

**EVELINA; OR, THE HISTORY OF A
YOUNG LADY'S ENTRANCE INTO
THE WORLD. IN TWO VOLUMES,
VOL. I. EDITED BY R. BRIMLEY
JOHNSON**

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FRANCES BURNEY & R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON

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EVELINA.



J. B. Stobley. —

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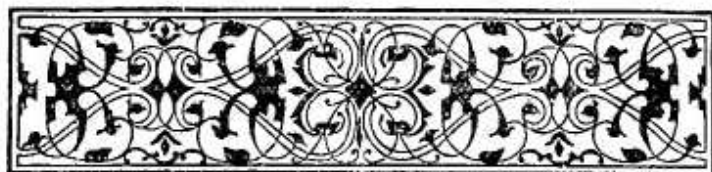


THE following edition is reprinted from :—

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The antique and inconsistent spelling and punctuation are retained, as well as the incorrect French and English attributed to some of the characters ; but a few obvious misprints are corrected, the words substituted for them being enclosed in square brackets.

For the loan of a copy of the second edition I am indebted to Mr E. S. Shuckburgh ; and my thanks are also due to Mr Charles Burney, of Halstead Lodge, Upper Tooting, and to Mrs Annie Raine Ellis, the editor of Miss Burney's *Early Diary*, for their kind answers to various questions. The frontispiece is from Edward Burney's well-known portrait.



FRANCES BURNEY.

THE fascinating Journals and Letters of Frances Burney present the record of a long and varied experience of great historic value, in which the diarist herself is frankly revealed to us, impulsive, affectionate, and ingenuous as one of her own heroines. In her life were four marked epochs under which, for convenience, it may be briefly summarised.

The twenty-five years from 1752 to 1777 were spent in quiet unsuspected *observation*, when the "little character-monger" was only one of a clever family, and not distinguished among them.

After the publication of *Evelina* in 1778 came eight years of almost intoxicating *popularity*, when she was fêted everywhere as the authoress of the day, and when Johnson, Burke, Horace Walpole, and Sir Joshua Reynolds were proud to be counted among her friends. Under the stimulus of this fame, and with the dread of losing it, *Cecilia* was written and published.

This short but brilliant period was followed by the *Imprisonment at Court** (1786-1791), when she was worn out in mind and body by the arduous duties of her position, tormented by the stupid cruelty of the chief robe-keeper, Mrs Schellenberg, and only occasionally enlivened by the agreeableness or the absurdities of the different equerries. "The voice of all England crying shame" at last roused her father to interference, and she was grudgingly permitted to retire.

Then, when forty years had passed, her own *Romance* began. Among a group of distinguished French refugees, settled at Juniper Hall, near her married sister's home, was a certain General D'Arblay, who seems to have been a great favourite with all the family. He and Frances fell in love with each other, and ultimately married on an uncertain income of £150. She became a model housewife, so much wrapped up in domestic affairs, that her diaries of this period are comparatively uninteresting; but her visits to France, extending from 1802 to 1812 and 1814 to 1816, brought her again into touch with the history of her time. Her last years were occupied in bringing out the *Memoirs of Dr Burney*, and, after losing her sisters, General D'Arblay, and her son Alexander, she died in 1840 at the advanced age of eighty-eight.

* The supposition adopted by Macaulay, that Miss Burney was so much infatuated by the condescension of royalty as to enter gladly into its service, may be decisively confuted by the following extract from her Diary (July 17, 1786). "I was now on the point of entering—probably for ever—into an entire new way of life, and of foregoing by it all my most favourite schemes, and every dear expectation my fancy had ever indulged of happiness adapted to its taste; as now all was to be given up, I could disguise my trepidation no longer—indeed, I had never disguised, I had only forborne proclaiming it." Burke and Dr Burney were deceived, but Frances saw with clearer eyes.

We are here concerned only with the first period of her life, in which *Evelina* was written, and its special interest for us lies in the fact that the heroine was her own portrait.

It so happens that an early estimate of Frances has come down to us from the pen of that clever and observant young person Susan Burney, who, at the age of fourteen, thus diagnosed 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.*"

The three qualities, "sense, sensibility, and bashfulness," are abundantly obvious in the diaries. Miss Burney passes judgment on her acquaintances, and generally with discrimination. She is very susceptible to praise or blame, and, like her heroines, extravagantly fearful of offending those she loves. Indeed she almost reconciles us to the old-fashioned grace of "sensibility," which, in our eyes, makes most of the romances of that time appear so artificial.

Miss Burney's shyness, however, was probably not excessive. It was natural that her friends should compare the mental independence and powers of cool observation exhibited in *Evelina* with their former conceptions of its authoress, and exaggerate the difference. Nothing transpired to contradict the traditional impression till the publication of *The Early Diary* in 1890,