

Henry Austin Dobson



Fanny Burney

Henry Austin Dobson

Fanny Burney



Published by Good Press, 2022

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066365783

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[PREFACE](#)

[CHAPTER I THE BURNEY FAMILY](#)

[CHAPTER II NO. 1, ST. MARTIN'S STREET](#)

[CHAPTER III THE STORY OF EVELINA](#)

[CHAPTER IV THE SUCCESSFUL AUTHOR](#)

[CHAPTER V CECILIA —AND AFTER](#)

[CHAPTER VI THE QUEEN'S DRESSER](#)

[CHAPTER VII HALF A LIFETIME](#)

[INDEX](#)

PREFACE

[Table of Contents](#)

The main sources for this memoir of Frances or Fanny Burney,—afterwards Madame D’Arblay,—in addition to her novels, the literature of the period, and the works specified in the footnotes, are as follows:—

1. *Memoirs of Dr. Burney, arranged from his own Manuscript, from Family Papers, and from Personal Recollections.* By his Daughter, Madame D’Arblay. In Three Volumes. London: Moxon, 1832.

2. *Diary and Letters of Madame D’Arblay,* Author of “Evelina,” “Cecilia,” etc. Edited by her Niece. [In Seven Volumes.] London: Colburn, 1842-46. [The edition here used is Swan Sonnenschein’s four volume issue of 1892.]

3. *The Early Diary of Frances Burney 1768-1778. With a Selection from her Correspondence, and from the Journals of her Sisters Susan and Charlotte Burney.* Edited by Annie Raine Ellis. In Two Volumes. London: George Bell and Sons, 1889.

I am indebted to the kindness of Archdeacon Burney, Vicar of St. Mark’s, Surbiton, for access to his unique extra-illustrated copy of the *Diary and Letters* of 1842-6, which contains, among other interesting mss., the originals of Mrs. Thrale’s letter mentioned at page [86](#) of this volume, and of Burke’s letter mentioned at page [124](#). Archdeacon Burney is the possessor of Edward Burney’s portrait of his cousin

(page 88); of the Reynolds portraits of Dr. Burney and Garrick from the Thrale Gallery (page 94); of a very fine portrait of Dr. Charles Burney by Lawrence; and of a group by Hudson of Hetty Burney, her husband, Charles Rousseau Burney, and her husband's father, Richard Burney of Worcester.

I am also indebted to Mrs. Chappel of East Orchard, Shaftesbury, granddaughter of Mrs. Barrett, the editor of the *Diary and Letters*, for valuable information as to Burney relics in her possession.

A. D.

75, EATON RISE, EALING, W.,

September 18, 1903.

Fanny Burney

CHAPTER I

THE BURNEY FAMILY

[Table of Contents](#)

In the second half of the seventeenth century, there lived at the village of Great Hanwood, four miles from Shrewsbury, a country gentleman of a good estate, named James Macburney. In later life, he was land-steward to the Earl of Ashburnham; and he rented or possessed a house in the Privy Garden at Whitehall. Tradition traces his family to Scotland, whence it was said to have arrived with James I. However this may be,—and the point was not regarded as of much importance by his descendants,—James Macburney married his Shropshire rector's daughter; begat a son; and in due time, became a widower. The son—also James Macburney—was educated at Westminster School under the redoubtable Dr. Busby. Then, taking to art, he worked as a pupil of the “eminent Face Painter,” Michael Dahl. About 1697, at the age of nineteen, he ran away with Rebecca Ellis, an actress in Giffard's Company, and younger than himself. Thereupon his irate father disinherited him, and in further token of his displeasure, took to wife his own cook, by whom he had another son called Joseph, who, as soon as he arrived at man's estate, removed all possible difficulties in regard to the succession by dissipating the property. Having effected this with much promptitude, he settled down contentedly as a Norfolk dancing master. Meanwhile, his elder half-brother,—who, though lacking in discretion, had many pleasing gifts (he was, in particular, an accomplished violin-player),—being left, by the death of his

actress-wife, with a numerous family, wedded, for the second time, a beautiful young lady of Shropshire, Mistress (*i.e.* Miss) Ann Cooper. Miss Cooper was currently reported to have rejected Wycherley the dramatist, who, it may be remembered, like the elder Macburney, was desirous of disappointing his natural heir. Miss Cooper had some money; but James Macburney's second marriage increased the number of his children. The youngest members of his family were twins, Susannah (who died early), and Charles, afterwards the well-known historian of music, and the father of Fanny Burney. Like his predecessors, he was born Macburney, but the "Mac" was subsequently dropped.

Not long after Charles Burney's birth, which took place on the 12th April 1726, in Raven Street, Shrewsbury (a name probably derived from the famous Raven Inn once familiar to Farquhar and "Serjeant Kite"), James Burney, as we may now call his father, settled at Chester as a portrait painter, leaving his little son at nurse in Condover, a village near Shrewsbury. Here, with an affectionate foster mother, Charles Burney thrived apace, until he was transferred to the Chester Grammar School. At this date his natural gifts were sufficiently manifest to enable him at a pinch to act as deputy for the Cathedral organist. Subsequently, he became the pupil of his half-brother, James, the organist of St. Mary's Church at Shrewsbury. Then, being again in Chester when the famous Dr. Augustine Arne was passing through the town on his return from Ireland to London, he was fortunate enough to be taken as that master's apprentice. This was in August 1744, when he was eighteen, pleasant-mannered, intelligent, very musical, very versatile, and—as

he continued to be through life—an indefatigable worker. From Arne he did not learn much except to copy music, and to drudge in the Drury Lane Orchestra, which Arne conducted; and, although he had an elder brother in London, he was left greatly to his own devices. But his abilities and personal charm brought him many friends. He was frequently at the house in Scotland Yard of Arne's sister, Mrs. Cibber, the foremost tragic actress of her day; and here he made acquaintance with many notabilities. Handel was often among the visitors, playing intricate fugues and overtures with his pudgy fingers upon the harpsichord; and Garrick, with the wonderful eyes; and Garrick's surly old rival, the *bon-vivant*, James Quin; and Mason; and Thomson the poet of *The Seasons*.

With Arne, Charles Burney would probably have remained, but for a fortunate accident. At the shop of Jacob Kirkman, the German harpsichord maker in Broad Street, Golden Square, he met Mr. Fulke Greville, a descendant of Sidney's friend, the famous Fulke Greville of Queen Elizabeth's days. The Greville of 1746 either possessed, or affected to possess, many of the attributes of Bramston's *Man of Taste*:—

“I would with *Jockeys* from *Newmarket* dine,

And to *Rough-riders* give my choicest wine ...

In *Fig* the Prize-fighter by day delight,

And sup with *Colly Cibber* ev'ry night.”

Like Bramston's hero, he also dabbled in gardening. But his accomplishments were not confined to pugilism and field sports. He danced, fenced, drew, wrote verses, and trifled with metaphysics. Lastly, he "*had* an ear." After the fashion of his day, he had doubted whether any musician could possibly be a gentleman, but Charles Burney undeceived him. The result was that Greville paid three hundred pounds to cancel Burney's engagement to Arne, and attached his new friend to his own establishment in the capacity of musical companion. This curious conjunction, which seems to have included a fair experience of Greville's other diversions, did no harm to Charles Burney. On the contrary, at Greville's country seat of Wilbury House in Wiltshire, he met many interesting and some eminent people, who considerably enlarged his social aptitudes. In 1747, however, his patron married a Miss Frances Macartney,—the "Flora" of Horace Walpole's *Beauties*,—making, in his impatience of the conventional,—or *fogrum* as it was then styled,—a perfectly superfluous stolen match. "Mr. Greville"—said the lady's matter-of-fact father, when his pardon and blessing were formally requested—"has chosen to take a wife out of the window, whom he might just as well have taken out of the door." Burney gave away the bride; and after standing proxy for a duke at the baptism of the first child,^[1] would have accompanied the Grevilles to Italy. But at this juncture he discovered that he, too, had an affair of the heart. Thereupon Mr. Greville magnanimously released him from his engagement, and left him to marry the woman of his choice.

She was a Miss Esther Sleepe, very attractive and very amiable. Her mother, although of Huguenot origin, was a Roman Catholic. Esther herself was a Protestant. She married Charles Burney about 1748, and they went to live in the City. In 1749, her husband was appointed organist of St. Dionis Backchurch, which had been rebuilt by Wren after the Great Fire. Burney's modest salary was £30 per annum. But he composed music, and soon found many pupils. When his first child, called Esther after her mother, was born, is not stated; but the register of St. Dionis contains record of the birth, in June, 1750, of James Burney, afterwards an admiral; and, in 1751, of a son Charles, who, apparently, died early. Before this date, hard work and close application had begun to tell upon the father of the little family, and he was advised by his friend Dr. John Armstrong, the author of *The Art of Preserving Health*, to try living in the country. He accordingly accepted the post of organist, with a salary of £100 a year, at St. Margaret's Church, King's Lynn, to which place he removed in 1751, his wife joining him some months later. At King's Lynn, on the 13th June, 1752, was born his second daughter, Frances, or Fanny Burney, whose life-story forms the theme of this volume. The name of Frances came to her from her godmother, Mrs. Greville; and she was baptized at St. Nicholas, in Ann Street. At Lynn were born two other children, Susanna, no doubt so named after her father's twin sister; and a second Charles, later a famous Greek scholar, Rector of Deptford, and Chaplain to George III. The date of Susanna's birth is not known; but Charles Burney was born in December, 1757.

At Lynn, in spite of an execrable instrument, and an irresponsive audience, the new organist's health speedily improved. His hearers, if unmusical, were not unfriendly, and his own good qualities helped him as of yore. "He scarcely ever entered a house upon terms of business, without leaving it upon those of intimacy." He gave music lessons in many of the great Norfolk mansions,—at Houghton (Lord Orford's), at Holkham (the home of the Leicesters), at Rainham (General Lord Townshend's), and at Felbrigge Park (Mr. Windham's),—padding along the sandy crossroads to his destination upon his sure-footed mare "Peggy," with a certainty that permitted him to study Tasso or Metastasio in the saddle, and even to consult a dictionary of his own composing which he carried in his great-coat pocket. These things, added to correspondence with the Greville circle, projects for a *History of Music*, increasing means, and a pleasant home, made Lynn life very tolerable for a season. But towards 1759 he seems to have wearied a little of his provincial lot, added to which, friends began to counsel his return to town, and to protest against his exile among "foggy aldermen." "Really, among friends,"—wrote one of them, to whom we shall often refer hereafter,—“is not settling at Lynn planting your youth, genius, hopes, fortune, etc., against a north wall? Can you ever expect ripe, high-flavoured fruit, from such an aspect?” And then the writer went on to adjure him to transplant his “spare person,” his “pretty mate,” and his “brats” to the more congenial environment of the capital. He eventually quitted Lynn in 1760 for London, which he had left about nine years before.

At this date, he was four and thirty. He set up his tent in Poland Street, then a rather more favoured place of residence than it is at present, and having, beyond the Oxford Road (as Oxford Street was then called), little but open fields and market gardens. Portman Square, Manchester Square, Russell Square,—of all these not a stone had been laid.^[2] But Poland Street was not without aristocratic occupants. The Duke of Chandos, Sir Willoughby Aston (with whose daughters the Miss Burneys went to school at Paris), Lady Augusta Bridges and others were all distinguished neighbours in this now dingy street—to say nothing of the Cherokee King, who, when he visited England, actually, to the delight of the Burney children, took lodgings “almost immediately opposite.” At Poland Street Charles Burney rapidly became the music master most in request with the fashionable world. Soon he had not an hour of the day unoccupied, beginning his rounds as early as seven in the morning, and finishing them, sometimes, only at eleven at night. Often he dined in a hackney coach on the contents of a sandwich box and a flask of sherry and water. But he must still have found time for original work, since it was at Poland Street that, besides “Sonatas for the Harpsichord,” he composed in 1763 the setting for Bonnell Thornton’s Burlesque *Ode on St. Caecilia’s Day*, “adapted to the Antient British Musick; viz.: the Salt Box, the Jew’s Harp, the Marrow-Bones and Cleavers, the Hum-Strum or Hurdy-Gurdy,” and the rest, which was performed at Ranelagh in masks, to the huge delectation of an audience musical and unmusical, and the amusement of Dr. Johnson.^[3] But the pleasures of increasing popularity were dashed by domestic

misfortune. Mrs. Burney, the “pretty mate” of the last paragraph, having, in the new home, given birth to a fourth daughter, Charlotte, sickened of consumption. A visit to the Bristol Hot Wells (Clifton) proved unavailing; and to the intense grief of her husband and family, she died, after a brief illness, on the 28th September, 1761. She seems to have been a most affectionate mother, and sympathised with her husband in his bookish tastes. With one of his subsequent essays he published a translation from Maupertuis, which she, naturally an excellent French scholar, had executed; and her reading of Pope’s *Works* and the *Virgil* of Spence’s friend Christopher Pitt, was one of the memories of her daughters. But at the time of her death her eldest child was only twelve, and her youngest a baby.

The little family at Poland Street, thus suddenly left motherless, must have been an exceptionally interesting one. Esther, or Hetty, the eldest, is described as extremely beautiful, and possessed of that fortunate combination, good sense, good humour, and an abundant love of fun. She was besides remarkably musical, and according to the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, was wont to astonish her father’s guests, at a very early age, by her skilful instrumentalism. James, the eldest son, who, at the age of ten, entered the Navy under Admiral Montagu as a nominal midshipman, was an unusually bright and manly lad, full of vivacity and high spirits. When at school in his Norfolk home, he had been taught by Eugene Aram. He could recall how that “melancholy man” would pace the playground talking of strange deeds to the elder boys; and he remembered well the memorable night in August 1758 when

“Two stern-faced men set out from Lynn,
Through the cold and heavy mist,
And Eugene Aram, walk’d between,
With gyves upon his wrist.”^[4]

James Burney rose to eminence in his profession,—sailed twice round the world with Captain Cook, was with him at his death, and lived to be a fine specimen of the old-time sailor, cheery and humourous, unpolished externally, but “gentle and humane” at heart. Charles Lamb loved him; Southey depicts him in his Captainhood as “smoking after supper, and letting out puffs at one corner of his mouth, and puns at the other”; and he dropped Hazlitt out of his whist parties, to which he was as attached as Mrs. Battle, because “W. H.” had affronted him by reviewing his sister Fanny’s *Wanderer* severely in the *Edinburgh*. In this brief biography James Burney cannot often appear hereafter, which must excuse these anticipations. The third child, Susanna, or, to be exact, Susanna Elizabeth, was also remarkable for her sweetness and charm. Joseph Baretti praised her *dolcissima voce*; her knowledge of music was affirmed to be exact and critical; and her native literary faculty was as fine, if not as imperative, as that of her sister Frances. Charles, the second boy, was still in the nursery; and Charlotte was a baby. Neither of these last can have had much influence on Frances, who with Esther, Susanna and James made up the little group of clever children which delighted Charles Burney’s friends, from Garrick to the singer Pacchieroti. “All! all! very clever girls” (James was of course at sea)—said this

observer later in his queer broken English. “Sense and *witta* (*sic*) inhabit *here*.... All I meet with at Dr. Burney’s house are superior to other people. I am myself the only *Bestia* that enters the house. I am, indeed, *a truly* Beast”—by which the poor gentleman in his humility, as Mrs. Ellis suggests, obviously intended no more than is conveyed by the French *bête*.

In the above enumeration of Charles Burney’s children, Frances has been intentionally passed over, and to Frances we now turn. Like many other persons destined to make their mark in this world, she does not seem to have impressed it greatly at the outset. Neither for beauty nor physique was she notable in childhood; indeed she was both short and short-sighted. She was besides extremely shy and silent, as well as backward in most things. At the age of eight she had not learned to read, and her sailor brother used often to divert himself by giving her a book upside down in order to see what she would make of it. Mrs. Burney’s friends used to call her the “little dunce”; but her shrewder mother “had no fear of Fanny.” For it was observed, by those who looked close, that her perceptive faculties were exceedingly acute; that, in a quiet way, she noticed many things; that she was full of humour and invention in her play; and that whenever she went with the rest to Mrs. Garrick’s box at Drury Lane, although she could not read the piece acted, she was quite capable of mimicking the actors, and even of putting appropriate speeches into their mouths. These exhibitions, however, she would only give in the strictest domestic privacy. Before strangers, she became at once the demure, reserved, and

almost sheepish little person whom it was the custom to designate familiarly as “the old lady.” An anecdote related by her father illustrates some of these peculiarities of character. Next door to the Burneys in Poland Street lived a wig-maker who supplied the voluminous full-bottomed periwigs then favoured by the gentlemen of the Law. The Burney girls used to play with the wig-maker’s daughters, and one day the playmates got access to the wig-magazine. They then proceeded to array themselves in what Fanny’s later friend Dr. Hawkesworth calls “the honours of the head,” dancing about in great delight at their ridiculous figures. Unfortunately one of the ten-guinea flaxen masterpieces soused suddenly into a garden tub filled with water, and forthwith losing all its portentous “Gorgon buckle,” was declared by the manufacturer to be totally spoilt. “He was extremely angry,” says Fanny’s father, “and chid very severely his own children; when my little daughter, the old lady, then ten years of age [1762], advancing to him, as I was informed, with great gravity and composure, sedately says; ‘What signifies talking so much about an accident? The wig is wet, to be sure; and the wig was a good wig, to be sure; but it’s of no use to speak of it any more; because what’s done can’t be undone.’”^[5] Dr. Johnson himself could not have been more oracular, though he would probably have said (as indeed he does in *Rasselas*) —“What cannot be repaired is not to be regretted!”

At this point it becomes necessary to introduce a personage who, for the future, plays no inconsiderable part in Frances Burney’s biography. Mention has been made of a friend by whom Charles Burney was advised to exchange

the north wall of Lynn for a more congenial London aspect. This was one Samuel Crisp, a gentleman twenty years older than Fanny's father, who had made his acquaintance when acting as musical companion to Fulke Greville. Samuel Crisp was a person of some importance in his day,—a man of taste and fashion, good-looking, well-mannered and accomplished, having gifts both artistic and musical,—friendly alike with the Duchess of Portland and Mrs. Montagu,—with Lady Coventry and Richard Owen Cambridge, with Quin and Garrick. Like many of equal abilities, he had dabbled in literature; and two years after Fanny's birth, Garrick had produced at Drury Lane, not without pressure from the writer's aristocratic supporters, a tragedy which Crisp had essayed upon a subject already treated more than a hundred years before by John Webster,—the story of Virginia. Crisp's play cannot be said to have failed, for it ran for two nights more than Johnson's *Irene*. But, on the other hand, it was not a genuine success, although Garrick, besides supplying an excellent Prologue and Epilogue, himself acted Virginius to the Virginia of Mrs. Cibber. The truth is, it was dull,—too dull even to be galvanised into mock vitality by the energy of the manager. No alterations could thenceforth persuade Garrick to revive it, and the author was naturally deeply chagrined. In a frame of mind very unfriendly to humanity in general, he carried his mortification to Italy. Returning in due course somewhat soothed and restored, he settled at Hampton, furnishing a house there so lavishly with guests, pictures, bustos and musical instruments that he speedily began to exhaust his sources of income. His annoyance at this

discovery being aggravated by gout, in a fit of spleen he sold his villa by the Thames; and determining to realise Pope's "the world forgetting, by the world forgot," took sanctuary with a friend in a secluded part of the country.

The retreat he selected was at Chessington, or—as it was then spelled—Chesington Hall, a rambling and ruinous old house between Kingston and Epsom. At this date, though on high ground, it stood in the middle of a wild and almost trackless common, which separated it effectually from the passing stranger. Its owner, Mr. Christopher Hamilton, was an old friend of Crisp and, since the house was too large for his means, only too pleased to welcome as an inmate, a companion who would share his expenses. At Chessington Crisp lived many years, and at Chessington he was buried. Until he became too infirm, he quitted it annually for a few weeks every spring, when he repaired to Town to visit his old haunts, look in at a concert or two, and run through the principal picture galleries. Lord Macaulay has described him as "hiding himself like a wild beast in a den," in consequence of the failure of his tragedy, which—as we have seen—was rather indulgently received, at all events on the stage.^[6] But Lord Macaulay had not before him all the information we have at present. Although Crisp rated his tragic powers too high, and consequently felt his qualified success more acutely, it is probable that impaired health and reduced means had most to do with his withdrawal to Chessington; and there is no particular evidence that his seclusion, though strict, was savage. In one of his periodical visits to London, he happened upon Burney; came at once to see him at Poland Street; grew keenly interested in his

motherless children, and thenceforward continued to be the lifelong ally and adviser of the family. Chessington Hall became a haven of rest for the Burneys,—“a place of peace, ease, freedom and cheerfulness,” to which, even when it was later turned into a boarding-house by Miss Hamilton, the father retired to work at his books, and the children for change of air. As Crisp grew older, they grew more and more necessary to his existence, filling the dark passages and tapestried chambers of the old house with fiddles and harpsichords, dancing, amateur acting, and all the stir and bustle of their fresh and healthy vitality. Their company must have been invaluable to a host, contracted, but by no means wedded, to melancholy; and there is no doubt that in return his experience of the world, his sterling good sense, and his educated taste were of the greatest service to them. They brightened and cheered his life; but they also owed not a little to the personage whom, in brief space, they came to designate affectionately as “Daddy” Crisp.

For two or three years after Mrs. Burney’s death not much is known of her husband’s doings. His grief at first was intense; but like many sensible men, he at once sought to mitigate it by hard work, attempting among other things a prose translation of Dante’s *Inferno*. In June, 1764, he paid a short visit to Paris in order to place Hetty and Susan at school there. Fanny was older than Susan, but apart from her general backwardness, her father seems to have apprehended that her very emotional character (she had been overpowered with grief at her mother’s death) might, when on the Continent, perhaps induce her to adopt the creed of her grandmother, Mrs. Sleepe, to whom she was

much attached. In the French capital, Charles Burney found many friends, and under the influence of Paris air, Paris clothes, Paris festivities and the *Comédie Italienne*, began speedily—like Garrick in the same place a few months afterwards—to recover his spirits, and interest himself once more in his old pursuits. Either now or later, he set to work upon a version of Rousseau's musical *intermède*, the *Devin du Village*, under the title of *The Cunning Man*.^[7] Towards the end of June, he left Hetty and Susan in the care of a certain Mme. St. Mart. They remained at Paris for about two years, returning in 1767.

The first diarist of the family appears to have been Susan Burney, who began her records at the early age of ten. Soon after her return home she sketched the portraits of her two elder sisters. "The characteristics of Hetty seem to be wit, generosity, and openness of heart:—Fanny's,—sense, sensibility, and bashfulness, and even a degree of prudery. Her understanding is superior, but her diffidence gives her a bashfulness before company with whom she is not intimate, which is a disadvantage to her. My eldest sister shines in conversation, because, though very modest, she is totally free from any *mauvaise honte*: were Fanny equally so, I am persuaded she would shine no less. I am afraid that my eldest sister is too communicative, and that my sister Fanny is too reserved. They are both charming girls—*des filles comme il y en a peu*."^[8] The words make one think that the composing of *Caractères* or *Portraits* must have formed part of Mme. St. Mart's *curriculum*. At all events they are all we know of Frances Burney at this time, and they coincide with what we have learned already. Doubtless, during the

absence of her sisters in France, she had been slowly developing. To her busy father, although he left her much to herself, she was devotedly attached; and she had grown almost as fond of the adopted parent who had now become her “guide, philosopher and friend.” When Hetty and Susan were away, she probably saw a great deal of Mr. Crisp, and in the beginning of 1766 paid her first visit to the “dear, ever dear Chesington” which was to figure so frequently in her future journals. It had been her father’s intention that she and her younger sister Charlotte should also have the advantage of two years’ schooling at Mme. St. Mart’s establishment; but the project, first postponed, was afterwards abandoned in consequence of Mr. Burney’s second marriage.

This took place in October, 1767. The lady, Elizabeth Allen, was the widow of a wealthy Lynn wine-merchant. She had been the intimate friend of the late Mrs. Burney, whose death she had deplored almost as much as Mrs. Burney’s husband. She had three children; but, owing to losses in her widowhood, apparently possessed nothing but a dower-house in the churchyard of St. Margaret’s at Lynn. Coming to London for the education of her eldest daughter, Maria, she renewed her acquaintance with the Burneys. Handsome, intelligent, well-read, and something of a blue-stocking to boot, she seems speedily to have inspired in Mr. Burney an affection as genuine as her own for him. But as her Lynn relatives were not likely to approve the match, seeing particularly that Mr. Burney had six children of his own, the marriage took place privately at St. James’s, Piccadilly; and the newly wedded pair, with the connivance of the friendly

Crisp, spent their honeymoon in a farm-house near Chessington. Even then, the matter was kept quiet, being only revealed at last by the misdelivery of a letter. After this, the second Mrs. Burney took her place definitively as the mistress of the Poland Street home, and the Lynn dower-house became an additional holiday resort for the combined family. The children on both sides seem to have been delighted with an alliance which brought them more intimately together; and the new mamma increased rather than diminished the literary tone of the house. "As Mrs. Stephen Allen," says Mrs. Ellis, "she had held a sort of *bas bleu* meeting once a week; as Mrs. Burney, she received men of letters, or art, almost daily, in an informal way." One result of the marriage, as already stated, was that Fanny and Charlotte did not go to Paris. Charlotte was put to school in Norfolk; and it was arranged that Susanna should teach Fanny French.

At the time of her father's second marriage, Fanny Burney was in her sixteenth year. Whether she had written much previous to the return of her sisters from Paris, cannot be affirmed; but it is evident that, with the advent of the diary-keeping Susanna, her native bias to scribbling rapidly increased. Every available scrap of paper was covered with stories and humorous sketches, confided only to the discreet ears of the younger sister, who laughed and cried over these masterpieces in secret. But it so chanced that Mrs. Burney the second, with all her appreciation of the *monde parleur*, was also keenly alive to the *misères du monde scribe*. Something led her to suspect that the girls were writing a good deal more than in her opinion was good

for them, and the result was that they were gently but firmly admonished not to spend too much time in idle crude inventions. Thus, one fine day, it came about that, in the paved play-court at Poland Street, when her father was at Chessington and her step-mother at Lynn, the docile Fanny “made over to a bonfire” all her accumulated stock of prose compositions. In the Preface to her last novel of *The Wanderer*, where it is added that Susanna stood weeping by, the date of this holocaust is given as her fifteenth birthday (June 1767). But as it obviously occurred some time after her father’s second marriage in October of the same year, her memory must have deceived her. Among the papers she burned was said to be an entire work of fiction, to which we shall return. Luckily,—although by this act she provisionally abjured authorship, and the discredit supposed to attach in the polite world to female writers and female writers of novels and romances in particular,—she did not refrain from journal-keeping. For the date of her first entry in her *Early Diary* is May 30 [1768], at which time Mr. Burney’s second marriage had been publicly acknowledged.

Before dealing with those portions of this chronicle which concern the present chapter, it is necessary to say something of the proceedings of the father of the family. In 1769 Mr. Burney, of whom we shall hereafter speak as “Dr.” Burney, received his Mus. D. degree at Oxford, his preliminary exercise being an anthem which was performed in the Music School, where it “was received with universal applause.”^[9] The chief vocalist was one of the Doctor’s pupils, Miss Jenny Barsanti, often referred to in the *Diary*; and Fanny wrote some congratulatory verses to her father

on his distinction, which, at all events, exhibit a knack of rhyming. The receipt of his degree appears to have revived all Dr. Burney's dormant literary ambitions. In matters connected with his profession he had always been an industrious note-taker; and he was also much interested in astronomy. One of the results of this last taste was an anonymous pamphlet prompted by the comet of 1769, at the close of which year it was published. To this was appended the translation from Maupertuis by the first Mrs. Burney, of which mention has been made. The *Essay on Comets* attracted no notice; but it served to strengthen its author's hand; and he began systematically to look over the miscellaneous collections he had accumulated towards that *History of Music* of which he had dreamed at Lynn. In arranging and transcribing the mass of material, Fanny fell naturally into the office of amanuensis and keeper of the records. But these had not long been manipulated before her father discovered that it would be necessary for him to make a personal tour in France and Italy,—first, to procure information in regard to ancient music, and secondly, to ascertain, by ear and eye, the actual condition of the musical art on the Continent. At Paris he visited Rousseau and Diderot, both of whom were interested and helpful. At Ferney he had a chance interview with Voltaire, then seventy-eight and wasted to a skeleton, but still working ten hours a day, and writing without spectacles. Discord, rather than harmony, was the topic of this conversation. The quarrels of authors—Voltaire held—were good for letters, just as, in a free government, the quarrels of the great and the clamours of the small were necessary to liberty. The

silence of critics (he said) did not so much prove the age to be correct, as dull. Dr. Burney had started in June 1770; he did not return until January 1771, when he almost immediately buried himself at Chessington to prepare his notes and journal for the press. In the following May his book was printed under the title of *The Present State of Music in France and Italy; or, the Journal of a Tour through those Countries, undertaken to collect Materials for a General History of Music*; and it obtained a considerable success. Copies went to Mason, Hawkesworth, Garrick, and Crisp, all of whom had aided in its progress. Among its other readers must have been Johnson, who told Mr. Seward that he had “that clever dog, Burney” in his eye when, two years later, he wrote his own *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*.^[10]

During Dr. Burney’s absence abroad, his wife had found the Poland Street house too small. She accordingly fixed upon a fresh residence in Queen Square, Bloomsbury, which was then much more in the country than it is at present. The new home was at the upper end of the square, which had been considerably left open by the architect so as to afford a delightful prospect, across Lamb’s Conduit Fields, of Highgate and Hampstead, which Miss Burney—we regret to say—spells “Hygate and Hamstead.” There was also a special interest in the house itself, for it had once been inhabited by Queen Anne’s printer, Alderman Barber, the “*Johannes Tonsor*” and “very good and old friend” of Swift; and it was a fond tradition of the Burney household that the author of *Gulliver’s Travels* had often dined with Barber at Queen Square. But the *Journal to Stella*, when it mentions