



The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney: Volume II: 1787 (Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney 1786 - 1791)

Stewart Cooke

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This volume is the second of six that will present in their entirety Frances Burney's journals and letters from 17 July 1786, when she assumed the position of Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte, until 7 July 1791, when she resigned her position because of ill health. Burney's later journals have been edited as *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame d'Arblay)*, 1791-1840 (12 vols., 1972-84). Her earlier journals have been edited as *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* (4 vols. to date, 1988-). *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney* continues the modern editing of Burney's surviving journals and letters, from 1768 until her death in 1840.

The only previous edition of the Court journals and letters is the *Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay*, edited by Burney's niece Charlotte Barrett and published by Henry Colburn in seven volumes, 1842-46. Barrett's edition, however, is heavily abridged. For the Court years, it excludes about half of the extant material, which will be printed in the present volumes for the first time. In addition, Barrett made no attempt to recover the thousands of lines obliterated by Burney in the Court journals and letters, and indeed added many further deletions of her own. Barrett's edition was subsequently revised by Austin Dobson in a six-volume edition, 1904-05, containing new annotations and illustrations, but no alterations to the text.

The present edition includes every extant letter that Burney wrote during her five years at Court, as well as all of her copious journals. The elderly Madame d'Arblay attempted to edit her own journals and letters, making numerous changes that would, she believed, make them fitter for publication. This edition aims to restore the manuscripts, as far as possible, to their original state. It recovers the words, lines, and entire passages that Madame d'Arblay strove to conceal and it contains a comprehensive commentary on the text.

This volume reveals Burney's struggles to adjust to the customs, rituals, and trials of a life of service in the Court of George III, a life she saw as analogous to entering a convent. It details year-long battles with her co-Keeper of the Robes, the imperious Elizabeth Schwellenberg, whose cruel behaviour Burney suffers in dignified silence, and with the Reverend Charles de Guiffardiere, the Queen's reader in French, whose interest in Burney seems to extend beyond admiration for her novels. Her respect, reverence, and affection for the Royal family grow as she comes to know them better, while her place at Court brings her into contact with some interesting company among the permanent courtiers, the changing equerries, and the occasional celebrity visitors.

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