks the vault, at ev'ry tread,
Sounds deeply in my ear,
'Thou too shalt join the silent dead,
'Thy final scene is here.'

Thy final scene! no, I retract,
Not till the clarion's sound
Demands the sleeping pris'ners back
From the refunding ground.

Not till that audit shall I hear
Th' immutable decree,
Decide the solemn question, where
I pass eternity.

Death is the conqueror of clay,
And can but clay detain;
The soul, superior, springs away,
And scorns his servile chain.
The just arise, and shrink no more
At graves, and shrouds, and worms,
Conscious they shall (when time is o'er)
Inhabit angel forms.

~**~

Written in the Retreat from BURGOYNE.

WAS it for this, with thee a pleasing load,
I sadly wander'd thro' the hostile wood;
When I thought fortune's spite could do no more,
To see thee perish on a foreign shore?
Oh my lov'd babe! my treasure's left behind,
Ne'er sunk a cloud of grief upon my mind;
Rich in my children—on my arms I bore
My living treasures from the scalper's pow'r:
When I sat down to rest beneath some shade,
On the soft grass how innocent she play'd,
While her sweet sister, from the fragrant wild,
Collects the flow'rs to please my precious child;

Unconscious of her danger, laughing roves,
 Nor dreads the painted savage in the groves.
 Soon as the spires of *Albany* appear'd,
 With fallacies my rising grief I cheer'd;
 'Resign'd I bear,' said I, 'heaven's just reproof,
 'Content to dwell beneath a stranger's roof;
 'Content my babes should eat dependent bread,
 'Or by the labour of my hands be fed:
 'What tho' my houses, lands, and goods are gone,
 'My babes remain—these I can call my own.'
 But soon my lov'd *Abella* hung her head,
 From her soft cheek the bright carnation fled;
 Her smooth transparent skin too plainly shew'd
 How fierce thro' every vein the fever glow'd.
 —In bitter anguish o'er her limbs I hung,
 I wept and sigh'd, but sorrow chain'd my tongue;
 At length her languid eyes clos'd from the day,
 The idol of my soul was torn away;
 Her spirit fled and left me ghastly clay!
 Then—then my soul rejected all relief,
 Comfort I wish'd not for, I lov'd my grief:
 'Hear, my *Abella!*' cried I, 'hear me mourn,
 'For one short moment, oh! my child return;
 'Let my complaint detain thee from the skies,
 'Though troops of angels urge thee on to rise.'
 All night I mourn'd—and when the rising day
 Gilt her sad chest with his benignest ray,
 My friends press round me with officious care,
 Bid me suppress my sighs, nor drop a tear;
 Of resignation talk'd—passions subdu'd,
 Of souls serene and christian fortitude;
 Bade me be calm, nor murmur at my loss,
 But unrepining bear each heavy cross.
 'Go!' cried I raging, 'stoick [stoic] bosoms go!
 'Whose hearts vibrate not to the sound of woe;
 'Go from the sweet society of men,
 'Seek some unfeeling tyger's savage den,
 'There calm—alone—of resignation preach,
 'My Christ's examples better precepts teach.'
 Where the cold limbs of gentle *Laz'rus* lay
 I find him weeping o'er the humid clay;
 His spirit groan'd, while the beholders said
 (With gushing eyes) 'see how he lov'd the dead!
 And when his thoughts on great *Jerus'lem* turn'd,
 Oh! how pathetic o'er her fall he mourn'd!
 And sad *Gethsemene's* nocturnal shade
 The anguish of my weeping Lord survey'd:
 Yes, 'tis my boast to harbour in my breast
 The sensibilities by God exprest;
 Nor shall the mollifying hand of time,
 Which wipes off common sorrows, cancel mine.

~**~

ANOTHER.

STILL apprehending death and pain,
To whom great God shall I complain?
To whom pour out my tears
But to the pow'r that gave me breath,
The arbiter of life and death,
The ruler of the spheres?

Soon to the grave's Cimmerian shade
I must descend without thine aid,
To stop my spirit's flight;
Leave my dear partner here behind,
And blooming babe, whose op'ning mind
Just lets in Reason's light.

When she, solicitous to know
Why I indulge my silent woe,
Clings fondly round my neck,
My passions then know no commands,
My heart with swelling grief expands,
Its tender fibres break.

Father of the creation wide,
Why hast thou not to man deny'd
The silken tye of love?
Why food celestial let him taste?
Then tear him from the rich repast,
Real miseries to prove?

~**~

A PROSPECT of DEATH.

DEATH! thou real friend of innocence.
Tho' dreadful unto shivering sense,
I feel my nature tottering o'er
Thy gloomy waves, which loudly roar?
Immense the scene, yet dark the view,
Nor *Reason* darts her vision thro'.
Virtue! supreme of earthly good,
Oh let thy rays illumine the road;
And when dash'd from the precipice,
Keep me from sinking in the seas:
Thy radiant wings, then wide expand,
And bear me to celestial land.

~**~

DESPONDENCY.

COME *Grief*, and sing a solemn dirge
Beneath this midnight shade;
From central darkness now emerge,
And tread the lonely glade.

Attend each mourning pow'r around,
While tears incessant flow;

Strike all your strings with doleful sound,
Till *Grief* melodious grow.

This is the cheerless hour of night,
For sorrow only made,
When no intrusive ray of light
The silent glooms pervade.

Tho' such the darkness of my soul,
Not such the calmness there,
But waves of guilt tumultuous roll
'Midst billows of despair.

Fallacious *Pleasure*'s tinsel train
My soul rejects with scorn;
If higher joys she can't attain,
She'd rather chuse to mourn:

For bliss superior she was made,
Or for extreme despair:
If pain awaits her past the dead
Why should she triumph here?

Tho' *Reason* points at good supreme,
Yet Grace must lead us thence;
Must wake us from this pleasing dream,
The idle joys of *Sense*.

Surely I wish the blackest night
Of Nature to remain,
'Till Christ arise with healing light,
Then welcome day again.

~**~

HOPE arising from *RETROSPECTION*.

ALAS! my fond enquiring soul,
Doom'd in suspence to mourn;
Now let thy moments calmly roll,
Now let thy peace return.

Why should'st thou let a doubt disturb
Thy hopes, which daily rise,
And urge thee on to trust his word
Who built and rules the skies?

Look back thro' what intricate ways
He led thy unfriended feet;
Oft mourning in the cheerless maze,
He ne'er forsook thee yet.

When thunder from heav'n's arch did break,
And cleft the sinking *ship*,
His mercy snatch'd thee from the wreck,
And from the rolling deep:

And when *Disease*, with threat'ning mein,
Aim'd at thy trembling heart,
Again his mercy interven'd,
And turn'd aside the dart.

When *Murder* sent her hopeless cries
More dreadful thro' the gloom,
And kindling flames did round thee rise,
Deep harvests to consume;

Who was it led thee thro' the wood
And o'er th' ensanguin'd plain,
Unseen by ambush'd sons of blood,
Who track'd thy steps in vain?

'Twas pitying heav'n that check'd my tears,
And bade my infants play,
To give an opiate to my fears,
And cheer the lonely way.

And in the *doubly dreadful night*
When my *Abella* died,
When horror struck—detesting light!
I sunk down by her side:

When wing'd for flight my spirit stood,
With this fond thought beguil'd,
To lead my charmer to her God,
And there to claim my child;

Again his mercy o'er my breast
Effus'd the breath of peace;
Subsiding passions sunk to rest,
He bade the tempest cease.

Oh! let me ever, ever praise
Such undeserved care;
Tho' languid may appear my lays,
At least they are sincere.

I never will distrust thee more,
Tho' hell should aim her dart;
Innoxious is infernal pow'r,
If thou Protector art.

It is my joy that thou art God,
Eternal, and supreme—
Rise Nature! hail the power aloud,
From whom creation came.

~**~

A HYMN.

OMNICIENT and eternal God,

Who hear'st the faintest pray'r
Distinct as Hallelujahs loud,
Which round thee hymned are.

Here, far from all the world retir'd,
I humbly bow the knee,
And wish, (as I have long desir'd,)
An interest in thee.

But my revolting heart recedes
And rushes to the croud;
My passions stop their ears and lead,
Tho' conscience warns aloud.

How deeply sinful is my mind?
To every ill how prone?
How stubborn my dead heart I find
Insensible as stone?

The hardest *marble* yet will break,
Nor will resist the *steel*;
But neither *wrath* nor *love* can make
My flinty bosom feel.

My passions like a torrent roar,
And tumbling to hell's glooms
Sweep me away from Reason's shore,
To "where *Hope* never comes."

By labour turn'd the useless stream
Thro' fertile vales has play'd;
But for to change the course of sin?
Demands immortal aid.

All nature pays the homage due
To the supremely blest;
All but the favour'd being who
Was plac'd above the rest.

He bids the teeming earth to bear,
The blushing flow'rs arise;
At his command the sun appears
And warms the orient skies.

Oh! was I but some plant or star,
I might obey him too;
Nor longer with the Being war,
From whom my breath I drew.

Change me, oh God! with ardent cries
I'll venture to thy seat;
And if I perish, *hell* must rise
And tear me from thy feet.

~**~

To Miss BRINCKERHOFF, on her quitting New-York.

ELIZA, when the southern gale
Expands the broad majestic sail,
While Friendship breathes the parting sigh,
And sorrow glitters in each eye,
The vessel leaves the flying shores,
Receding spires and less'ning tow'rs;
And as it cleaves the lucid sea,
The distant tumult dies away:
Then pensive as the deck you quit,
Caressing sable rob'd regret,
Indulging every rising fear,
And urging on the pendant tear,
While Recollection's flatt'ring eye
Your former pleasures magnify;
Then shall your guardian spirit smile,
Rejoic'd that Fate rewards his toil;
And as he mounts on aerial wing,
Thus to his kindred angels sing:
'Hail, happy hour that snatch'd my fair
'To aether pure, from *city air*,
'Where *Vice* triumphant lifts her head
'And hisses *Virtue* to the shade;
'Where *Temperance* vacates each feast;
'Where *Piety* is grown a jest;
'Where *Flatt'ry*, dress'd in robes of truth,
'Inculcates pride in heedless youth;
'Where oft with folded wings I spy
'The torpid soul inactive lie,
'Shut up in sense, forbid to rear
'Her plume beyond our atmosphere.
'How bless'd my charge, whom gentler fate
'Leads early to the *green retreat*,
'Where every object thoughts inspire
'Exalted to seraphic fire;
'And where the speculative mind
'Expatriates free and unconfin'd;
'There surely I shall find access
'To cherish ev'ry budding grace,
'Enlarging still each nobler pow'r,
'Till active, like myself they soar.
'And when my pupil learns her worth,
'She'll feel a just contempt for earth,
'And fix her elevated sight
'Alone on primogenial light:
'Nor shall her *charms external* fade,
'But bloom and brighten in the shade;
'While innate graces still shall rise,
'And dart their radiance thro' her eyes.'

~**~

To JULIA AMANDA.

FAIR *Julia Amanda*, now since it is peace,
Methinks your hostilities also should cease;
The shafts from your eyes, and the snares of your smile,
Should cease—or at least be suspended awhile:
'Tis cruel to point your artillery of charms
Against the poor lads who have laid down their arms.

The sons of *Bellona* who *Britain* defies,
Altho' bullet proof, must they fall by your eyes?
In vain have they bled, they have conquer'd in vain,
If returning in triumph, they yield to your chain.
For shame! in the olive's salubrious shade
Your murders restrain, and let peace be obey'd;
Since *Europe* negotiates, alter *your* carriage,
While they treat of peace, make a treaty of *marriage*.

~**~

PEACE.

ALL hail vernal *Phoebus*! all hail ye soft breezes!
Announcing the visit of spring?
How green are the meadows! the air how it pleases!
How gleefully all the birds sing!

Begone ye rude tempests, nor trouble the aether,
Nor let blushing *Flora* complain,
While her pencil was tinging the tulip, bad weather
Had blasted the promising gem.

From its verdant unfoldings, the timid narcissus
Now shoots out a diffident bud;
Begone ye rude tempests, for sure as it freezes
Ye kill this bright child of the wood:

And *Peace* gives new charms to the bright beaming season;
The groves we now safely explore
Where murd'ring banditti, the dark sons of treason,
Were shelter'd and aw'd as before.

The swain with his oxen proceeds to the valley
Whose seven years sabbath concludes,
And blesses kind heaven, that *Britain's* black ally
Is chas'd to *Canada's* deep woods.

And *Echo* no longer is plaintively mourning,
But laughs and is jocund as we;
And the turtle ey'd nymphs, to their cots all returning,
Carve 'WASHINGTON,' on every tree.

I'll wander along by the side of yon fountain,
And drop in its current the line,

To capture the glittering fish that there wanton;
Ah, no! 'tis an evil design.

Sport on little fishes, your lives are a treasure
Which I can *destroy*, but not *give*;
Methinks it's at best a malevolent pleasure
To bid a poor being *not live*.

How lucid the water! its soft undulations
Are changeably ting'd by the light;
It reflects the green banks, and by fair imitations
Presents a new heaven to sight.

The *butterfly* skims o'er its surface, all gilded
With plumage just dipt in rich dyes;
But yon infant has seiz'd the poor insect, ah! yield it;
There, see the freed bird how it flies!

But whither am I and my little dog straying?
Too far from our cottage we roam;
The dews are already exhal'd; cease your playing,
Come, *Daphne*, come let us go home.

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To Miss S\*\*\*\* T\*\* E\*\*\*\*.

NO, I can admit of no excuse, I have written three letters in folio to my SUSAN, and have received no answer. After various conjectures about the cause of so mortifying an omission, I have come to this conclusion, that you have commenced a very, very fashionable lady—(you see my penetration)—and though I am not in possession of JOSEPH's divining cup, I can minutely describe how you passed the day when my last letter was handed you; we will suppose it your own journal.

*Saturday Morn, Feb. 12*

*Ten o'clock.* WAS disturbed in a very pleasant dream by aunt V. W. who told me breakfast was ready; fell asleep and dreamed again about Mr. S.

*Eleven.* Rose from bed; DINAH handed my shoes, washed the cream poultice from my arms, and unbuckled my curls: drank two dishes of hyson; could not eat any thing.

*From twelve to two.* Withdrew to my closet; perused the title page of the Pilgrim's Progress: — came in, and, with an engaging address, presented me with a small billet-doux from Mr. S. and a monstrous big packet from sister B. Laid the packet aside; mused over the charming note until three o'clock.

Could not read sister's letter, because I must dress, Major ARROGANCE, Colonel BOMBAST, and TOM FUSTIAN being to dine with us; could not suit my colours—fretted—got the vapours: DINE, handing me the salts, let the vial fall and broke it; it was diamond cut crystal, a present from Mr. S. I flew up in a passion—it was enough to vex a saint—and boxed her ears soundly.

*Four.* Dressed; aunt asked me what sister had wrote. I told her she was well, and had wrote nothing in particular. *Mem.*—I silly broke the seal to give a colour to my assertion.

*Between four and five.* Dined; TOM FUSTIAN toasted the brightest eyes in company— I reddened like crimson—was surprised to see M—blush, and looking round saw P—blush yet deeper than we. I wonder who he meant. TOM is called a lad of judgment. Mr. S. passed the window on horseback.

*Six.* Visited at Miss —'s: a very formal company: uneasy in my stays—scalded my fingers, and stained my changeable by spilling a dish of tea; the ladies were excessively sorry for the accident, and Miss V. Z. observed, that just such another mischance had befallen the widow R. three years before the war. Made a party at cards until seven in the evening; lost two pistoles. *Mem.*—had no ready cash, but gave an order on —.

*From six till three in the morning.* Danced with Mr. S.—thought he looked jealous—to punish him I coquetted with three or four pretty fellows, whispered Colonel TINSEL, who smiled and kissed my hand; in return I gave him a peccant blow on the shoulder. Mr. S. looked like a thunder-gust; then affected to be calm as a stoic; but in spite of philosophy turned as pale as BANQUO's ghost. M— seemed concerned, and asked what ailed him? I don't like M—: I wonder what charm makes every body admire her: sure, if Mr. S. was civil to her, it was enough; he need not be so very affectionate. I flew in a pet to a vacant parlour, and took out sister's letter to read: I laboured through ten lines, contemplated the seal, chewed off three corners, and folding the remains elegantly, put it in my pocket. I suppose it was full of friendship and such like country stuff. However, sister writes out of a good heart to me, and I will answer it. Mr. S. and I were reconciled through the intercession of P—, whose lovely humanity every where commands esteem. We passed the hours very agreeably. On my retiring DINAH attended, and having no paper handy, I gave her sister's letter to put my hair in buckle, while I read these verses, which Colonel TINSEL, with a sigh, gave me:—

Lofty cretur, wen de sun  
 Wantons o'er yu wid his beme,  
 Yu smile wid joy—my lakes alone  
 Obnoxious ar—woud I war him.

I think the Colonel writes as well as HOMER; I believe he knows as much; what signifies Greek and Hebrew! I hate your starched scholars that talk Latin.

Well SUSAN, you see that in the arctic wilds of *America* your secret actions are brought to light, so I hope you will pay more respect to this epistle.

Mr. B— begs me, at this very instant, to present his very humble regards to you, and has made three solemn bows to your ladyship before I could write a sentence. POLLY S— is here, and making sad execution among our beaus. We live here a merry kind of a laughing, indolent life: we suffer no real evils, and are far from regretting the elegant amusements which attend a city life: all that I want, my sister, is your company. This constant repetition you must permit (without repining) in all my letters. I never walk in that angle of my garden where your flowers are planted, but I heave a sigh, as if it were a painted monument to your departed body. Can you never come to us? Were it not for my precarious health, I might even adventure to R—, and kiss cousin B—, as my old dear friend, whom I tenderly love, though she forgets me: but I am often sick; and happy am I that my JACK is so good a nurse; the tenderness of his nature and cheerfulness of his temper, contribute more to my cure than all the restoratives in the dispensatory.

Tell my sweet cousins I love them all tenderly; recollect me with affection to aunt V\*\* W\*\*\*, and permit my PEG and HANNAH to salute you.

Ann Eliza Bleecker.

*Tomhanick, March 29, 1783.*

This day fourteen years ago, SUSAN, I was married; repent, and take a husband.

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To Mr. S***** S*****.

I Congratulate you, my dear brother, on the peace; in consequence of which I sincerely hope you may see many happy years: as for me, my bright prospects lie beyond the grave; I have little to promise myself on this side of eternity. Affliction has broken my spirit and constitution; I grow daily weaker and more emaciated, and depressed with the reflection of leaving my husband and child—alas! the only treasures I have now on earth.

Let me talk freely to you for the last time, my brother:—You know your poor BETSEY was born a solitary orphan: though enjoying a genteel fortune, yet friendless, and a wanderer, at length I found peace in the company of a tender husband. Ah, how soon interrupted! my lovely babes died away like summer blossoms before the frost: still I had a kind mother to complain to; we wept together: but soon the enemy rushing upon us like a hurricane, we were scattered like a flock of frightened birds: our dear mother fled to *Red-Hook* with SUSAN; I staid awhile at the farm; but a sudden incursion of some savages hastened my retreat; I took my beautiful ABELLA on my arm, and PEGGY by the hand, and wandered solitary through the dark woods, expecting every moment to meet the bloody ally of Britain: however, we arrived safe at

[Stony] *Arabia*, where I met my husband, who had been to *Albany*; he procured a chaise, and took us to the city; the alarm increasing, we got a passage in a sloop with sister SWITS and family; twelve miles below Albany my ABELLA died of a dysentery; we went ashore, had one of my mahogany dining-tables cut up to make her coffin, and buried the little angel on the bank. I was seized with the distemper; and when we came to *Red-Hook*, found my dear mamma wasted to a shadow: she mourned over the ruins of her family, and carried me to uncle H—'s, who received us very reluctantly. Soon after my dear mother died, and I returned to Albany, where, in a few days, I saw poor sister CATY* expire. We retired again to *Tomhanick*, where we lived sometime blest in domestic tranquillity, though under perpetual alarms from the savages: at length, one afternoon, a small party from Canada, who had unperceivedly penetrated the country, carried off Mr. BLEECKER with his two servants. This shock I could not support. My little PEGGY and I went to *Albany*, where we wept incessantly for five days, when God was pleased to restore him to our arms. Soon after I fell into premature labour, and was delivered of a dead child. Since that I have been declining; and though we often fled from the enemy since, been cruelly plundered, and often suffered for very necessaries, yet your silence, my brother, hurts me more than these.

Mr. BLEECKER talks of taking me to New-York [city] this spring, but I believe I shall never reach it; my health is so precarious that I dare not, even here, venture an afternoon's visit. I could wish to see you before I died; but I am used to disappointments. I have given you my little history that you may see I die of a broken heart. Farewell, my only brother; may God preserve your family, and continue all your blessings. When you see my poor little PEGGY, and my poor little HANNAH SWITS, think of your friends who have perished before you, and love and pity them for their sakes. Give my kindest love to BETSEY, and accept of your brother's. I am, dear SAMMY, your very affectionate sister,

Ann Eliza Bleecker.

Tomhanick, May 8, 1783.

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*To Miss S\*\*\*\* T\*\* E\*\*\**

MY DEAR SUSAN.

INDISPOSITION has of late so dispirited me that I have omitted to write to any of my friends; but within these few days I am sensibly better, and feel this evening in a chatty humour. Let me first of all give you the news—LYDIA S— is married to Mr. JOHN B—, and Miss POLLY S— to Lieutenant G— (son of Ennis G— the taylor;) moreover, NATJE L— (your old enemy) is likewise become somebody's espoused wife. Lord STERLING died last night, and (I am quite a gazette) beau T— is gone to *Canada*. The lads lodge with us, and we have endeavoured to pass the winter as gleefully as plenty and simplicity can make us—E— kisses your hands; JAMES is a profess'd slave to PEGGY S—; and POLLY will join us tomorrow, when Mr. B. and his spouse intend to leave the merry circle at *Tomhanick*, and take a ramble to *New-England*. I have been informed that Mrs. A— has blest the Doctor with a son and daughter; if so, I give you joy. Did you ever see so incoherent an epistle? however, you must confess, did I reduce so much news to order, and tell every thing elegantly, it would swell my paper beyond the common limit; besides, I do not mean to set up for "the complete letter-writer." My PEG is quite disappointed at your silence, and regrets that she ever sent her scrawl to R—: and indeed, SUSAN, (now I think on it) you have corresponded with me rather like a formal acquaintance than a warm friend; with every post you might have sent me some scribble; sometimes a half a quire, sometimes a half a line; the dawnings of friendship, emotions of humanity, sentiments of piety, or impressions of love, ought to have been candidly confided in the bosom of your own ELIZA: they would have brightened my moments of solitude, and have made me forget my oblivious situation. SAMMY too has helped to embitter my cup of life; he has contracted his affection within the orb of his little family, and cannot shoot out a ray of love at this distance, to enlighten and bless a forlorn sister: I love him sincerely; may he and his be forever happy. My sister, I shall grow too dull if I proceed; I had better conclude; but I am fond of talking to you. Let me drop into news again—POLLY P— (Mrs. L.) has a fine son; and I had like to have forgot to mention that *Vermont* intends again to renew the east and western claims. Upon a late resolve of Congress, (handed particularly to them) they have assumed an insulting arrogance of behaviour, threaten Congress, and imprecate *New-York*. In short. I fancy we shall have all our persecutions to go over again.



But what have your black eyes been doing all this while? have you captured no heart worth retaining? I am afraid the gentlemen are so severely attracted by the charms of three fair ones, that (like Mahomet's shrine) they cannot attach themselves to either. Pray be seen separate.

We have here a rustic beauty come into our forest, that would be much admired (I mean for person, not manners) by all the beaux of *R*—: the symmetry of her form, glitter of her eyes, and lessening shades of vermilion on her cheek, which lose themselves imperceptibly in a complexion of the most delicate whiteness; these, when improved in the *beau monde* by artificial graces, would make her an irresistible toast; she has the romantic name of MELANESSA; but being of a tender constitution, not able to work, has no declared admirer.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

GRAY.

Dear girl, you are tired with my impertinence, but I haste to relieve you. Your brother begs you to remember him with tenderness; the children love you; even FAN and MARKEE solicit your remembrance of them; and O, my sister! might you but really feel how much I am your affectionate

Ann Eliza Bleecker.

*Tomhanick*, Dec. 10, 1783.

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