

FRANCES BURNEY

M. JOSEPHINE SHANNON

THERE are some figures in the literary world that are of perennial interest. No one tires of Samuel Pepys or Samuel Johnson, of Jane Austen or Charlotte Brontë. The appearance some weeks ago on the London stage of a fashionable lady dressed to represent Fanny Burney, in the pageant called *Hyde Park*, is a reminder that Miss Burney, too, is among the immortals; partly as the author of *Evelina*, partly as the friend of Johnson, but most of all through the merits of her famous *Diary*. From Macaulay, who wrote an essay on her when the *Diary* was first published, to Muriel Masefield, who produced a slight monograph on her last year, there has been a constant succession of articles dealing with this eighteenth century writer who sprang into fame with unexampled suddenness. For the most part these essayists have been just in their estimate of the author, but few of them seem to have perceived the gifts and graces of the woman. This is a pity; for "dear little Burney", as Johnson called her, was a rather uncommon character who well deserved the fairest appreciation.

Frances Burney, who was born in 1752, enjoyed the great advantage of being brought up in a large family—perhaps the best preparatory school there is for life. Dr. Burney's home in Queen's Square, London, and afterwards at No. 1, St. Martin's Street, was very full, for besides his four girls and two boys by his first wife, their Burney half-brother and their Burney half-sister, sheltered the two daughters of his second wife, who had formerly been a Mrs. Allen. Happily for themselves, the various members of this odd household were singularly good-natured, and had a merry, scrambling time together, with few disturbances beyond the ordinary "little rubs of life." The heterogeneous elements were kept in harmony by their common devotion to the kindly and indulgent man who was master of the house.

Across the vista of the years the figure of Dr. Burney still seems to glow with that winning geniality which made him such a favourite. "I love Burney: my heart goes out to meet him", cried the outspoken Johnson; "I much question if there is in the

world such another man as Dr. Burney." "He was indeed a most extraordinary man", affirmed Arthur Murphy, "at home upon all subjects, and upon all so agreeable." Dr. Burney was a musician, something of a composer, something of an author. His personal charm, however, was his richest endowment. It raised him and his family out of the obscurity that would otherwise have been their lot. His tact and dignity placed him on an equality with his patrons at a time when class distinctions were rigidly observed. He entered the mansions of the great as a humble music-teacher, but ere long became the family friend. The most distinguished people in the social world visited his home and attended his weekly concerts; thus his children at the most impressionable period of their lives had the inestimable advantage of having their minds cultivated and their manners formed by contact with the best society.

The young Burneys inherited their father's sweet temper and pleasant ways. His eldest son entered the navy, and in due time rose to the rank of admiral. The second became a notable scholar. Hetty, the eldest girl, was pretty and very musical; Susan possessed all her father's charm; while little Charlotte was the sprightliest of them all. These three sisters married young, and it was to them and for them that Frances wrote her letters and journals.

And Fanny herself? Strange to say, in her childhood Frances was backward and even dull. She did not learn to read until she was eight years old, and it was a favourite trick of her sailor brother's to hand her a book upside down and watch her attempts to spell out the words. She was so shy and solemn before strangers that she was nicknamed "The Old Lady". But this dulness was only on the surface. Years afterwards her father used to remember that in the nursery "she had a great deal of invention in her childish sports; and used, after having seen a play in Mrs. Garrick's box, to take the actors off, and compose speeches for their characters." Her shyness was never conquered. While her lively and beautiful sisters helped to make Dr. Burney's receptions delightful, little Miss Fanny was wont to hide herself away in some corner from which she could peep out demurely but observantly on the company. Those, however, who were persevering enough to follow her into her retreat soon found that she had attractions all her own. When she forgot her shyness and allowed herself to talk, the short-sighted eyes sparkled with humour, the corners of her mouth curved in a bewitching smile, the brown cheek flushed becomingly, and now the little creature was absolutely pretty! The efforts, too, to draw her out were well rewarded when successful, so sprightly and amusing were the responses she made in her soft, low voice.

Though such a little quiet thing, Frances had a heart big enough and warm enough for a giant. The keen eyes of her step-mother perceived the depth and strength of her feelings, and she became uneasy over the future of the child. "Here is a girl will *never* be happy! *Never* while she lives!" she proclaimed, to the great annoyance of her step-daughter, "for she possesses perhaps as feeling a heart as ever girl had." The great passion of Fanny's life was for her father: "This dearest, most amiable, this best beloved of men . . . every virtue under the sun is his!" For him she would have sacrificed herself by accepting a most unwelcome suitor, had not the tender-hearted man, perceiving her unhappiness, put a stop to the affair. For him she did indeed make a most grievous sacrifice. Next to her father she loved Susan, "the peculiar darling of the whole house of Burney"; and outside the home circle her deepest affection was given to her adopted father, "Daddy Crisp", one of Dr. Burney's oldest friends, a cultivated and scholarly man who lived in a retired nook where he was constantly visited by the Burney family. To Mr. Crisp Frances was indebted for much useful advice and kindly criticism, and it was through the correspondence kept up with him that she first displayed her great gifts.

From early childhood she was passionately fond of both reading and writing. Macaulay says, "It was not by reading that her taste was formed . . . her knowledge of books was small . . . she was unacquainted with the most celebrated works of Voltaire and Molière, and appears to have been by no means a novel-reader"; but Fanny's *Early Diary* contradicts him. She was in the habit of noting down, among other matters, the different books she was reading, with her own artless comments on them. Thus she mentions the works of Pope; Voltaire's *Henriade*; *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Rasselas*. "I am reading Smith's translation of Thucydides's *Peloponnesian War*", she observes in 1768, adding humourously, "I mention the *translator*, lest I should be suspected of reading the original Greek." Alas for Macaulay! The record contains the names of many of the ephemeral novels of the period. With this reading went much scribbling; little tales which delighted her sisters and afforded Fanny much pleasure; but her step-mother disapproved so strongly of this amusement that one sorrowful day the good obedient girl gathered all her manuscripts together in the stone-flagged courtyard, and solemnly burnt them in spite of the tears of the faithful Susan. The demand for self-expression, however, was so insistent that presently a diary—less harmful than a romance—was begun, her conscience being appeased by the rule, "Never to indulge in my two *most* favourite pursuits, reading and

writing, in the morning—no, like a very good girl I give that up wholly to needle-work.” The pages of this *Early Diary* sparkle with the lustre reflected by great names. Who would not like to have shared Fanny’s little corner and peeped out with her at the “lyons” as she called them—Garrick and Johnson; Bruce the African traveller and Count Orloff the favourite of the Russian Empress; with numerous stars from the world of fashion no less than from the world of music? But sometimes the insignificant folk were just as interesting. Fanny had a keen sense of humour, and took a mischievous delight in sketching her various admirers. Into her journal went the halting verse of one adorer:—

What beauties have met me!
How often have I sighing said
Poor Hetty’s charms are now quite dead,
Nor dare they vie with Fanny.

Melidorus

with the sarcastic comment appended: “Your servant, Mr. Melidorus, I am obliged to you. Who would not be proud to have such verses made on them?”

II

In 1778, Frances made that timid essay into literature which met with such extraordinary success. The story of her anonymous publication of *Evelina* has been so often told that it is unnecessary to repeat it. How was it that a shy, shrinking girl like Fanny, “so dividant (*sic*) of her own performances”, as a cousin remarked, could have brought herself to take such a daring step? Perhaps the most satisfactory answer to that question is the one George III received when he propounded it to her at their first meeting. “But your publishing—your printing—how was that?” demanded his Majesty, with plebeian curiosity; and poor Fanny, trembling with nervousness, blurted out—not a little to her own surprise—the astonishing reply: “Because—I thought—Sir—it would look very well in print!”

It soon appeared that the public also thought the book looked very well in print. Erelong it was in constant demand at the circulating libraries. The reviews printed favourable notices of it, and people of a very different order from the common novel-reader began to talk of it. Lively Mrs. Thrale read it and was enchanted; the great Johnson condescended to peruse it; Burke sat up half the night over it; and kindly, courtly Sir Joshua Reynolds vowed that if a woman wrote it, he would make love to her. But Fanny’s sweetest gratification came from her adored father and her

Daddy Crisp; for the one laughed and cried over the book, and pronounced it to be the best novel he knew except Fielding's; while the other assured Fanny that her fame and reputation were made.

The little insignificant girl now became the object of the most flattering attentions. The interest she aroused, the adulation she received were sufficient to have turned the steadiest head; but Fanny's deep, innate humility was unshaken. She was excited, gratified, but almost frightened by her amazing success. Well she knew the fickleness of public opinion, and the uncertainty of that mysterious gift called inspiration which may to-day pour out its riches unsought and to-morrow be invoked in vain; and this knowledge preserved her from conceit. Macaulay does her full justice on this point. "If", he says, "she recorded with minute diligence all the compliments, delicate and coarse, which she heard whenever she turned, she recorded them for the eyes of two or three persons who had loved her from her infancy . . . to whom her fame gave the purest and most exquisite delight. Nothing can be more unjust than to confound these outpourings of a kind heart . . . with the egotism of a bluestocking who prates to all who come near her about her own novel or her own volume of sonnets."

Mrs. Thrale, a notable hunter of "lyons", fairly took possession of Frances, inviting her constantly to Streatham, where divers learned people congregated, and where dear rough old Johnson—"Gay Sam, agreeable Sam, pleasant Sam", as Bozzy called him—lorded it over everyone. At home Fanny found herself continually obliged to attend as a distinguished guest the most brilliant and fashionable assemblies. With a sure touch she sketches these rich and titled and famous folk, and they spring to life before one. There rolls along the awkward figure of Johnson accompanied by the amiable Reynolds, or by the gallant Burke, perhaps the greatest man of his time; and here flutter the vivacious Mrs. Thrale, and the beautiful Mrs. Crewe, and the learned and affected Mrs. Montague. "The perfection of lucid writing", says Mr. Benson, "seems to resemble a crystal stream, which flows limpidly and deliciously over its pebbly bed . . . Though the very stream has a beauty of its own . . . its chief beauty is in the exquisite transfiguring effect which it has over the shingle, the vegetation that glimmers and sways beneath the surface . . . Thus it is with the transfiguring power of art, of style." Miss Burney's style is so clear, so effortless, that she seems to lead one to a wide window through which one looks out on a gay and ever-shifting scene crowded with figures; young and old, handsome and ugly, odd or attractive, bowing, smiling, con-

versing; and the whole thing is so real and so absorbing, one forgets that art and style have anything to do with its charm.

Such scenes, for the most part, were to be henceforth Miss Burney's lot in life. In England, in France, in old age as in youth, she was from this time forth reckoned among the celebrities of the period. But though it was her genius that drew her from obscurity and gave her a front place on the stage of life, it was something very different that won the deep respect and affection of those with whom she came into contact. You will remember that Thackeray was quite as keen to meet Charlotte Brontë as ever Burke or Reynolds was to know Miss Burney; but when the evening came, and Charlotte sat in his drawing-room, silent, reserved, so that with all his efforts he could not draw her out, his disappointment was so intense that he slipped away from the house, determined not to return until his guest had gone! Whose was the fault? Perhaps Thackeray had not the winning manners or persuasive address of the eighteenth century; at least one knows that there was warmth enough behind Miss Brontë's cold exterior. But while it was *Evelina* that first attracted Johnson to Frances Burney, whom he called with huge delight "a little character monger", it was not her mental gifts that attached him to her; that made him, at times so rough to others, invariably gentle and even tender with her; and that made him send for her when he lay a-dying in Bolt Court and bid her remember him in her prayers. But for *Evelina* and *Cecilia* it is not likely that Mr. Windham would have ever noticed Fanny; but it was not simply because of her talents that he conversed with her so often in Westminster Hall. Shy enough she was, and self-conscious too; but her tact was so fine, her humour so playful, above all her nature so deeply sympathetic, that it seems clear these great men quickly forgot the fame of the author in the subtle charm of the woman.

In 1782 *Cecilia* was published, and Miss Burney reached the height of her fame. No one ever had more reason to be happy than she now had, surrounded as she was by an affectionate family, with delightful friends, and a literary reputation deservedly high and freely acknowledged; and she was happy, in spite of the inevitable changes wrought by time. In 1782 died her beloved Daddy Crisp who, with almost his last breath, spoke of her fondly as "Fanniken, the dearest thing to me on earth." In 1784 she lost Mrs. Thrale's friendship by that lady's imprudent second marriage; while a few months later came the death of the great-hearted Johnson, whose love for her was constant to the last. All these were heavy griefs to the affectionate girl, but she was young, life was full

of pleasure, and, in time, Mrs. Thrale at least had her place taken by sweet old Mrs. Delany, the particular friend of the king and queen.

Pleasant as was the acquaintance of this gracious and venerable lady, it proved a most disastrous one for Frances. Queen Charlotte disapproved of novels as a rule, but she had read and enjoyed *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, and she had heard Mrs. Delany speak with high praise of their author. Now, in 1786, she met Miss Burney in the home of her old friend, and soon formed the wish to attach her to her own service. "I was led to think of Miss Burney", she told Mrs. Delany, "first by her books; then by seeing her; then by always hearing how she was loved by her friends; but chiefly by your friendship for her." How astonished, and, possibly, indignant the queen would have been could she have known that the woman she intended to honour would have infinitely preferred being left to the enjoyment of the happy home on St. Martin's Street! In this instance Macaulay failed to do Fanny justice. He asserts that though she hesitated to accept the position offered, she was dazzled and overwhelmed by the royal condescension. Very differently does she herself describe her feelings. "You cannot easily picture to yourself", she says, "the consternation with which I received this intimation", (that of the queen's wish.) "It was such that the good and kind Mr. Smelt, perceiving it, had the indulgence instantly to offer me his services, first in forbearing to mention even to my father his commission, and next in fabricating and carrying back for me a respectful excuse." Then she enumerates the conditions of her service, ending with the mournful comment, "The confinement to the court continual! . . . what a life for me, who have friends so dear to me, and to whom friendship is the very support of existence!"

Had the matter rested with her, there is no doubt what answer the queen would have received; but Fanny's habitual obedience now forced her to acquaint Dr. Burney with the royal offer. Unfortunately the father seems to have experienced all that glamour which Macaulay attributes to the daughter, and, as Fanny foresaw, the end was inevitable. With clear undazzled sight she faced her future difficulties and deprivations; but, with a woman's genius for self-sacrifice, sold herself into bondage to gratify those dearest to her. The world had its own opinion, according to Horace Walpole, and declared contemptuously that she had been "royally gagged, and promoted to fold muslin."

The next five years of Fanny's life were spent in the narrow circle of a dull and formal court. Her position was second keeper of the queen's robes; her duties were to assist at the queen's toilet

three times a day, with such other light tasks in addition as mixing her Majesty's snuff, reading aloud to her, and writing occasional verse when desired; for the queen was evidently proud of her new attendant's literary reputation. A woman less suitable for the place than Miss Burney could scarcely have been found, for she disliked the whole business of dress, and the fuss and ceremony of a court. The little hand so nimble with the pen was exceedingly awkward in the queen's closet, and the clever brain could never master the intricacies of the toilet. She says herself that she often ran "a prodigious risk of giving the gown before the hoop, and the fan before the neckerchief."

But Fanny could have endured the dulness and the ceremonial if fate had not been so malicious in her choice of the woman who was to be her chief companion during these five years. Madame Schwellenberg had come over from Germany with Queen Charlotte; she had never become accustomed to English ways or English people, and made no secret of her contempt for both. She was narrow-minded, arrogant and jealous, and the irritability of her temper was intensified by ill health. Her insolence and her jealousy might have been borne, although to one as gentle and sensitive as Fanny they made life well-nigh intolerable, but her inhumanity more than once endangered Miss Burney's health. Painful indeed were those dreaded coach rides when the cutting winter wind drove in through the open windows, almost freezing the hapless girl while the virago opposite kept screaming passionately, "Put down that glass! put it down when I tell you! It is my coach! I will have it selfs!" Happily for Fanny, her keen sense of humour was not wholly stifled by the atmosphere of the prison-house. Much as she suffered in mind and body during the years spent in the palace, the portion of the *Diary* written at that time is as gay and vivacious as the earlier part, and is of as much interest and value; more so, one ventures to think in opposition to Macaulay, than any novel she might have written in the same time.

A warm regard soon sprang up between Miss Burney and her royal mistress. Queen Charlotte has always been the victim of the attacks of ignorance, party spirit, and prejudice. In Fanny's *Diary* she appears, no doubt, exactly as she was; simple, sincere, and kind-hearted. One often loses sight of the queen altogether, and sees only a sad and anxious woman. "Her understanding", says Frances, "was of the best sort; for, while it endued her with power to form a judgment. . . it pointed out to her the fallibility of appearances, and thence always kept her open to conviction where she had been led by circumstances into mistake. . . When I was alone with

her, she discarded all royal constraint . . . all formality, to lead me to speak to her with openness and ease . . . What she desired to know she asked openly, though cautiously if of grave matters, and playfully if of mere news or chit-chat, but always beginning with, 'If there is any reason I should not be told, or any that you should not tell, don't answer me' . . . These words were spoken with such visible sincerity that I have availed myself of them fearlessly . . . but whenever she saw a question painful, or that it occasioned even hesitation, she promptly and generously started some other subject."

Even in the dull routine of the court, Miss Burney soon found rich material to employ her pen. Madame Schwellenberg herself was not without her comic side when Frances was light-hearted enough to perceive it. Nothing could be more amusing than the account of that ancient dame and her beloved pet frogs, of which she boasts: "When I only go so to my snuff-box—knock, knock, knock—they croak all what I please." The manners and foibles of the different members of the royal household are described with inimitable drollery by the demure lady whose bright eyes at first scarcely glanced at her companions, she was so shy. There was the wild and flighty clergyman who was French reader to the queen and princesses, and who often disconcerted Fanny with his odd ways. There was the goodnatured, discontented equerry who was always complaining of his position: "What a life it is! Well! it's honour! that's one comfort; it's all honour! One has the honour to stand till one has not a foot left; and to ride till one's stiff, and to walk till one's ready to drop";—and that other equerry who was so dreadfully bored with music: "I like any caw-caw-caw better than that sort of noise—only you must not tell the king I say that, ma'am, because the king likes it"; and still a third, a man of refinement and education, whom one suspects of doing his best to win Fanny's heart by way of an idle pastime; and a host of other equally amusing folk, with whom Fanny's tact and gentle ways made her so great a favourite that the half-hour spent at her tea-table was soon pronounced the most agreeable part of the day.

But all the interests she found in her high position could never compensate Fanny for the anxieties and deprivations that were part of the exacting service, and in 1791 her health was so completely broken down that she was forced to resign her place at court. Her release was not easily accomplished; the queen clung to the attendant who had become her friend, and on whose steadfast loyalty and discretion she had learned—especially during the king's alarming illness in 1778—that she could safely depend. But death appeared about to seize Fanny; her one chance for life seemed to lie in retire-

ment, and at length her resignation was reluctantly accepted. It was, however, as Fanny reflected with natural pride, only the loss of court position, not of court favour. Queen Charlotte's estimate of Miss Burney's character after five years association reflects credit on them both. "She is", said the Queen, "what we call in German 'true as gold'; and, in point of heart, there is not, all the world over, one better."

III

So Fanny retired, but not to die. On the contrary, before many months had passed, and when health and spirits had both returned to her, she astonished her friends, and perhaps herself no less, by crowning the romance of a most romantic career with a very singular marriage.

In 1793 England was overrun with French *emigres* who had fled from their distracted country, then in the hands of the National Convention. A small party of these unfortunates were living near the home of Mrs. Phillips, Fanny's beloved sister Susan, and here Fanny made their acquaintance. As far as distinction goes, they were surely worth knowing, for among them were Madame de Staël, M. de Talleyrand, and Count de Lally Tollendal. But it was General Alexandre D'Arblay who became the favourite of the sisters. He had been adjutant-general to Lafayette; he was of middle age, handsome, gay, polite. He desired to learn English, and Fanny was very willing to improve her French. With the aid of such dull things as nouns and verbs they speedily became friends. It was astonishing how congenial were their tastes, how rapidly the hours flew that they spent together.

For the first time there was a serious difference of opinion between Fanny and her adored father. Dr. Burney with much shrewdness soon perceived whither this intimacy tended. He knew the General's poverty, and the slight chance there was of his ever regaining his fortune; he knew that all Fanny could reckon on was the trifling pension of a hundred pounds a year, which was altogether dependent on the pleasure of the queen. His alarm roused him to the unusual exertion of remonstrating. He wrote to Fanny, but his appeal came too late—she had already parted with her heart! Gently, but resolutely, she opposed her will to that of her father. She had no fear of poverty. "I know that there is not any part of our family that cannot live upon a very little, very gaily; as cheerfully as most folks on a great deal", she had written with reference to Susan's marriage in 1781; and now she added more strongly for herself; "A crust of bread with a little roof for

shelter and a fire for warmth would bring me to peace, to happiness." Dr. Burney had to give way. He sent a reluctant consent to the imprudent marriage, which was shortly afterwards celebrated in the little country church near her sister's home; "and never, never was union more blessed and felicitous", wrote Frances in mournful retrospection thirty-two years after the event.

Singularly happy were the first years of Madame D'Arblay's married life, though spent in a remote and isolated nook, with no companions but her husband and her little son—their only child—and though they were rarely able to afford more than the bare necessities of life. But she had well understood how slight were her requirements for happiness, and was fortunate in finding in her husband tastes similar to her own. There are few more delightful pictures in the *Diary* than those of the idyllic existence of these modern hermits. M. D'Arblay as a gardener! What amateur gardener will not feel the tenderest sympathy with him in his eager anticipations, his zeal often misplaced, his failures, his indomitable perseverance? "This sort of work is so new to him", his wife writes in affectionate merriment, "that he receives every now and then some 'disagreeable compliments'... With great labour he cleared a considerable compartment of weeds, and when it looked clean and well, and he showed his work to a gardener, the man said he had demolished an asparagus bed!" "His misfortunes might melt a heart of stone; the horses broke through our hedges and have dug up our turnips and carrots; the sheep followed and have eaten up all our greens, every sprout and cabbage and lettuce... but he works as if nothing had failed; such is his patience and industry."

The poverty of the ménage within doors has its share of gentle raillery. "For heaven's sake, my dear girl", she cries to her sister who wishes to bring a visitor to the tiny dwelling, "how are we to give him a dinner? unless he will bring with him his poultry, for ours are not yet arrived; and his fish, for ours are still at the bottom of some pond, we know not where; not to speak of his knives and forks, some ten of our original twelve having been massacred in M. D'Arblay's first essays in the art of carpentering; to say nothing of his large spoons, the silver of our plated ones having feloniously made off under cover of the whitening brush—not to talk of his cook, ours not yet being hired... With all these impediments, however, if he will eat a quarter of a joint of meat (his share, I mean) tied up by a packthread and roasted by a log of wood on the bricks, and declare no potatoes so good as those dug by M. D'Arblay out of our garden, and protest that our small beer gives the spirits

of champagne...and pronounce that bare walls are superior to tapestry, we shall be sincerely happy to receive him in our hermitage."

The charm and sweetness of Madame D'Arblay's nature were never exhibited more delightfully than in the mingled tenderness and humour with which she relates the trifling incidents of their quiet life. Her boy was an inexhaustible source of joy and amusement which she loved to share with her father, who had long since become fully reconciled to her marriage. "My little man waits for your lessons to get on in elocution", she writes in 1796; "he has made no further advance but that of calling out, as he saw our two watches hanging over the chimney-piece, 'Watch, papa—Watch, mamma'; so though his first speech is English, the idiom is French. We agree that this is to avoid any heart-burning in his parents." She was full of pride, pleasure and anxiety when presenting the child to the Queen, who was still her constant friend. The little fellow, too young to understand the distinctions of rank, played about the stately rooms with the wildness of a little rustic, running away from the princesses when they tried to caress him, and leaning and jumping against the Queen's knee as she showed him a Noah's Ark she had ordered for him. Her Majesty offered him a cake. "He took one", says the fond mother, "with great pleasure...I asked him if he had nothing to say for it; he nodded his little head, and composedly answered 'Sanky, Queen!' This could not help amusing her, nor me neither, for I had no expectation of quite so succinct an answer."

After eight years of this tranquil life at Camilla Cottage—so called from her third novel, the proceeds of which built the house—the turn of events summoned Madame D'Arblay from her retreat, to which she was never again able to return. In 1802, when Bonaparte had become the ruler of France, and there was for the moment peace between that country and England, M. D'Arblay, in the hope of improving his circumstances, returned to Paris, whither his wife and child soon followed him, planning to remain a year. Before that period was completed, however, war was renewed between the two countries, and for nine anxious years Madame D'Arblay was cut off not only from seeing her family, but even from communicating with them, except at rare intervals and by chance messengers. What a pity it is that her *Diary* passes over those years in silence, for she had unusual opportunities of seeing the life of the imperial court, and met familiarly many famous and agreeable people. "The society in which I mix," she wrote in 1810, "when I can prevail with myself to quit my yet dearer fireside, is all that can be wished,

whether for wit, wisdom, intelligence, gaiety or politeness. Could I write with more security. . . I would characterize the whole set to you." But the dread of Bonaparte was so great, the system of espionage so thorough, that Madame D'Arblay, though a woman, and living in the quietest and most unobtrusive fashion, dared not commit her observations to paper. Even when she was again in England, her dread of the tyrant was still so instinctive that she wrote, "I whisper still if I utter a word that breathes an opinion."

In 1812, with her son, then nearing the age of conscription, she contrived to escape from France, and reached England again in time to cheer and soothe her father's last years, nor did she rejoin her husband until Napoleon was an exile in Elba. The Emperor's escape from his place of exile early in the next year and the thrilling events of the Hundred Days form one of the most interesting episodes in the *Diary*. Her reader seems to share with Madame D'Arblay all the terrors and anxieties of her hurried flight from Paris to Brussels, all the anguish and suspense she suffered as she listened to the distant roar of the cannon during those fateful days in June, all the exquisite relief that came to her with the news of the glorious victory of Waterloo. When peace was once more restored to the distracted country, Madame D'Arblay and her husband set out for England to join their son whose earnest wish was to establish himself in his native land; and thenceforth she had the happiness of living in her own country, surrounded by those she loved.

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Madame D'Arblay lived to be very old; it has been said, indeed, that she lived long enough to become a classic. The rising generation made pilgrimages to see this relic of a famous period as if visiting a shrine. One day there came into her little parlour a middle-aged Scotsman with a pleasant, whimsical face and a slight limp. When his name was spoken, her faded eyes brightened, and she said, with the most delicate flattery, that he and Canning had been the two men of all others she had been most anxious to see. Sir Walter Scott—for he it was—describes her as "an elderly lady with no remains of personal beauty, but with a simple and gentle manner, and pleasing expression of countenance, and apparently quick feelings." "I trust", (he concludes), "I shall see this lady again." So the old charm was still there—the charm of an unusually fine and sympathetic nature.

In 1832 another author, a young man, who was having a struggle for success, and to whom, therefore, praise was doubly sweet, wrote in boyish delight to a beloved sister: "The staunchest ad-

mirer I have in London, and the most discerning appreciator of *Contarini* is old Madame D'Arblay. I have a long letter I will show you—Capital!" Lord Beaconsfield and Madame D'Arblay! So the Victorian period joined hands with the Georgian, and the great names of the nineteenth century seemed to sparkle for the moment close beside those other great names of the eighteenth century, united by one individual who belonged to both.

The publication of Madame D'Arblay's *Diary and Letters* a few years after her death added greatly to her reputation, which has steadily grown as the merit and value of her historical sketches have been more clearly recognized. No doubt this would have gratified her. In her gentle way she enjoyed and appreciated fame, but she was too thoroughly feminine for it ever to be the greatest thing in life to her. "Happiness is the great end of all our worldly views", she wrote once to an old friend: "To me wealth and ambition would always be unavailing to produce it. . . Domestic comfort and social affection have invariably been the sole as well as ultimate objects of my choice, and I have always been a stranger to any other species of felicity."