

A GENTLEWOMAN OF BOSTON

1742-1805

BY BARRETT WENDELL

Years ago, when they had wax figures in the long since vanished Boston Museum, there was observed among them one marked "Catherine Wendell, a Beauty of the Last Century," or some such thing. Who she was nobody seemed to remember. The chances are that an old gown marked with her name had been found somewhere, put on a frame, surmounted by a wax head like those occasionally to be seen in shop windows, and then described as a portrait. Gown, head and all disappeared a good while before the last play was acted in the Lecture Room of the Museum. Even the memory of them has almost faded now. So nobody can tell whether she was the same Catherine Wendell who wrote some letters forgotten for more than a hundred years and lately found. One likes to fancy that she may have been. The letters are not remarkable to be sure, and after the fashion of the Eighteenth Century they are spelt and punctuated pretty much anyhow. Reduce them to formal shape though, without altering a syllable, and you begin to feel that the woman who wrote them, beauty or not, not only knew how to use the English language, but so used it through many years of declining fortune as to leave behind her traces of the quality which our ancestors used to call that of a gentlewoman.

When she wrote the earliest of the letters she was already an old maid, as things went in the Eighteenth

Century; for, still unmarried, she had reached the age of twenty-seven. And the rather hasty lines show that she was confronted with difficulties which she did not mean to yield to. She was the tenth of the fifteen children of John and Elizabeth (Quincy) Wendell, of Boston, and she was first cousin through both father and mother of the still traditionally remembered Dorothy Quincy, who married the celebrated John Hancock. When she was born, in 1742, her people held their heads rather high. A few years before, her paternal grandfather, a New York Dutchman, who had there come to grief in a money way, had moved to Boston, where his convivial qualities had made so agreeable an impression as to lure the Governor and His Majesty's Council to attend his funeral in state. A little later her maternal grandfather, the third Edmund Quincy, had died in London, where he had gone as official representative of the Province of Massachusetts; and the General Court had honored his memory by voting to put over him, at public expense, a fine monument in Bunhill Fields—for some reason or other never erected, so his unmarked grave has long been lost. Her father, educated in Boston, and a substantial merchant there at a time when Boston merchants, like those of old Italy, wore their swords, had worn his to such advantage that in 1740 he was elected, on Boston Common, to the command of The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company. On one occasion, too, he is recorded by his friend Captain Goelet to have drawn it. He had given, in Goelet's honour, a dinner party, at the close of which the gentlemen had thought well to go out and clear their heads by a walk in the night air. Attracted by the sound of fiddles, they had presently entered a tavern, somewhere near the Common, to find a number of pretty girls dancing with youths of humbler condition than theirs. So out came the swords of the Captains and their friends, and away scampered the frightened youths, leaving the pretty girls to dance

with their betters as long as their betters chose. It is fair to add that the two Captains went to church together next Sunday morning, and gravely discussed the sermon afterwards. George the Second's Boston maintained the traditions of the Puritan fathers, among which few were more tenacious than that which demanded recognition for persons of quality.

When Catherine was about eight years old, her mother died, having meanwhile borne five more children, of whom two survived. Some three years later, her father married, Mercy, widow of Captain John Skinner, of Marblehead; this lady, who had Skinner children, though faultless in character and of high respectability, appears to have been less distinguished in origin than his first wife, Elizabeth Quincy, and to have brought no addition to his rather unstable fortunes. So the inheritance of his children,—consisting mostly of unimproved lands in Granville which had earlier been called Bedford, a little to the west of Springfield, given their mother by her father, Judge Quincy,—appeared to them important. Meanwhile, the family lived well; their house, on the corner of Tremont and Court Streets, was subsequently lifted up, to make room under it for the store occupied by the well-known grocer S. S. Pierce, and so remained there till Catherine had been safe in the Granary Burying Ground for more than seventy-five years. And of her nine elders seven survived till after she was twenty years old. These were Abraham, who went into business with his father, and died unmarried at the age of twenty-five; Elizabeth, who married a well-to-do Boston merchant named Solomon Davis; John, who took his degree at Harvard in 1750, and presently betook himself to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he lived on till 1808; Dorothy, on whom we shall touch by and by; Edmund, who early became a ship-master; Henry, who after a rather riotous youth died young at sea; and Josiah, who was lost at sea when little more than of age. There were

two younger children as well: Thomas, two years Catherine's junior, and Sarah, a year younger than Thomas.

Though no personal trace of her exists until her first remaining letter to her brother John, written in 1769, two or three papers touch on her surroundings. In June, 1752, Solomon Davis, already married to her eldest sister, adds to a business letter, addressed to her brother John in Portsmouth, this brief postscript: "Brother Richard Skinner [a son of her step-mother] and sister Dolly [her own unmarried sister] are with us, and join in love to you, as does your sister Davis. They say Richard courts Dolly." He did, and to Dolly's grief successfully. We shall meet her often again. Six years later, in 1758, her brother John, already five years married to Sarah Wentworth, of Portsmouth, grand-daughter of John Wentworth, Lieutenant-Governor of New Hampshire, and cousin of Governor Benning Wentworth, made a journey to Springfield in the interest of the whole family. The lands in Granville given their mother by Judge Quincy remained undivided. He secured an order from the Court at Springfield that a formal division be made—two-elevenths to the estate of his elder brother Abraham, who had been heir-at-law, and one-eleventh to each of the others. The division was made; Catherine thereby became a landed proprietor, though not yet of age, and Brother John collected from his brothers and sisters the sum of £61.18.0, probably in provincial currency, in return for which he rendered an itemized account of his expenses.

Brother John was enterprising. He at once bought, for £133.6.8, the two-elevenths assigned to the estate of Abraham, and a few months later he secured Henry's eleventh for £60.0.0. So he owned in 1759 four-elevenths of the Granville lands, originally belonging to his grandfather Quincy. Thus the matter seems to have stood on December 15, 1762, when Solomon Davis wrote him as follows: "About seven

o'clock this morning it pleased Almighty God in his Providence to summon your worthy father out of this world. The loss I sincerely condole. Under the circumstances you will no doubt think it necessary you should be here in person as the direction of his interests devolves on you. All your friends join in condoling your and their bereavement. As nothing will be done but what is absolutely necessary, it will be best for you to be here as soon as possible." So Brother John made post-haste from Portsmouth to Boston; and there was a grand funeral which cost £67.6.8, including £8.0.6 for Catherine's mourning, and about as much for that of three slaves, Caesar, Thomas and Phyllis; and the worthy father was laid beside his own in the Granary Burying Ground; and before the month was out Brother John was made administrator of his estate, which by and by proved insolvent. So all Catherine had seems to have been her eleventh of grandfatherⁿ Quincy's land in Granville. The insolvent estate proved troublesome, and incidentally involved some interesting letters from that most excellent and popularly misunderstood magistrate, Thomas Hutchinson, concerning conflicts of provincial law; for, Brother John, the administrator, lived not in Massachusetts where the estate belonged, but in the then quite distinct province of New Hampshire. Brother Edmund, when his father died, was in London, commanding a ship bound for Boston; Brother Josiah was soon lost at sea, if indeed he had not been already; Brother Henry was soon to follow him. And there were disputes about advanced money. In May, 1763, Solomon Davis wrote the perplexed administrator: "As for the money you let Mr. Skinner and mother have, I have nothing to do with it, neither will I. We expect Brother Ned in about three weeks." By December this matter had come to law, and a detailed account of what the dead old gentleman had paid out for his step-daughter, Tabitha Skinner—which amounted to £625.13.6 "Old

Tenor"—was duly filed, and stays faintly interesting as evidence of what a Boston girl, of good condition, wore at the beginning of the reign of George the Third. Incidentally, however, this implies imperfect cordiality in the relations between Brother John and his step-mother together with the Skinner family, which by that time included his sister Dorothy. A letter from Richard Skinner, her husband, in April, 1764, shows that they were in a bad way as concerns both money and health; in point of fact, his habits are said to have been intemperate. All of which did not prevent Brother John from buying next August, for £64.0.0, the one-eleventh of the Granville lands which had been assigned to his sister Davis; thus he became possessed of five-elevenths of that Quincy property. The Granville matter seems confused, though. In July, 1768, some two hundred acres there were sold at auction, as part of the estate of John Wendell deceased, to one Timothy Robinson, for £87.5.6; and less than a week later this Robinson conveyed them for the same sum to Brother John. In October, 1768, Brother John, already administrator of his father's estate, was appointed by Thomas Hutchinson, then Judge of Probate in Massachusetts, administrator of the estates of Brothers Abraham, Henry and Josiah. Clearly, this eldest surviving brother was getting things, so far as he could, into his own hands. This last matter, though, appears chiefly to concern not the Granville lands but some other property, in Milton, inherited from Judge Quincy, which Hutchinson himself wished to buy.

Meanwhile, Brother Tom, the youngest of the three surviving brothers, by that time living at Marblehead, where the Skinners belonged, had been in Boston, and in some sort of money difficulties. It is all indistinct, but very plainly the family affairs were by no means prosperous. A letter from Uncle Edmund Quincy, however,—he was Mrs. Hancock's father,—implies that in 1769 fortune was smiling on Brother Edmund, who,

still a sea-faring man, had agreeable social qualities and a contract to supply masts to His Majesty's Navy, and on his Brother John, at Portsmouth. Between them they managed, before Edmund started on another voyage, to give Thomas Hutchinson some sort of title to the Milton lands. Edmund's voyage was not long; before the end of the year he was in Boston again and had made an excursion to Portsmouth. These two brothers, on the whole, were fairly well sustaining the family traditions; and so, to all appearances, was sister Davis, and the youngest sister, Sarah, who presently married a brother of the later distinguished Elbridge Gerry, and lived, like the luckless Skinners and the not too prosperous Brother Tom, at Marblehead.

Catherine, meanwhile, the only one of the family not yet married, seems to have taken up her abode with the Davises, in Boston; and, as sister Davis was apt to be in a family way, and otherwise not vigorous, to have taken considerable charge of the Davis housekeeping and children. She did not relish dependence, however. Her first letter to Brother John is short, simple and to the point. "I am in some little way to support myself" she writes; but to do so she needs money, and accordingly offers him her eleventh of the Granville lands for £300.0.0. In view of what he had paid for his other holdings there, this price looks hardly modest. What came of this offer does not appear. Brother John, though, clearly had an eye on Granville; for, in 1771, he bought of one Cotton Mather Stevens, a Portsmouth tailor, the rights in Granville which Stevens had inherited from his mother whose grandfather was a Mather; these cost only £19.0.0 in provincial money.

The next glimpse of Catherine, or rather of things close to her, is to be found in some letters from uncle Edmund Quincy, in the next year, 1772. They touch on the negro Tom, whose mourning had duly appeared in the funeral accounts of the elder John Wendell,

some ten years before. Tom, now thirty or forty years old, had been born in New York, as a slave, in the family of this John Wendell's grandmother, Mrs. Dekey, and had finally been sent to her grandson in Boston, partly as an inheritance, and partly that he should not be sold to strangers; he had been trained to the trade of a painter, and is described as skilful. Brother John seems to have claimed him as administrator, which was all right, and to have taken personal possession of him at Portsmouth, which may or may not have been. On May 11, 1772, Uncle Edmund wrote to Brother John thus: "The same day I received yours about your man Tom's desertion, he, after a fatiguing journey via Haverhill came to your brother Davis's house. This morning he has been with me and says and by all accounts he means honestly to return home if you have altered your mind touching his changing masters; on which errand he says he suddenly left you, thinking some person here might be likely to buy him, and here chose to be if he parted from you. I don't see any possibility of his leaving the town, as he knows nothing from me of being confined in gaol at Boston, and I think it's a pity to put him there, as if you sell him it will depreciate his value, and if you keep him it may sour him and thus render him less useful. He's a *slave*, a rank of the human species which begins to be more and more disagreeable to the people of this continent, particularly to the Northward, where *Liberty*, in its most genuine and proper idea, runs so high. Great Britain very wisely, many centuries past, banished slavery. America, which as Dr. Franklin says is already too blackened by it, can't easily rid itself of the evil. The most Southern provinces are averse. Those Christians who have them are called to do all they can to render their black servants comfortable but are further evangelically obliged to contribute everything in their power by precept and instruction, and especially by example, that after a life of tolerable

service here, their present slavery, with themselves, may pass into a life of perfect freedom. The future similar circumstance of both master and servant should weigh with all, and will weigh with the Christian master." Two weeks later he touched on the matter again: "I note what you say of Captain Miller not bringing your negro Tom at which you wonder, and I wonder as much that I have no answer to mine by post Monday last, giving [by which the good old gentleman probably meant *asking*] directions for sending Tom home either by land or by water. I fear you omit inquiring after a letter. Your boy, notwithstanding what Miller told you, would have come in him, had I or anybody else thought it proper to return your property by water without the least intimation of your mind touching his so coming. Now that you have shown yourself uneasy that he did not go by water, I shall order him on board the first that goes. For, [I] assure you, your brother Davis never objected to my sending him that I know—if he had you would have heard it from me last week. I note what you say about the piece of villainy in which Tom is suspected of privity at least, and hope Mr. Clarkson may find his money by T.'s help."

In three days more things looked less clear: "I sent for Tom," wrote Uncle Edmund, "to go on board *Fournal* or *Yeaton*. He prays that I would write about his really procuring a master here; he'd rather be in Boston; and so forth. I begin to suspect that the true reason is too deep a concern in the affairs of C[larkson]. Now what step is to be taken? If you would have him returned to you I shall upon your advice agree with the master to take him just as he is departing, and shall send him on board, upon notice, by a constable or some proper person."

Now all this came pretty close to Catherine. She had been a girl of fifteen or so when Tom arrived from New York, as a house slave, born in the family, to live at her father's. She was herself living with the

Davises when runaway Tom took refuge there. It is just conceivable that she saw in Tom's training as a painter some prospect of help towards her "little way to support" herself. And Uncle Edmund's next extant letter, written on June 15, shows that Brother John suspected her to have something to do with the wood pile in which his troublesome negro was skulking. "I must say" he wrote, "in justice to Captain Davis, your sister Davis and sister Katy that they never surmised any pretensions or desire to keep him with them, for which reason I'm sorry a thing of that sort was ever carried to you, as I find by divers of your letters mutual uneasiness has ensued from it. I would have a final embargo laid upon everything of that kind, that so peace of family may be preserved. You know in former years such peace was the very singular character of the Wendell family. May God continue it and increase it, upon this maxim if no other—that life is so very short and our enjoyments of each other so precarious that there is scarce a thing or subject to be mentioned which is worthy of a wise man or woman, and a philosopher, to disturb himself or herself with . . . Your man Tom is now in my office getting ready cheerfully to go on board with Dr. Little. *Sub modo suo*, he begs hard at the distance of seventy miles that you would not be angry with him, promising absolute subjection to the will of a naturally kind master, and that he will do everything to please him and his mistress also on all accounts. I have told him that I would hand his request to you but could promise nothing. I should be well pleased in being able to say as much in his favor as St. Paul wrote to his Brother Philemon concerning Onesimus, his servant. However, I know you'll weigh the hints already suggested, and take such steps as your prudence may upon the whole dictate."

So Tom went back to Portsmouth, where Brother John seems not to have sold him after all. And what

Uncle Edmund described as the "peace of family" which had been the "very singular character" of the Wendells, was apparently renewed. For in August Brother Ned, on a visit to Portsmouth, brought with him a friendly note from Catherine to "Sister Wendell," stating that £2.19.8 was the "balance of the caps sent you." Catherine's taste was evidently trustworthy, and Sister Wendell duly paid the little balance. Haplessly enough, though, this was among the good lady's last acts. In nineteen years she had borne eleven children, of whom seven survived. Four of them, as well as the mother, were ailing in September; and the poor lady with her eldest daughter, then eighteen years old, were not well enough to accept in October an invitation from Elbridge Gerry at Marblehead, who was of opinion that "in addition to the advantage of a ride by land, the salt air here would serve as a voyage to sea." And on the 17th of November, she rested in the Lord, leaving Brother John widowed at forty-one, with seven children under eighteen. He made haste to dispatch a "very just and good" character of her to Uncle Edmund, who duly arranged that it should appear, on one of the last Thursdays in the month, in Mr. Green's newspaper, where very possibly the curious may still find it; and letters of condolence came flowing in.

Uncle Edmund was perhaps prematurely solicitous about the orphaned children. Their "loss," he wrote, "can't easily be repaired. Yours possibly may, but I heartily advise you to be very cautious in the reparation. But as speedily as may be procure the most prudent, wise and good woman to instruct, guide and govern them under your auspices. This I only hint. I hope you are already provided, or may be soon with such an one."

Two or three weeks later, he recurred to this matter, with excursions into Latin and dubious French: "I hope this may find you and your bereaved children well, and wish if possible they may have their loss in

due time compensated. In repairing the same, as I may have hinted in my former, *Festina lente*. Regardez les qualitez de la person plus que [la] famille (toujours de la reputation) mais ce n'est pas necessaire d'etre riche. Remember Horace's banter in his first Epistle to Maecenas," and so on. Evidently, Brother John's connubial propensities weighed on his uncle's mind.

Catherine's condolence, though formally old fashioned now, looks more impulsive: "It is the confessed principle of us all," she wrote, "to believe whatever is is right. Give me leave to send you the following, as they flow from a sympathetic heart: but at the same time [I] must beg, as they are very imperfect, you will view them with a partial eye:

Great God, whose just commands but thine
 Could tempt or force me to obey?
 Shall I Thy Sovereign will repine,
 O Thou who tak'st my all away?
 No! Let my wounded passion plead
 For ease, when struggling sorrows throng.
 My throbbing heart no more shall bleed,
 Nor accents murmur from my tongue.
 Thou art thy Maker's claim—not mine,
 When He the awful summons sends
 I must thy tender soul resign;
 To some He gives, to others lends.
 Then may we meet—in one unite—
 Like kindred souls before the throne.
 Auspicious Heaven, resplendent, bright,
 Receive our souls; join them in one."

Now, unless I am all wrong, one of these sixteen lines is either a judiciously appropriated or else an admirably simple expression of genuine Christian resignation on the part of this Boston spinster. "To some He gives, to others lends" is good enough for Wordsworth or for Whittier. And to be one-sixteenth of a poet, in the twelfth year of King George the Third's dominion over his Yankee provinces, is to be something else than commonplace.

Three months later, in February 1773, she wrote a long letter to Brother John, who seems seldom to have written her; "I believe the cold has dropped into your ink-horn and deprived you of the use of it. I should be glad to know what is the reason that Sally [Brother John's eldest child] can't or rather won't write me. It would give me much pleasure . . ." The Skinners, she goes on to tell him, are in a bad way. Measles have broken up a school which sister Skinner had opened. Brother Davis is kind; Catherine herself does all she can; but the Skinners are reduced to dining on potatoes. "I sincerely believe her a good Christian" she writes; but, as to Richard Skinner, "I can't but be much incensed against him. He certainly must be void of all sensibility, or would exert himself and go to sea, as he has failed in other attempts. I have said so much already that I have made him my enemy." Brother John, she thinks, would do well to write sister Skinner affectionately—"I should be glad to know," she adds, "if [your children] have had the measles. 'Siah [probably a Davis child] is just got well of them, and I think the chance now in his favor of his getting rid of his other complaint"—whatever that may have been.

At this time Brother Ned was again in England. As to Brother John, Catherine evidently had little news from him, for in September she wrote him thus: "It is well for us on both sides, my dear brother, that there are public prints, for that is the only resource I have. On Saturday nights, when we have the paper, I just look under [the] Portsmouth head, [and] finding no mention I conclude you are alive. As to Mr. Wentworth, I've scarcely seen him since he has been here. My brother and sister" (Davis) "being out of town, I suppose he would not favor me with so much of his company. You see what little attraction is left in your sister. Poor Mr. Inman has lost a fine daughter with a throat distemper. The Londoners are in; I've heard nothing material, [probably

concerning Brother Ned still abroad.] My love to the children. I'm very sorry Sally thinks her aunt of so little consequence as not to write her."

The next remaining letter from her is sadly torn; but seems to have been written late in the summer of 1774. By that time Brother Ned, whose affairs in England were upset by the rising political troubles, had betaken himself to Antigua and there married a widow who in October primly answered a formal letter of congratulation, at just about the time when her husband sent home a small consignment of sugar and rum. Catherine begins by complaints of impoliteness on the part of one F. who commanded a ship bound to Portsmouth from Boston: "Would you believe it, he would neither take this to you nor let his negro, who spends [the] chief of his evenings in our kitchen. Upon my word, I grow exceedingly out of humor with American manners. He told Mr. D[avis] he wa'n't a going to spend his time with letters—there was a post and I might give it to him. But such a dog is unworthy [to be] the subject of a female pen; so I shall leave him; and continue to reply to yours." The reply implies two facts not otherwise recorded—that Brother John was extensively surveying womankind with a view to a second marriage, and that he was already attracted by a rather young cousin of his departed wife, named Dorothy Sherburne, who finally married him some four years later, and survived him nearly thirty years, dying in 1837.—"Firstly" she goes on, "you tax me with my silence on the worthy Miss H., my deserting you, and I don't know what all. But before I excuse myself on that head you are to answer my question: Who deserted first, you that choose a Doll for your amusement, or I that would not subject my brother, though a wanton widower, to the discernment of a lady who could see through his caprice, had I wrote her all I know? No, no, my dear; she's not to be sneezed at, I assure you. When sons believe their father is going to take a Doll, I begin to

think the truth of it too; and also that it's some sign of that dotage my brother talks of in others. No matter; once a man and twice a child. I shall talk the matter over with you, perhaps, ere this reaches you. Secondly, as to the W [idow], I an't seen her lately, but I hope she has more wit than her enemies—ay, and sense too,—or I should depose her from my love, which is really sincere. Thirdly, as to paper money. It's the devil's coin and they that fabricate it his commissioners. I suppose you have heard some of the commissioners have lately been concerned in counterfeiting a large sum—pretty devils! Fourthly, you ask me a natural though tender question: Have I heard from Antigua? I can only answer in the negative. I transiently heard he [doubtless Brother Ned, whatever he had been doing] was well. God continue it till I am no more, prays his still affectionate sister. Had I expected the worst of him, I thought there might be forgiveness expected. I wish much to know your opinion of natural affection—whether it is not put out of existence [in] these times. That it once subsisted I firmly believe, but such proofs against it as I have lately seen make me doubt its non-existence. Fifthly, you expected a long letter. Sixthly, I think you want to be disappointed, though I am sorry to put you to the double expense of perusing and paying for it. But I don't know another opportunity; and it will take only one act to pay it. I think on the whole you come pretty well off, [with] such a long letter from one who loves you in spite of your lies. Truth is worn out; all things become new.—Do bring with you Sister D[avis]'s age, also Aunt Dennie's? Sister Davis in point of fact, was then forty-five years old, and seemingly not young for her, age; Aunt Dennie, born Sarah Wendell, was fifty-three, and perhaps well preserved; and Catherine herself was thirty-two.

The next year, 1775, as everybody knows, was troublous in American history, and ended with Boston,

still held by the British troops, besieged by Washington. The only remaining letter from Catherine, however, though written only three weeks before the Battle of Lexington, no wise implies these disorders. She addresses her brother as Amintor, signs herself Aminta, touches lightly on family matters, and is throughout in a bantering mood. Some aspirant for her hand seems to have turned up at Portsmouth. "If he's under forty" she writes, "a tolerable good fortune, an easy genteel address, just sense enough to discern I've none, good-tempered enough to let me have my own way,—tell him I'm the girl for him, and that I'm dying with impatience to see him." With her niece Sally, Brother John's eldest child, by this time well on to twenty-one, things looked less bright; a fickle young suitor of the girl is now reported about to marry somebody in Boston. Mrs. Bull, or some such name, who has lately had an accident, sends her love to Sally, and has given Catherine "a locket of hers and two nieces' hair" set in garnets. And Catherine is grateful to Sally for a present of embroidery. "The widow" she goes on, "I've seen but once since I wrote you. I can say no more of her than what I ever have: she's a worthy woman. I observe you mention your mills attract you another way. I would only say to that—when you want to add to your grist, saw, and bottling mills I think it probable you may find the wind and water mills this way at your service." One infers that Brother John's matrimonial surveys of womankind were thought not to be imprudently negligent of ways and means; though who beside Dolly Sherburne came within his range of observation nobody has remembered these hundred years. As for Catherine, despite the fact that embattled farmers were so soon to fire the shot heard round the world, she seems troubled only by her immediate concerns. She wants to write to Antigua, but seemingly can find no ship bound there. She owes £200.0.0, and would like to sell her land—

evidently a hint that her Granville property may be had cheaper than in 1769, when she offered what she held there for three hundred. And she is rather afraid that she may catch the smallpox, then prevalent in Boston.

The only trace of her in 1776 is on the 25th of May. By that time Boston had been two months in American hands; in two months more the Declaration of Independence had been signed. To escape the siege or the smallpox or both she had betaken herself to Barnstable—perhaps the longest journey from home she ever made—and there for the sum of £69.0.0 lawful money, she finally conveyed her Granville land to Brother John, who had meanwhile had other dealings in that region with Timothy Robinson, an illiterate person, but apparently shrewd. Her letter written on the same day, touches, in bantering terms, but serious mood, on Brother John's matrimonial projects. One gathers that he had almost if not quite proposed to the widow, and taken advantage of coyness on her part to withdraw; that the widow expected his advances to be renewed; and that Catherine rather thinks him in honor bound to renew them. "You don't think," she proceeds, "how I long to see you and the children. The shock of [the] distance I'm at from all my brothers and sisters often throws me into a state of despair. Sister Davis's late indisposition has been a shocking stroke to me, and the losing of some of my very valuable friends being an addition I have no pleasing time of it, I assure you. But, thank Heaven, her complaints have a little abated, and I trust I may find some new friends." And this is the last glimpse of Catherine Wendell under the Crown, getting on toward thirty-five.

By May, 1777, Brother John, who was meanwhile trying to sell some of his Granville holdings, and wanted to drive a hardish bargain with one Pratt there, seems to have been pretty nearly engaged to be married to Dorothy Sherburne, then about twenty-

five; she married him a year later. Catherine was again in Boston. She touches lightly on his matrimonial decision, is glad to be at home once more, and has had her things sent back from Barnstable. And that is about all. It was probably in this year, however, or perhaps toward the end of 1776, that sister Davis died, after some twenty-five years of happy marriage, leaving a son Edward a daughter Betsy, and other children. Under these circumstances, Solomon Davis clearly needed a new wife almost as much as brother John did. The British law against marriage with a deceased wife's sister had never prevailed in New England, where such marriages have always been usual and completely sanctioned by public opinion. Catherine had long lived in the Davis household, and seems to have been cordially liked there; she was already on the verge of middle-age—and in fact never bore children. So the next time we hear of her she had been married, in November, 1777, to Brother Davis, and everybody but Brother Ned, at Antigua, seems to have been happy.

Towards the end of February, 1778, she wrote Brother John her first extant letter signed by her married name. Part of it runs thus: "You expect a reply to what you ask—I mean what do I think of independence? I answer in a word: I firmly believe it will be the perdition of every one of us, even those whose very existence depends on keeping up the dispute. Instead of future generations rising up to bless them, I believe they will be cursed by the last who breathe on earth.—Now you have it. We are all already undone, threatened on every side with want, particularly that of bread, which is felt by all the poor and is breaking [out] in the families of the rich, if any such there is among us. America's downfall is rapid in its progress, and what was her boast now is her shame. She is divested of all her shining beauties: viz.—religion, public virtue, humanity,

compassion, brotherly love and charity. The widow, the orphan and the poor feel it; for them my heart aches. Boston was once remarkable and united by her hospitality, even [to] the inhabitants of distant climes; but now [is] such a prostitute to oppression, extortion, envy, malice, tyranny, hatred, and in short every sort of bitterness that it's now the object of contempt and ridicule. The source of all this I leave you to determine for yourself. I shall keep my own sentiments on the same. You see the danger of giving me a latitude in what you have endeavored to surmise. I could not speak my mind a great while before, nor would I [now] to any but you. Though, to be very serious, there is too much truth in what I've said, and it's a real truth. Several times we have been obliged to contend for a joint of meat."

In the spring of 1778, Solomon Davis thought well to be inoculated for smallpox, and Catherine suggested that Brother John should come to Boston to share his discomforts and immunities. So this, even without the reference to the French alliance, would pretty clearly be the year of a letter dated only May 10th: "I saw Mr. and Mrs. Quincy were come to town to receive some money; but that article being scarce here they could not get it, so I was obliged to put up with a promise of having it soon. I wish you had had the smallpox. Mr. Davis longs to see you, as does myself. It was very unfortunate I could not have got that letter [from] you. It would have gratified me exceedingly to have you under our roof and my care . . . I want to know what you think of our new alliance. That empire you saw rising in America comes with all the new fashions out of France. The fear of an establishment of the Popish religion among us was very alarming in the commencement of our disputes; but, thank Heaven, there can be no danger now. The taxes of Great Britian were insupportable, but owing to the wise interposition of our own legislators we are now taxed only once

in three months. You'll think I've got over my anxiety [about Mr. Davis's inoculation] since I begin to touch again on politics, but this [is] only an interval, I assure you.—But company just come in obliges me to throw aside my pen."

A fortnight later Brother John's nephew, Edward Davis, about to sail for the West Indies, wrote him as follows concerning Brother Ned's state of mind: "I sent you a letter which I received from my Uncle Edmund since I returned. [I] am afraid to show it to my parents, as he is very angry with those who consented to their marriage, but gives me a strict charge of showing it upon pain of never seeing him again . . . I should rather choose you would write about it before I show mine, as it is very severe—indeed so much so [that] I am afraid it will be attended with bad consequences. It's very unfortunate coming just at this time, when my father [is] under inoculation; and his family is unhappy for fear of its being unfavorable, but—thank God—he is in a fair way of recovery . . . In my letter he bids her adieu forever, and never looks upon her as a sister again. [I] must entreat your writing as soon as may be, as I wish for your advice in this disagreeable affair." It looks as if Brother Ned, whose personal morals were not austere, found himself—temporarily prosperous at Antigua—in unexpectedly stern accord with the marital principles of the Church of England, always the dominant religious body in the British West Indies.

What came of all this does not appear. The relation between Brother John and the Davises stayed very cordial. About the time of his announced engagement to Dorothy Sherburne his daughter Betsy, then eighteen years old, went to visit them in Boston; her aunt found her to need both clothes and education. Apparently the visit lasted until after Brother John's wedding, in August; for in a rather bantering letter shortly before that ceremony Aunt Catherine writes: "Betsy says her Aunt Davis is

cross. She does me justice." Poor Betsy, by the way, appears never to have enjoyed such clothes or such education as might have been wished. She ultimately married a Mr. Berry, of Rye, in New Hampshire, and there slowly fades from record.

She was still, or again, in Boston, though, as late as July, 1779, about a year after her father's marriage, when Solomon Davis writes that she is "heartily welcome while at my house." Meanwhile there are traces of many business relations between the brothers-in-law. These indicate both more commercial activity than might have been expected during the Revolutionary war and the persistence of correspondence with old commercial friends in England through France and Holland. At one time Brother John meant to despatch his son Daniel to Nantes, where the youth might serve as a means of communication with England; but whether the boy, who is reported as of engaging address, ever went abroad does not appear. He died, anyhow, early in 1780, not yet quite twenty years old. In the previous August, Solomon Davis had written brother John that a prize had just brought in some Jamaica sugar, which would thereupon cheapen; and that, as for himself, he would take no commission on any supplies bought for Brother John's family. Of Catherine herself there is no direct trace in 1779.

Her only remaining letter of 1780, written in March, concerns her nephew Daniel's death. "He had won my affections greatly," she writes. "The whole family were pleased with him on his late visit to us. I held him up as a pattern to ours—of sweetness and affability." She thereupon falls into verse, which contains no line such as redeemed her effusion concerning his mother's death eight years before. "May his virtues," she goes on, "still live in the soul of my young cousins." Ned Davis, away on a voyage, has been reported ill. As for Brother Ned, in Antigua, the clouds seem to have cleared, for she has just received intelligence from him, "who is very well and

lives very grand. . . . Pray present my love to sister Wendell, to whom I am at a loss to dictate a letter since my omission on a proper subject." (Sister Wendell had been brought to bed of the first of her eight children some two or three weeks before Daniel died) "I wish her happy in all her vicissitudes, and am sorry her joys are so soon turned into mourning. My love to Sally, Johnny, Betsy and the younger ones. May they live and be happy." Before this was despatched she had more news from Portsmouth, where Sister Wendell was ill; so she adds a postscript, four days later: "May we soon hear of her speedy recovery. [We] have not yet heard from Neddy [Davis]. I dread to hear. He is our greatest concern at present. May the frown of Heaven withdraw from you and yours with the returning spring."

There are two more glimpses of her, and her surroundings, though, in this same year 1780. The first is in a letter from Uncle Edmund Quincy, written toward the end of July; the good old gentleman had then reached the age of seventy-seven. Brother John had seemingly been on a visit to Boston. "I hope," writes Uncle Edmund from Cambridge, "this will meet your safe return home, and that you found your spouse in good health, with your children. The elder of whom, my agreeable grand-niece Sally, I had the pleasure of conducting hither Saturday last. [I] take this opportunity of felicitating you upon the kind and valuable gift bestowed on you and yours in such a daughter and sister; and it is my devout wish that the blessing may be continued, whether in a single or more connected state. You're sensible this is not a compliment: such things are out of my line. Your daughter tells me she goes tomorrow or next day to Marblehead with her aunt, and thence for Portsmouth. I wish her a safe and good journey, having charged her with my best respects to you and her Mamma, as she is styled." This Sally, I may add, then twenty-six years old, stayed unmarried four years more.

She then married Edward Sargent, a Portsmouth shipmaster; and some time later Elbridge Gerry wrote pleasantly of them both, who had visited him at Elmwood. But they seem by and by to have come to financial grief; and if they had children no trace of the family remains.

So Catherine must have seen Brother John and his agreeable daughter in July. Early in the autumn comes a real glimpse of her. Dorothy Sherburne, Brother John's second wife, had a brother Jonathan, six years her junior. Both their father and their grandfather had been members of His Majesty's Council, in New Hampshire. He took his degree at Dartmouth College, studied medicine, served as a Naval surgeon during the Revolution, and at his best had unusual literary faculty. His later life, however, was regrettable. He was financially irresponsible, he was increasingly given to drink, he made an imprudent marriage at the age of thirty or so, and when he died at eighty-nine, he had for years been literally a pauper. At twenty-six, however, in September, 1780, he was probably both presentable and entertaining; and he wrote from Boston as follows: "I have only time to inform you that after an agreeable journey I am safely housed in Boston. My reception by Mr. Davis and family was truly agreeable, and I assure you I am extremely happy under so hospitable a roof, where I experience every civility necessary to my happiness during my stay here. Mrs. Davis I was most agreeably disappointed in, having formed no particular idea of her before my arrival. I find her the most agreeable lady I ever knew, for her open and sincere disposition, her mind adorned with the most refined sentiments, and a heart replete with the noblest impressions of friendship, benevolence, sympathy and compassion. Perhaps you may admire my partiality, and the giving [of] my opinion so soon. I never knew my discernment to fail me, and my opinion once formed [is] ever after the same.—Ever since I have

been here I have been exercised with a very severe cold, and am this moment exceedingly indisposed, which may continually keep me under particular obligations to Mrs. Davis's and [her] family's benevolence. Mrs. Davis's love is not that of an indifferent friend but of an indulgent parent.—I spend my time very agreeably. Miss Betsy has a troublesome thumb, otherwise is well."

In 1781, there is no direct trace of Catherine beyond the beginning of an account with Brother John, which ran on for eight years, ending with a balance of £65.0.0 in his favor, for which he magnificently claimed no interest. One or two letters, however, touch on her surroundings. Among her near kinsfolk the most eminent were than the John Hancocks, with whom she was evidently on intimate terms. And on the 23rd of October, her husband wrote Brother John, in Portsmouth, as follows: "Governor Hancock mentioned to me that he had met with some difficulty about taxes of his lands in your government. He wished to get some gentleman to have the care of them. I mentioned that you had the care of Mr. Inman's lands, and that I knew no man more capable than yourself. I suppose he will write you by this opportunity. I wish you to do all in your power to serve him." Sure enough, Hancock duly wrote at the same time; and a considerable correspondence seems to have ensued. The relics of it among Brother John's papers, however, were long ago reduced to a rather large folder marked "Governor Hancock's Letters," and two stray letters, both of which excuse brevity on the ground of indisposition—apparently gout.

This episode suggests one or two comments. For years by that time, Brother John had been much concerned with the settlement of lands in New Hampshire and Vermont just as he had been with his own lands at Granville in Massachusetts, concerning

which he had recurrent dealings with shrewd Timothy Robinson, now and then a member of the General Court. Brother John sometimes acted for himself in these matters, but oftener as agent for other non-resident proprietors. The settlers in such remote regions presently organized town governments, taxed all lands within their town limits, and whenever they could manage to do so sold to themselves for the taxes lands belongings to non-residents. Whence arose manifold complications of title. This general state of affairs mixed up the claims of Hancock among others. But, to proceed, Hancock himself though politically and socially eminent, was thought slippery when it came to business. Among other details, he was made Treasurer of Harvard College in 1773 and held the office for four years. When his successor, Ebenezer Storer, tried to get the College account books from Hancock, he is said to have been met only with polite statements that such details could not properly be called for from a gentleman; and, in point of fact, the books were not found until they turned up in Hancock's private stable, after his death, in 1793. Such, at least, is the current story, sometimes supplemented by the never proved statement that at least on this occasion the eminent Boston patriot was little better than a defaulter. So the chances are that Brother John's dealings with him concerning New Hampshire lands repeatedly sold for taxes were not cloudlessly happy.

Hancock's letter of May 22nd, 1782, is here to the point. "I have only strength," it runs, "to acknowledge receipt of your several letters, and to thank you for your very great readiness to serve me; and in return command any services in my power. By flattering myself that I had far more recovered my health than I found by experience was the case, I exerted myself to too great a degree, and have taken such cold as to give me such a nervous pain in my head as has confined me to my chamber unfit for business

for several days past. But it seems now abating, and I am in hopes, if this prove an agreeable night of rest, I shall be current tomorrow; in which case I will perfect a power of attorney and reply to the particulars in your several letters, and immediately transmit them to you. In the meantime please to act for me as for yourself. You will soon hear from me. My best compliments, with Mrs. Hancock's, to you and family conclude me, Dear Sir, your obliged humble servant."

It is fair to add that later in the same year Hancock paid fifteen pounds to Sister Davis, in recognition of Brother John's order on their account. In November she wrote concerning this matter; "You do the Governor injustice, my dear Brother. He has not been able to hold a pen since I've been from Portsmouth. He desired me to inform you he approved your conduct, and whatever you were in advance he is willing to refund. He could write you no more if he had his hands. He had paid me the £15.0.0. which I've credited on the back of the note.—Do ask Betsy how the cap goes on. I have bragged much of her performance [and] wish to exhibit it . . . I wished to have shown the Colonel [whoever he may have been] every civility, but his frequent engagements have denied me the pleasure. I am sorry Boston so ill agrees with his health."

So the Patriot Governor fades out of the letters. At last peace was in sight, which turned Brother John's attention to his father's insolvent estate, still unsettled after one and twenty years, the intervening Revolution, and the Lord knows what fluctuation in the value of money and lands. The personal effects of the convivial parent seem to have been divided long ago, and duly charged to one or another of his numerous family. These accounts appear to have somewhat annoyed Catherine, who thus wrote of them in May, 1783: "In the first place, the silver porringer my sister had was my sister's by right. We all had one, with our names on them. She left hers till father's

death, as she had some of Mr. Davis's to use. I cannot think, my dear, in any justice he ought to pay for his own. The salts I admit were not, and therefore due; but Mr. Davis will dispose of them, I believe, and pay for them without you choose to take them. And as to my mother's picture and Grandfather Quincy's, I never knew they were to be paid for, nor could I ever [have] thought such a thing could be approved; but if it is to be paid for they must be sold to pay the money. I believe, my dear brother, it is the first instance [when] family pictures were ever sold.—" Incidentally, her mother's picture—the mate of the picture of Judge Quincy's other daughter Mrs. Edward Jackson, celebrated by Dr. Holmes as "Dorothy Q."—ultimately went to descendants of Brother Tom or sister Skinner; but what became of this particular replica of Smybert's portrait of Judge Quincy has been forgotten. In justice to Brother John, it is fair to add that, some twenty years before, certain portraits of his Wendell grandparents and of his Flynt ancestors—all trace of which has long been lost—had been duly appraised in the inventory of his father's estate. The details about the estate on which Catherine has touched, she adds, trouble Mr. Davis, who grows old. "His spirits are so much broke with his own and his children's misfortunes [that] I forbear giving him the least inquietude, lest nature should pay the price for it." So, without the old man's knowledge, she has privately borrowed money. "It behooves me to use all my weak endeavors to preserve that life which seems devoted to me and my happiness. I may with truth say [that] few women are blest with such a husband . . . I have heard from Brother Ned; he is like to recover by the use of the baths at Bristol." Some stray letters from England, at about this time, show that Brother Ned, whose grand living at Antigua had resulted in crippling gout, had betaken himself to the mother country and resorted for treatment, and probably for social distractions, to Bath, still a fashionable watering-place.

In October, things with Mr. Davis were no better. "He is so harried," she writes, "and his spirits so depressed, that I daily observe it affects his memory, though I choose not to let him know I notice it. I beg you would take no notice of it in any letters to him or me, as it may give him pain. My sole study is to make his few remains of life as happy and comfortable as I can, though that is but little. The weight of troubles overbalances all my efforts. . . . As to the porringer, you are certainly mistaken about [it] as we have but three in the house—one marked 'E. W. from Father', [the first Mrs. Davis was named Elizabeth Wendell,] one Mr. Davis's mother gave Solomon, and one we had from England with some other plate. If Sister Davis had taken any other than her own, it must have been here, for we have never parted with any plate—excepting a can—since she died, and I am certain none before." She goes on to resent the charges against her and her sister Sally, now Mrs. Gerry, for mourning at their father's funeral, in 1762, when they were minors. She is worried about money matters, and thinks of attempting business herself, to help Mr. Davis.

A fortnight later, she inquires about Granville lands, said to have been sold by Brother John without due authority from Brother Ned, whose affairs are in charge of harried old Solomon Davis. "I hear," she adds, "you have been to Salem. Sister Skinner, [Sister] Gerry and myself think it unkind you called to see none of us when so near."

In 1784, the only trace of her is a letter written early in March. "Are you so absorbed in farming," she begins, "as to forget your connections, or are you writing the history of our rising empire; or [are] all your faculties frozen up with the inclemency of the season?" After all, she adds, it is the same with all her brothers and sisters; she is "the only one left in our native spot." Cousin Sewall has written his father that Brother Ned "has met with great success

in a restorative medicine for the gout," and is about to embark again for Antigua. As for Brother Ned, himself, though he writes Mr. Davis on business, he won't answer her letters. "Sister Skinner," she goes on, "is in trouble by Tom Gerry's persecution and provocation." (Tom Gerry, a brother of Elbridge Gerry, had married Richard Skinner's sister Tabitha.) "She is obliged to quit her house; the family is like to be broke up. I hear Uncle Josiah Quincy was buried last night [at Braintree.] What is become of Mr. Davis's Co-horse or Co-something lands?"

In April, 1785, more than a year later, things looked rather less dismal. Brother John's second wife had just presented him with the fourth of her eight children; and his first wife, we may remember, had left surviving her, in 1772, seven out of her eleven. Childless at forty-three, and thus safe from at least one source of anxiety, Catherine wrote her brother as follows: "I congratulate you and my sister on her being safe abed. But pray let me ask you if you intend keeping up this fun? Why, you must build a large castle to contain your children. If you go on at this rate, you'll have as long a train of children and grandchildren at your funeral as an old gentleman mentioned in some of our late papers. Sally, I find, [his eldest daughter, by that time thirty-one years old] is setting out to follow your example. My love to her.—I have had an affectionate letter from Brother Ned. He had intended to come in the vessel; [he] has recovered so far as to be able to ride on horse-back; his business prevented, but [he] intends coming as soon as possible. . . . Mr. Davis is got into his spring dejection; [he] has been nicely young and in good spirits all winter, but is low now as possible. Betsy, [his daughter] is to be married soon." Betsy Davis married Dr. David Townsend, of Boston, who had graduated at Harvard in 1770.

In 1786, there is no direct trace of Catherine. Two letters in the autumn from her step-son, Edward

Davis, to Brother John imply, however, a little trouble. In October the nephew wrote his uncle, rather abruptly, requesting that he procure and forward to Boston a copy of some deed, recorded at Portsmouth, in which young Davis had a personal interest. Brother John, whose business habits were leisurely, had not attended to this matter by the 12th of November, when his nephew wrote him again, in such terms that the uncle endorsed the missive as "Ned Davis's impudent letter." Which does not look precisely serene.

There is little direct trace of her, either, during the next year, 1787. In November, however, Nathaniel Appleton wrote Brother John from Boston that he had so arranged a transaction concerning lands as to be able to pay Mr. Davis nine pounds, and to forward Brother John £11.7.4. This agreeable incident seems to have been unusual; or else the letters concerning favorable turns of business are all lost. Earlier in the year, too, Elbridge Gerry had written from Philadelphia a letter which details matters as interesting to Catherine as they were to Brother John. Their youngest sister, Sarah, had married Gerry's brother, John, who had died in 1786; and, with what Brother John had thought unseemly haste, she had proceeded to marry Captain Fiske, of Salem. Elbridge Gerry's defense of his sister-in-law runs thus: "I am very sorry to hear you are at variance with Mrs. Fiske. My candid opinion is that she acted wisely and judiciously, and I assure you she consulted me as her confidential friend. The fact is Mrs. Fiske did not want to form an early connection, knowing that all the friends of her late husband would be very much hurt, and that her own reputation would be affected by the measure. But as soon as it was known that Captain Fiske gave her the preference, the friends of a lady whom it was supposed he would have courted, urged him to push his suit to Mrs. Fiske, and in this way used every means in their power to break off the

match. She kept him at such a distance as to give him offense, and then they triumphingly said that he had left her and that her pride would be humbled. This was the language of a certain person who declared that he had intended to marry Mrs. Fiske, had she not treated him with such coolness when he hinted it to her before Captain Fiske made his advances. Thus, you see, your sister was reduced to this dilemma: either to accept Captain Fiske earlier by far than she or her friends thought decent, or by refusing him to see him form a connection with another lady, and all *her* friends triumphing in the success of their manoeuvres. She asked my advice, and knowing all the circumstances I did not hesitate to give it in favor of her accepting the offer. Indeed, after this I was under the necessity of writing a letter to Captain Fiske, to counteract the plans adopted against Mrs. Fiske. Thus I think you will see she was not culpable . . . This information you will consider as confidential, and intended to restore your affection for a deserving sister." What Catherine Davis thought about all this does not appear. Clearly, though, she must have thought about it a good deal.

In November she wrote Brother John, with a very bad pen. Brother Ned had sent from Antigua a present of tamarinds and oranges, some for Brother John, which had mostly spilit on the way. And Betsy (Mrs. Townsend) had lost a fine child.

The next year, 1788, reveals her more clearly again. On the 28th of January, after recurring to Brother Ned's oranges, she goes on: "This day is the anniversary of my birth, 46 years ago. My worthy parents gave birth to an insignificant creature. It being a day of reflection, I could not but contemplate the divine goodness in thus making me a monument of His sparing mercy, when I have so often provoked Him to cut me off as an encumb[rance] or as an unprofitable servant. I am easily mortified, my dear, when I reflect I have lived forty-six years in

the world and done no more good in it. May Heaven grant me wisdom and ability to devote my short remains to His more immediate service, is my fervent prayer.—Here I am sitting in my corner feeling as old as Sarah, and my Abraham is flying about making punch, and as full of spirit as the bottle he is now pouring out of.—You will laugh as this medley of a letter, but it accords with my feelings, so you must take it as it rises, and throw a veil of brotherly kindness over all its imperfections. As to its incoherence, you must impute [that] to old age. Sisters Skinner and Fiske have both been sick; all three of us confined together. As to news now, the Federal Constitution”—But what she thought of this we shall never know, for just here the bottom of her page is torn off and lost.

About a month later she writes again. Brother John seems to have been doubtful whether he had duly received all that Brother Ned had sent him. “In respect to the rum,” she says, “Neddy only sent a few quart bottles to Mr. Davis.” There is word, however, of a whole barrel, now presumably at sea, intended for Brother John. “The oranges had [all]most all got defective. I believe they were touched with the frost, but they have served to do much good among the sick. Mr. Davis, as he hates writing worse than ever, and as it gives him a dizziness in the head, wishes me to answer your letter for him. In respect to your proposal he says he can’t afford to touch upon law. He thinks this a dubious case and would not choose to engage in it.” (Apparently it concerned title to lands originally belonging to Judge Quincy, who had now lain for fifty years in his unmarked London grave.) “If you incline to try for it, and recover it, he will accept your terms . . . Sister Skinner [has] been sick all winter, but I dare say she will agree with us . . . You can write her upon it.”

Her next extant letter was written in August. Uncle Edmund Quincy had lately died at the age of

eighty-five. For nearly forty years he had frequently written to his nephew at Portsmouth. His letters imply him to have been a man of considerable accomplishment, high principle both public and private as well as religious, and active though not very powerful mind. In person he was thin and rather agile, long toothless, and prominent both of nose and of chin; and during his later years he was irreverently described in Boston as "old Daddy Quincy." Catherine's letter touches on his end.—"Uncle Quincy mentioned to me your not answering his letters three days before he died. I was much with him, and marked the upright man, for his end was peace. Though he did not think he should die, he was ready and willing. We grow so plaguy poor that we must begin to look out for what right we have in this world. Perhaps you will retort upon us to look our for our right in another. True, O King; I think that's most essential; but Solomon says there is a time for all things, and both are necessary. Your quotation is there is a time to get. I believe [you] for you keep getting and I believe will as long as Abram. I read the Major your letter wherein you say Uncle Quincy is gone to Father Abram's bosom. He desires I would tell you he believes that his bosom has been full long ago, and you nor he must not expect a chance on it . . . My love to Sister Wendell. Tell her [if] I were she I would run away from such an old creature without he would discard some of his love of the flesh. The flies plague me so I can write no more; so you must take this as your wife took you—for better or worse."

In November she was more troubled. "Our worthy Sister Skinner," she writes, "is very ill and in miserable circumstances. Her two sons are at sea, John is married, and Dolly has a young family and [is] not able to do for her as she needs. Judge Wendell has obliged her to quit her house, She has taken a small chamber in the house where Dolly lives. Her spirits are broke, and I am afraid [she] will soon fall a martyr

to affliction. She has ever been a child of affliction since she connected herself with Mr. Skinner; but as he is no more I desire to be silent. I shall write to Neddy [at Antigua] this week; he has a vessel here; he means to come in the spring himself. I have wrote to Sally. [Mrs. Fiske, at Salem.] We must try, my dear, to do something for our dear sister . . . This winter we are not able to do all ourselves, or I should not ask anyone. I am much disturbed about her. I hope I shall go down [to Marblehead, where poor Sister Skinner lay ill] tomorrow; I mean to. My whole soul seems harrowed up with perplexities.— I find age rapidly increases on my dearer self. He tries to his utmost to provide for his family, which is a hard task at his late period; but he has his health, thanks to the all merciful God, and so have I. This I prize as an inestimable blessing [which] demands my highest gratitude; but when age bows the head, we have no right to look for death at our elbows. I pray Heaven this may meet you all as your last favor left you—a customer to the butcher instead of the doctor.”

In 1789, there are only two letters from her. The first, in March, touches on business matters, tells that she has found a paper in the handwriting of her father, dead twenty-seven years before, relinquishing to all his children, “from Sister Davis to Tommy, [that is, from oldest to youngest by name] all rights in Granville granted by Grandfather Quincy to mother;” and so on. “You’ll see,” she adds, “by the papers that Colonel Fiske has met with a theft. We are all well, also Betsy’s family. I really wish, my dear brother, you would show us your face once more and bring your wife. I see no fun in forever staying at home begetting, bringing and training up. Novelty is the life of pleasure.” On the same day she wrote a letter on business for her husband, and scribbled at the bottom: “You see I am secretary, C. D.”

Her other letter, written at night, early in June, is less buoyant. Brother Ned, then fifty-four years old,

has arrived from Antigua; "He is a poor, shattered, unhappy man. He requires all my attention and art to keep him tolerably happy. His intellectual parts are much weakened as well as his body. He wants to, see you all, but is unable to undertake the fatigues of another journey yet. He only rode today as far as Cambridge, and is so overcome with it [that] I was obliged to send for a doctor, more to compose his mind than to relieve his body. I sometimes fear he is come to mingle his clay with his parents'. I am obliged to be all cheerfulness with him, when my heart aches for him. The reason, I find by his servant, he has not wrote you lately is [that] he was unequal to it. Should you indulge us with a visit to him, you must be cautious, and not see him suddenly. I should have wrote you, my dear, before, but my eyes and cares conspire to deny me that pleasure. I have not wrote Sisters Skinner and Fiske, nor has he seen them yet. I dread the scene, for he was so afflicted seeing me I thought he would [have] had a fit. I will save [my] eyes, and retire to my old gentleman, who is well, thank God. I am keeping the servants up."

There is little trace of her in 1790—only a hasty half page, dashed off one September Sunday at two in the afternoon, reporting Sister Skinner "with us and well," and enclosing for "perusal" a letter from Brother Ned, who had evidently managed to get back to Antigua, whence, to all appearances, he never emerged again.

The next year, 1791, reveals her more clearly. In February she writes that she has been thrown out of a sleigh; "I've been but a useless piece of furniture for some time. Sister Skinner has been very bad—not like to live. I went to see her, unable as I was, as she wished to see me. It hurt me to be obliged to leave her, but I could not stay. We endeavored among us to supply her with comforts. Her friends were all extremely kind, and—thank God—I hear she is getting better fast. She had a lung fever, and is in

a very uncomfortable room, poor creature. She is the daughter of misfortune, but bears it with Christian fortitude." It is perhaps fair to add that Sister Skinner survived them all, dying in 1822, at the age of eighty-nine.

After that, we hear no more of Catherine until the 11th of June, when both she and Mr. Davis were perplexed about the accounts and charges of the still unsettled estate of her father, by that time twenty-nine years dead. This is almost the last we hear of poor old Mr. Davis in this world. His end came without warning. One evening that same June, he went alone to sup with Governor Hancock. His wife was detained at home by a letter from "my dear William, [apparently a sea-faring son of Mr. Davis, who wrote from Antigua,] with particulars of his melancholy disaster, and the death of two of Neddy's family, one a natural son of his." Freed from conjugal observation, Mr. Davis appears to have supped imprudently; what he drank is not mentioned, but he ate more plum-cake and fruit than was good for him. On his way home, he was seized with a fit in the street. Carried to his house, and there helped by the doctor, he so far recovered himself as to go cheerfully up stairs; but once in his chamber he was again overcome by sickness, and instantly expired. "I can only say," she writes, "[that] in him I have lost a friend, a lover, and a husband. May I be prepared to meet him in a blessed eternity, where I hope he is." His estate proved hopelessly insolvent. "I am now thrown upon the world to rest my head. I trust God will enable me to do it, by giving me strength according to my day If I could get a house and be settled this fall, it would be a relief to me not to be enforced to be turned out in winter. But may I be resigned to God's will in all things."

Two months later, she writes: "I more and more miss my cheerful and agreeable companion. I can truly say I now see the days when there is no pleasure

in them. Sister Skinner left me two days past to attend the last remains of Mrs. Gerry—Tabby Skinner that was. They have put her into mourning, and she thinks in gratitude she must stay with them till next week, when she will return to stay with me for the present. She intends writing you respecting your proposals, but she is too much broke to engage in any undertaking." So, apparently, Brother John was still in trouble concerning his father's estate. He was on such terms with his brother-in-law, "the Hon. John Fiske, Esq. of Salem," however, that at about this time he settled some claims of this gentleman by transferring to him certain drafts on correspondents in England. Whether these were paid does not definitely appear; one or two faint indications inspire fear that they may not have been.

In November Catherine was settled for the winter. Her stepsons Edward and William Davis had both got home from sea. She is anxious that Brother John shall send her precise statements of any land claims she may have. "Sister Skinner," she goes on, "spends the winter with me. Her health is very much impaired by her sufferings and I trust God will enable me to make her more comfortable than she was the two last winters. Her children have all wives now, and a man is commanded to leave father and mother for a wife, and most children are very willing to comply with such a pleasing command, especially where there is no expectation, and she—poor soul—has not a shilling but the bounty of her friends. My sons are very good to her, and do more for her than ever they did for me; but inasmuch as they do it for her, they show that respect to me and to their own mother that I love them for it. I don't mean to complain of them. They show me every respect, and we have all lived six weeks past in the strictest harmony together. While I am able to get my bread, I am willing to spare no pains. It is my allotment, and I hope ever to be

content with it. My daughter Betsy" (Mrs. Townsend) "has been very dangerously ill, and I fear will never be really well again; but, thanks to God, she is better."

The next year, 1792, was troublous. Through a good part of it she was still living in Mr. Davis's house in Tremont Street, but too poor to keep it. Her first extant letter was written in February, and there dated. It repeats old questions about shadowy titles to lands. "Isaac," it goes on, "has had a fit of the gout—his grandfather's legacy, he calls it." [The Wendells had a gouty strain through another century.] "I was most alarmed last week by a fire in the neighborhood. I packed up my goods and chattels, but was mercifully spared the removal of them."

In April, she writes, still from Tremont Street, that she is glad to hear of Brother John's decision not to move into the country, "as I think [town] must be more agreeable to Sister Wendell and the children—minds formed for social life. I think the country is dismal." She goes on to tell of her cousin, Aunt Dennie's son, who, "goes to sea, . . . is a worthy young man, has been unfortunate in having a sick family, and unsuccessful in business, but [is] very industrious and drives the nail that will go. This is character." She proceeds to touch on details, evidently connected with the never settled accounts of her father's estate, now thirty years dead. One Mrs. Kennedy says that "the glass was destroyed with her furniture in the time of the war. She is an old woman, and supports herself only by day labor, from a few charitable families that employ her from no other motive. I don't think it in her power to pay you." Then follows something about gloves—apparently those bought for her father's funeral, thirty years before. "I am sorry, my dear," she continues, "if by any stroke of my pen or conduct, I should give you or any one of my connections or friends the least pain. I feel too much myself to wound others. . . ."

My dear deceased knew he ought to pay all his debts, and was honestly disposed to do it, were it in his power. That was the only affliction he had on earth, and I shall ever think was accessory to his death. But I must waive the subject; it's too much for me to dwell on . . . Sister Skinner has gone hence on a visit . . . What shall I do with father's books and papers? Shall I send them by Huntress?"

A month later, she writes: "Our dear brother Edmund departed this life [at Antigua] the 2nd of March, very suddenly. In him I have lost a most affectionate and attentive brother, who has shown me every attention that absence admitted of ever since the death of my dearer self." His last letters had asked her to come and live with him, it seems. "My house is sold," she goes on, "Captain Edward Davis has bought it. I remove as soon as I can get one. I can say no more. My full heart obstructs my sight."

Two letters in December, seven months later, give glimpses of her again. She has engaged in some business by that time: "I find I must work while the day lasts. I have no one to help me, and am growing older every day; and should I neglect making some provision for old age—should it please God to bring me to it—I have no other prospect than the Al[ms-house.] Sister Skinner is in need; every trifle helps clothe her. I expect to move in the spring . . . I wish to know if I may not send father's books and papers. I don't know what to do with them."

Only two days afterwards, she writes another request for clear statement of any land claims she may have. "The breaking up of my house and family," she goes on, "and the difficulty of getting a house is constantly upon my mind. But I won't burden you or any of my friends with my inquietude. I only wish that you would answer this as soon as possible, relative to the land, and accept and present Sister Skinner's and my love to every member of your family."

The only trace of her in 1793 is a letter written in

January, little more than a month after that on which we have just touched. "Surely," she writes, "the fates have conspired to tease me in the settlement of the estate, which I am heartily tired of and wish myself clear of. It has occasioned me so much knowledge of mankind that I am fully convinced that the most predominant principle of the human heart is self-interest. The books and papers have at last been sent by Mr. Sherburne." (Incidentally a few relics of them are still in the hands of Brother John's descendants) "My spirits," she concludes, "are rather depressed, and have been for some time. I will not burden my friends when I cannot entertain them."

In 1794, there are two glimpses of her. The first is a hasty letter, written in March. Members of Brother John's family passing through Boston have not found leisure to call on her. Sister Skinner is going to visit a daughter in Newburyport. Has Brother John ever heard from Brother Ned's widow? As for herself—Catherine—her eyes grow weak. The second is a letter from Sister Skinner, whose command of the pen, for all that she once tried to teach school, by no means approached Catherine's. In August, she wrote from Newburyport that Sister Davis had been very unwell, and like to die. As for the Skinners, Dick is about to sail on a long voyage, and Dolly is much as she was. The letter closes with an expression of regret, probably not shared by Brother John, that Sister Skinner cannot manage to pay him a visit.

By March, 1795, Catherine was living in Cambridge Street, and Sister Skinner still, or again, visiting at Newburyport. Poor Catherine, surprised by an unexpected debt, is "almost broken in spirit," and longs for the company of even forlorn Sister Skinner. But, "I a'n't so selfish as to wish her not to enjoy herself, and therefore shall endeavor to be patient till she inclines to come." A month or so later, "Sister Skinner wrote me she received the money. I shall

endorse it on your note. I hope if she comes to see you it will be soon, as I long to see her . . . I often compare her to the sow you tell of that must be pulled by the ears to the trough and by the tail back again; for she will not exert herself, though—poor creature—she has had enough to fix her as a statue . . . Brother Ned's estate, I am informed, won't pay four-pence on a pound. She [doubtless Brother Ned's widow at Antigua] is very dejected."

In 1796, we do not hear from her until September. Then she writes Brother John, from Cambridge Street, a letter of condolence on the death of the youngest, and last, of his nineteen children. A fine child of Isaac Davis, her step-son, she says, has just been buried from her house: "But I consider all children," she continues, "which are taken away, as only going from their earthly parents to be blessed in their heavenly parents' arms; and while their earthly parents are grovelling [in] the throes of the flesh and sin, their little purified spirits are hovering around, and look down with pity on those that gave them birth, that they still have to combat with the vicissitudes of this mortal state . . . Sally and Mr. Sargent [Brother John's eldest daughter and her husband] have passed the day with us. She appears to be very happy and has afforded us much pleasure. I sent for your son George but could not find him." A long postscript follows, much of which has been deliberately blotted out by Brother John. It seems to have concerned senile anger, on the part of the Honorable John Fiske, now styled General, with Brother John, by reason of disputes concerning land-claims owned by the shadowy and insolvent estate of the elder John Wendell, thirty-four years dead. The General's state of mind had involved more or less trouble for Sister Fiske.

So here or hereabouts seems to belong the undated draft of a long letter from Brother John to Dr. David Townsend, now for some years married to Betsy

Davis. "After my affectionate regards to yourself, Mrs. Townsend and [your] children give me leave to address a line to you as a gentleman of unbiassed principles; and as it comes from one who upon the verge of the grave [Brother John had reached the age of sixty-five] and expects to be accountable to God and his conscience, I hope it may have a weight at least in your mind, to convince you of the sincerity of my assertions. I have heard several times that it has been said by some of the children of my sisters that I have received and spent what was their parents'; . . . and many other things as false as God is true. If any one sister or their children will inform me of one single brass farthing that ever I received or disposed of which belonged to them any ways, By Heavens, I will give them a guinea for a copper." He goes on to detail certain legal proceedings, which have proved fruitless. "I lost," he adds, "£100.0.0 by taking administration on my father's estate, instead of getting anything. If these complainants will point out one single act of injustice which I have done to them, I will pay ten-fold their demands, so help me God! After such a solemn assertion, I hope they will make inquiries to satisfy themselves, without impeaching the rectitude of their kinsman." A long passage follows concerning the impudence of Edward Davis, which he so resents as to assert that none of his family "will eat his bread while they have any of their own.— I beg your pardon," he proceeds, "for giving you the trouble to read this letter, and you may wonder at my intrusion, as being . . . known to you only by some of these gross falsehoods. I have a sincere and respectful regard to my niece, your lady, whose deportment to me and my family has ever been genteel and polite, affectionate and dutiful; and it would give me pleasure to see you and her here, with some of your little folks, if your avocations would permit. . . [I] desire to let a gentleman of your discernment know that I challenge every connection in life to prove a single injustice that

ever I did to any of them. . . while I have the pleasure to recollect many acts of love and respect on my side. My love attends you and Betsy, and any branches of my family who remember that they once had an uncle by my name . . . I wish this letter may be read and known to any branches of my family who have felt themselves injured by me in thought, word or deed."

When this was written does not appear. In November, Catherine wrote Brother John a detailed account of how Sister Skinner, visiting her, had been seized with a fever. Charitable friends have helped. Sister Fiske has promised a little. Can't Brother John do something, too? The letter is brave and self-respecting; but one feels an undertone of something like despair.

What Brother John answered will never be known; but they got along somehow, for two letters from her in 1797 show no change in their relations. The first, hastily written in September, says that Judge Wendell—her father's cousin Oliver Wendell, grandfather of Dr. Holmes—thinks she has never sold her lands in Lenox, and asks Brother John what has become of them. These were probably a part of the thousand acres in Lenox bestowed by the General Court on the descendants of Judge Edmund Quincy when that worthy, representing the Province of Massachusetts Bay, succumbed to inoculation in London, fifty-nine year before. What became of them nobody now remembers. Her second letter, written in December, reveals her old self again. Brother John's son George, then twenty-six years old, has called on her. "I am much pleased," she writes, "with his frank, open and manly behavior. I should have known him only by the countenance of his Mamma which I think he has taken a large share of." She goes on to inquire again about the Lenox lands and to tell something of the confusion of the Davis estate. "I have walked out today," she continues, "for the first time in six weeks, though [I] still have a bad cough. Sister Skinner is

unwell with a cold. She is so young that she is very daring." (She was nine years older than Catherine, who was then about fifty-six.) "Poor I am a little wizened up old woman, as George I fancy will describe me. He acknowledges his disappointment in the ideas he had formed."

In 1798 there is no trace of her. Two letter of August in that year, however, touch on relations between Brother John and Sister Fiske of which she must have known. In 1780 we may remember, a promising son of Brother John, named Daniel, had died at the age of twenty. The next son born to him came into the world in 1783, and was given the same name. Though less carefully educated than the first Daniel, he seems to have been a youth of diligence and ability, who might have made good if exposure to cold in the course of attending to business had not prematurely ended his life, too, in 1807. At the age of fifteen he rather laboriously wrote to his Aunt Fiske, at Salem, as follows: "This day week my honored father, your brother, fell from his horse about a mile from here, and [it] was thought would not have survived the fall. But being attended by three doctors they found no bones broken, only his thigh to be bruised, and all its tendons and muscles so hurt that he will not be able to walk for a long time. He has laid in his bed upon his back ever since, and cannot raise himself up. The doctors pronounce him out of danger. The great number of gentlemen who have come to see him has been rather injurious, but as friends they were all agreeable except one, who was a deputy sheriff with a writ from you this day, which grieved him to the heart, and really hurt him as well as mortified him to be so exposed as that his credit runs so low with you as to put it out of your hands, which he could have secured to your entire satisfaction." He proceeds to detail the transaction involved which concerned a friend of Aunt Fiske, Colonel Pickman, of Salem, who seems to have transferred to

her, claims against Brother John. "My father," he goes on, "wishes for no favor but what honor and justice may indulge him with, but grieves that he has lost the confidence of his sister. He wishes you to believe his affection for you forgives the injury, as not intended by you, but the wound will go with him to his grave as a lasting monument of the force of money. He joins my mother and the family in our cordial regards, and if he could have sat up would have wrote you himself."

To this letter Aunt Fiske replied ten days later on her return from a "tour into the country"—"The relation of the catastrophe which befel my brother," she writes, "claims my pity and excites in me painful sensations. But your reflections, as unjust as unmerited, I shall pass over unnoticed, only observing that, whatever effect you may suppose money may have on some, its fascinating charms are not sufficient to induce me to do an unjust or an ungenerous action. I wish not to recriminate, and will only state facts, and leave your better judgment to rectify your too hasty conclusions, and not again impute to the cruelty of your aunt [what] proceeded from the avarice of a lawyer." She goes on to state the case from Colonel Pickman's point of view, who acted as guardian for the son of her late husband, and whom she conceives to have been actuated by the "nicest rules of honour"—"I wish," she concludes, "not to add expenses to or in any degree wound the sensibility of your respected parent, notwithstanding your insinuation, but heartily sympathize with him in his misfortune and sincerely wish him the consolation I cannot give. You will present my kind remembrance to your parents and to the several branches of the family."

Evidently the "peace of family" which up to 1772 Uncle Edmund Quincy had found "the very singular character" of the Wendells was no longer more than formally prevalent.

In 1799, Brother John was sixty-eight years old. Of his nineteen children, eleven survived—the youngest a boy who had reached the age of eleven. The eldest son was forty-two. Named for his father, he appears to have been of more active intellect, and rather better educated than his younger brothers. His letters resemble those of a college-trained man. In point of fact, however, he never went to college, perhaps because the Revolution occurred at just about the time when he would regularly have done so; he was for a while in the employ of his uncle Joshua Wentworth, who thought him a bit flighty; he appears to have been the son of Brother John who, failing to get a commission on the *Ranger*, under John Paul Jones,—an intimate friend of the father,—went before the mast rather than not go at all; and after the Revolution, he showed considerable enterprise in business, meanwhile corresponding with friends in Congress on political matters as well as social. Why he never married does not appear; his reason may very likely have been that he was never in a position to support a wife and family in the station to which he felt himself entitled. Particularly after the first Daniel's death, however, he was his father's chief reliance. In the spring of 1799, he made a journey to New York, where he did something towards establishing a futile claim to property in what was already Broadway. This claim was characteristic of Brother John, who held more or less valid title to a great deal of landed property, but had very little ready money. So the old man could hardly have had a more crushing blow than the sudden death of this eldest son in August, 1799.

Among the letters which ensued on this bereavement, two are worth recording. One is the bill of Dr. Lyman Spaulding, the chief physician in Portsmouth, who charged two dollars for "5 visits and advice during his last sickness." The other is what Elbridge Gerry wrote from Cambridge: "I sincerely

condole with you and your family on the melancholy occasion which you allude to. There are events beyond our control, the dispensations of a supreme incomprehensible Being, but nevertheless distressing in a high degree, in consequence of those attachments and affections He has implanted in our minds. You have, however, the heartfelt satisfaction of having, on reflection, discharged the duty of a parent."

Catherine wrote characteristically: "I once viewed death with a great deal of horror; but whether it is from the many trials I have had to conflict with, that have weaned me from the world, or whether it is from a foolhardiness I cannot say, but I feel perfectly resigned to leaving it, and can contemplate death with great composure." She goes on to say that she has not seen Brother John for eighteen years. She touches on troubles he has had with his daughters, one of whom appears to have been disordered in mind, and another to have fallen in love with an undesirable suitor. Sister Skinner is away on a visit to Newbury, Salem, and Marblehead. And then references to land claims turn up. "I assure you, my dear, with my weak frame I find it tough work to rub along," she continues, "but I don't wish to complain." Living, it seems, costs £300.0.0 a year, and she already owes a thousand pounds. But Captain Sargent's bitters have done her good, and she would be glad to have another bottle.

In October, 1800, writing from Cambridge Street, she is something like her old self again. Brother John has had a fever; so has Sister Skinner, and so has she. "You must now remember," she writes, "[that] you are an old man. You must put off the deeds of the body; go thy way, and sin no more . . . You often say you are coming to see me. You put me in mind of the brace of pigeons the Irishman carried as a present, and let them fly from the basket; and when he delivered his letter, [and] the person told him he found in his letter the pigeons were sent, [he said]

he was glad they were found in the letter, as he had lost them by the way." It is twenty years, she continues, since she has seen Brother John. This letter goes by "my two best friends, Mr. and Mrs. Scott." (This Mrs. Scott was her double cousin, Dorothy Quincy, widow of John Hancock, who had found in a second marriage less brilliant but calmer joys than had attended her first.) "She is like a sister," Catherine goes on, "[and] he my father, friend and protector. I wish all my friends would love him for my sake. They will inform you [of] my situation better than I can write it." . . . Sister Skinner, she adds, is at Newbury. The fever has cost \$40.00 for the doctor and \$12.00 for the nurse, besides medicines. And she owes Captain Scott £500.0.0 which she hopes to pay.

There is only one more letter from her, a much torn sheet written in February, 1803. Evidently she had asked Brother John for money; and it is fair to say that although rich in lands he could seldom lay hand on cash even for his own household bills. As for Catherine, her long dauntless spirit is almost broken. "What, my dear brother, have I done," she writes, "to merit your alienation? Could our venerable parents make but one visit to their offspring, and see the change, methinks their very souls would melt at the prospect. I am sure mine soars up to the regions where I think they dwell, and longs to unite with them in their humble adoration to the God of mercy. When I take a retrospection of our juvenile years, and view the harmony and love that pervaded our peaceful mansion, and [then] take a present view, I am lost in astonishment, and almost fancy myself in a delirium . . . May poverty never assail your mansion, may the poignant sting of an indigent, dependent widow, never be the lot of the partner of your wealth, is the prayer of a sister that forcibly feels them both, and only begs that she may be endued with patience till the heavenly mandate shall summon her to her

eternal rest. I must own, my dear, that I have not philosophy sufficient to combat with the trials of poverty and the indifference of my nearest connections." She has a heavy cough, getting worse. "Our poor sister is at Newbury. God knows how it is with her. I hear she has lost her son Richard. I hope she will be supported through her many trials, and have a happy issue out of them. I congratulate you [on] the preservation in the late calamity by fire; also on the marriage of your daughter, [which, alas, proved luckless,] and the enjoyment of health which Mr. Sheafe informs me you possess. God grant you and yours every blessing. Accept and offer my love among them, from that sister who once flattered herself she was beloved by you."

It was probably in answer to this letter that Brother John drafted one to her, which may or may not have been copied and sent. "I am as ready to answer, my dear sister, your letters as I am to receive them, or you [are to] write me, and I challenge all the world to produce an instance of my ingratitude or want of affection where the cause originated with me . . . I have a very valuable estate in outlands, yet I am like Tantalus up to the chin in water, yet cannot drink. I have some thousands of dollars due me which I cannot collect without distressing my fellow men, and I am wading through an almost finished race without the pleasure of enjoyment. Happy should I have been if a kind providence had permitted me to have been the sole support of helpless sisters, but a very large and dependent family has called for thousands more than I have had to help them. But, thank God, through the knowledge that I have an independent real estate, no person is distressing me." He goes on, at great length, to detail the circumstances concerning family lands which he has been accused of appropriating, to point out that not a penny has come to him from these, but that they have involved losses; and incidentally to resent the fact that "Mrs. Han-

cock, now Mrs. Scott" (doubly his first cousin) had offered to send him "Mr. Davis's wig, after his death." The draft of this letter, on the whole senile and peevish, breaks off in the middle.

Two or three more letters concern Catherine, however. In April, 1804, her step-daughter, Mrs. Townsend, wrote a touching appeal to Brother John, whom she supposed affluent. "I have ventured, without her knowledge, to inform you of her real, unhappy situation. A woman at her time of life, beyond the years of sixty, accustomed in the early part of it to live handsome and genteel, and by her industry in the latter to be above dependence, is distressing to a degree. She was obliged to give up everything to her creditors and renounce business two years ago. Ever since, she has been with Aunt Fiske and myself, excepting some visits to Mrs. Scott. The death of her sister and the repeated troubles she has met with have so racked and debilitated her constitution that she is totally unable to undertake any business that can maintain her without the assistance of her friends . . . Aunt Fiske has left her one hundred dollars, which without a home, and no other means to begin with, is small. . . . Were it in my power to place her in affluence I would with pleasure do it; but our house is very small, our family large and our business on the decline. She has seriously talked of offering herself as housekeeper to any genteel family, which from her ill health she is unable to undertake. Were she to do that . . . I know you would be mortified, not only as her brother but as a man of fortune and benevolence."

Now, so far as records can tell us, Brother John was really a man of benevolence; and believed himself potentially a man of fortune. But he was land-poor. He had never had money enough properly to educate his children. He was lavish in signing notes, which kept him in constant hot water. He believed his lands to be worth a hundred thousand pounds sterling;

and today they are, and more. But when he died, in 1808, and his insolvent estate was somehow wound up by his young colleague at the Portsmouth bar, Daniel Webster, the whole property realized only about fifteen thousand dollars. So the long letter which he instantly wrote back to Mrs. Townsend, detailing his business perplexities, is unquestionably true. He had been unable, for years, to meet his own current expenses; and, in uncomfortable circumstances, he had been accused of heartlessness in not helping poor relatives. This he had resented—particularly when not informed of his sister Fiske's death, nor invited to her funeral. "Your Aunt Wendell," he goes on, "who is one of the best women in the world, heartily grieves at every misfortune in our family, and would heartily join you in anything which would relieve my sister; but, poor woman, although she knows my great sufferings by paying money as bondsman, she knows not half my afflictions."

In brief, he is actually unable to do anything; but before long two of his sons-in-law, Captain Sargent and Captain Randall, are expected in the port of Boston. When they arrive, Mrs. Townsend may consult with them. "In the multitude of counsel there is safety, and something may be devised for my distressed sister."

Whether anything came of this proposed family council does not appear. A letter from Dr. David Townsend, written on Sunday afternoon, April 7th, 1805,—almost a year later—finishes the story: "This day, after a few days' more severe illness than she usually experienced for many years of distressful infirmity, your sister Mrs. Catherine Davis expired about one o'clock. It becomes my painful duty to give you this information, because Mrs. Townsend's distress on the occasion prevents her from giving you a more circumstantial account of the event."

She was buried, the only one of her family left in their native spot, in the tomb, in the Granary Burying

Ground, where her parents lay and her grandparents. This place of burial was piously cared for by Dr. Townsend, and now bears his name as well as that of Major John Wendell.

As for Brother John, who died three years later, he lies in a large tumulus at Portsmouth, bearing his name and the epitaph "Sic Transit Gloria Mundi."

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