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Dr. Johnson's Friends and the Cotswolds

by W. H. Hutton
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DR. JOHNSON'S FRIENDS AND THE COTSWOLDS.[1]

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AMONG the lesser lights of literature who were acquainted with Johnson was one who shared his affection for Fanny Burney. Samuel Crisp was the companion and counsellor of Dr. Burney from his early years, and Fanny's niece, Mrs. Barrett, who first published her diary, rightly calls him Fanny's "accomplished and venerated friend." Everyone knows how Macaulay represents him as a disappointed dilettante, an "unsuccessful literary man," who was so disgusted by the failure of his play of *Virginius* that he moaned and moped for the rest of his life. Within the last few years the publication of some of his letters[2] has done something, I hope, to show him in a truer light, as a bright and mirthful person, a wise adviser, the centre of a very happy social circle. I will not attempt to controvert, or even to follow, those pages in Macaulay's most characteristic style where poor Crisp is disposed of, and we are assured that a few years after the production of *Virginius* "no memory of his bad verses remained among men." It is enough to say briefly that Chessington, where he lived so happily during the last years of his life, was certainly no retreat "studiously concealed from his old associates," that the house which Fanny Burney loved, and Mr. Thrale and Dr. Johnson

[1] This paper is based upon the *Early Diary of Fanny Burney* (2 vols., 1889), the *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay* (5 vols., 1904), and the MSS. at Broadwell Manor, Moreton-in-Marsh, which Mrs. Edward Egerton Leigh most kindly allowed me to read and copy. To her, and to her late husband, who is so deeply lamented in Gloucestershire, I am greatly indebted. Where there is a *lacuna* (*e.g.* on p. 197) the word is either missing or illegible in the MS. quoted.

[2] *Burford Papers*, 1905.

visited, was far from being a "desolate old hall in which he hid himself like a wild beast in a den," and that, apart from the inevitable sufferings of disease and the sorrows of mortality, there is no word in all the information we have about him which would justify us in believing that a life "which might have been eminently useful and happy ended in the same gloom in which, during more than a quarter of a century, it had been passed." The communications between Fanny and her "dear daddy" prove the contrary; and hardly less clear in their evidence are those letters to his sister, Mrs. Gast, living in the Great House at Burford, which I have ventured to entitle and to publish as *Burford Papers*.

Samuel Crisp remained to the end of his life the kind, cheerful, witty observer who had enjoyed his earlier years of travel, his middle life of moderate literary fame, and his old age of friendship and affection towards younger folk.

The unpublished letters and papers which remain in the possession of Mrs. Egerton Leigh enable me to illustrate each of these points. I will quote a few that bear upon the youth, the middle life, and the last days of Samuel Crisp.

I. Before the date when the *Dictionary of National Biography* begins to take up his career, Samuel Crisp had been a well-known person in London society, and had travelled for some years on the continent, after the fashion of his time. He was born in 1708, and from 1737 to 1740 letters and notes show that he was in France and Italy. Mrs. Leigh has a large number of undated notes descriptive of palaces and picture-galleries, antiquities and contemporary customs. He seems to have made a considerable stay at Rome. Parts of a letter from him to Mr. Shute of Broadwell (where the letter is now preserved in Mrs. Leigh's house) have already been published,[1] but other parts have sufficient interest, I think, to be inserted here. The letter is dated Rome, February 15th (new style), 1739.

[1] *Burford Papers*, p. 105 *seq.*

(Endorsed "letter from Mr. Sam Crisp.")

Dear Doctor,

Three days ago I received a letter from you, which was a pleasure I have been impatiently waiting for ever since the 24th of December, N.S. the day I came hither. I think I give you the most convincing proof I can, that hearing from you is such to me, by making you my Debtor again without delay: and pray take notice, that I give no such long Credit any more, but require prompt Payment; That if you keep one so long out of one's Debt, one can't live by you: I would have you to know that I gain here full four per Cent by all the Bills of Exchange I draw on London, besides the Interest of Six Weeks; and why I should lose so much more by my Wit, than my mony, I don't know; especially when I am dealing with so sufficient a man as your self: It can be nothing but niggardliness; a Vice I never thought I should have occasion to reproach you with: As to poverty, you must not plead that after you have showed me so rich a Vein of Ore upon your own Estate, which is of so singular a Nature too, that I think I may, not improperly term you a perfect Goldfinder; 'tis true, like all rich Soils this is a little dirty and nasty; but your true Goldfinder minds that so little, that he will munch you his Bread and Cheese immediately, without so much as wiping his fingers; provided you allow him to pull out his own Pocket knife to cut it with. For Godsake, where did you rake up so much filth?; who has let you into the rites and Mysterys you paint so well that you turn one's Stomach? I fancy you have been a pretty much of late, as Mr. Congreve, when he was writing the Character of Ben the Sailor, us'd to go to Wapping two or three times a Week. However that be, the poem is a good poem, and I am glad that Luxuriant humor, which formerly vented it self in through Bass, has now taken another Channel and runs off in verse; which is a musick I can hear very well at this Distance. I am not less oblig'd to you for your prose, since it gives me an Account

of your Welfare and of that of several of my other friends; I am very glad to hear your Doxy is like to make both you and father, with so little trouble herself; pray give my kind love to her and tell her I wish her a happy minute with all my heart. I am not sorry to find, that Rascal Kitt is alive him I 'll kill you must give me leave to doubt about that; I am much oblig'd to you for your Caution about freedom of speech here, which I am very inclinable to observe, tho' not from any apprehension of Danger; for you may be assur'd (what may seem a Paradox) that here, at the very fountain head, there is more freedom taken with religion, than in any Country in the World; there is no place where the professors of it believe less of the matter, or live more openly in contradiction to its precepts; however you know that is no bread and butter of mine; I live here very quietly. I find the Country agree with me both here, and while I was upon the Road. I wrote to Mr. Doughty from Modena, so I shall not repeat what I said then, supposing he has told it you already: I shall not pretend to give you an Account of the infinite Curiositys, and Antiquitys that this whole Country abounds with, and which amount to but little more than a dry Catalogue in so short a recital as I should be oblig'd to give you of them; therefore I shall only touch upon one here and there, as they happen to be more considerable or more easily described in Words than the rest. From Modena hither We came all the common route, thro' Bologna, Rimini, Ancona, Fano, Loretto, Foligni, Terni, &c. at Bologna we made no Stay at all but one night, reserving that for our return: Between Cesena and Rimini we pass'd the Rubicon, now call'd Pisatello, upon the Banks whereof is a Pillar with the Decree of the Roman Senate engraved on it, forbidding Caesar, or any of his Army to pass over it on pain of being Adjudg'd Enemies to the Commonwealth: this would be a very valuable piece of Antiquity if it were undoubtedly authentic; but I am afraid 'tis not so, tho' the people of the Country contend for it warmly.

At Rimini they show'd us in the market place, the very suggestum that Caesar mounted on, to harangue his Army immediately upon his Arrival there after having passed the Rubicon. From Rimini quite to within a few miles of Loretto, our road lay quite upon the Sands of the Adriatic Sea, which came up and wash'd our Chaise Wheels most part of the Way; One morning which was particularly clear, having deviated from the Shore to make a Shorter cut, from the Top of one of the Rocks, We plainly saw the shore of Dalmatia, which is near twenty Leagues distant. The second day after, we came to Loretto where we rested one whole day and part of the next to see the holyhouse: I will give you as short an Account as I can of this holy house, with any possibility of making you conceive an Idea of it, which I would have you do, as a grand Specimen of the Religion of this Country; which is not more surprizing in any Instance than this, that it is at once productive of the grossest Bigotry, and has at the same time a natural tendency to lead its followers and Professors into the flattest Infidelity and Libertinism: the short history then of this holy house (on which are written many hundred Volumes) is this. You must know this holy-house was transmitted from Father to Son thro' a long uninterrupted line of the Patriarchs of the Old Testament till it came at last into the possession of St. Joachim and St. Anna the parents of the Blessed Virgin, who was born in this house; and She being an heiress it descended to her and in process of time She and her husband and her Son liv'd in it. this house one night in the year 1291 was by Angells transported from Nazareth, its original Situation, to Dalmatia, the Shore of which I told you we saw on the other side of the Adriatic this is 1895 miles: it stay'd here two years or more and then it took another journey from thence into the middle of a Wood in the territory of Ricanati about 2 miles from Loretto; the English Jesuit here showed me the very spot of Ground where it rested this second time from the Windows of their College. From thence in about 2 Years

more it came to Loretto, and has been very of it consists of one Room of about 20 foot square, built of a reddish Stone of a sort of brick Colour: there Chimney in it, and on one side of the chimney is a little cupboard, that came along with the house; in this Cupboard they found the Sacred porringer, in which the Blessed Virgin made pap for her Son, who constantly us'd it; it is a sort of blue and white Delf and is set in Silver: they also found in this Cupboard a piece of her old Gown, which is now put into a Shrine of Gold set with Jewells and a Glass before it, thro' which you see it with the same sacred Dust and Cobwebs that were found on it when it came: it is of a sort of stuff very much of the Consistence of a Scotch Plad, only 'tis all of one colour, which is a dirty red. There is a partition run across this house or room, which separates off the Chimney, and about 6 foot of the breadth of the Room from the rest, but over against the Chimney in this Partition is a large Silver Grate of ten foot square, (each Space in the Grate about as big as a Common pane in a sash window) which opens a Communication between these two parts of this room. Over the Chimney in a Nich, is a statue of our Lady with her Son in her Arms of Cedar Wood, made by Saint Luke, which came along with the house. We could only see the faces of these two figures, which are now grown as black as Ink, the rest is covered by their habits, which I could not distinguish of what they were made; for they are both Coverd all over with such Jewells as I did not imagine had been in the World. They have each a little Crown of Jewells on, which together are Valued at a hundred thousand Crowns. The Nich, in which these figures are placed, is covered over with a thick Plate of Gold finely wrought; the rest of this part of the house which is partitiond off, as I told you, from the other, is wainscotted from top to bottom, (about 25 foot high) with Plates of Silver with bas reliefs on them; and here hang down by Golden Chains twenty Vast Gold Lamps of the finest Workmanship, which are allways burning, great

numbers of large hearts of Gold set with Diamonds. Severall children of Gold as big as the life and particularly an Angell of Silver of four foot high, who holds in his Arms a Child of Gold, which he is offering to our Lady; this was given for the birth of Lewis the 14th of France, by his Mother; there is likewise a Child of Gold given for the birth of the Chevalier by his Mother, and upon enquiry, I found they were most of them given by Ladies of great Zeal that wanted to be Mothers. The other Partition is filled with Lamps of Gold and Silver, Children Angells &c of the same Metal; A Vast Altar of Solid Silver, upon which is Celebrated Mass all the year round from four in the morning till one in the afternoon. here also is the Window plated with Silver thro which the Angell came who brought the Salutation. This house or Room is Cas'd or Coverd over by a most sumptuous Case of Marble, incrusted with bas reliefs of the history of the Virgin and of the Miraculous transportation of this house; there are likewise two rows of Tomes one above another in niches between these bas reliefs which are larger than the life and done by the greatest Masters; the lower Order Consists of the prophets [page torn] of our Saviour, and the upper of the same number of Sybills who foretold the same. After this I saw the Treasury which is still more amazing. the holy house stands in the Middle of a most Pompous Cathedral near as big as that of Worcester. I reckon I have sufficiently tir'd you with this tedious Description, which I shall conclude with telling you that severall of the Steps and other Places about are worn into hollows by the knees of Devout Pilgrims severall of whom I caught in the Very fact. In 6 days after we left Loretto (great part of which was among the Appennines, almost as bad as the Alps) We came hither upon the Flaminian Road; the night we arrived We went to an Entertainment given by the Pope to the Cardinals, which was first a grand Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Musick, very fine, and after that a Supper, which being Maigre was very Curious; the Desert was the most Extraordinary thing

I can conceive; over against every Cardinals Plate and Seat was what they call a Trionfo, or Triumph of Sweatmeats, which Consists of Trees figures of men and Women, Historical Legends of Saints, all in Sugar and finely done. In the middle of this long table was a Triumph of 6 foot high Consisting of a Vast tree at the foot of which lies asleep the Virgin with Christ in her Arms in the prettiest attitude imaginable; St. Joseph is watching over her, and Angells hovering over them in the Air, All this in Sugar, and in their Natural Colours. to tell you a quarter of the fine things one sees here every day, or, of the ridiculous functions that come as often in one's way, would take up too much room for a letter; however till my Paper is fill'd up I 'll tell you a few of them, (If I have patience) that I have met with; for example, the blessing of the horses, on the Day of St. Antony dei Cavalli, the Saint who presides particularly over horses: on this great Day all the horses in Rome, and twenty miles round about it go to the Church, where this Ceremony is perform'd, where in a sort of a Nich Stands the priest who blesses them by sprinkling them with a Brush dipt in consecrated Water, as they are driven by; Every horse pays so much to the Church for his blessing, and this one days work, one year with another bring in a matter of Six thousand Pounds of English mony; All the English Gentlemen in Rome went and had their Coachhorses blest, I was with one of them in his coach and received part of the blessing myself as we drove by: the people were so superstitious about this ridiculous Custom, that if any of their horses should not be blest, the owner would infallibly expect some heavy Judgment to fall on his horse, that he would dye or go blind or some such thing within the year. I have seen likewise the profession of a noble Lady, which was performed with infinite Magnificence and fine Musick, at which almost all the Nobility in Rome were present and made a most Splendid Show; tho' this was nothing to the two Grand Masquerades or Balls, which were held at this Carnival the one at Prince Colonna's

and the other at the Marchese Bolognetti's for the Entertainment of the King of Poland's Eldest Son who has been here a good while in his return from Visiting his Sister the Queen of Naples; he lives at a most immense Expense, he is about sixteen years old I believe, has a very fair face, pretty enough, but the poor Creature is so unhappy from the Rickets in his Childhood that he cannot stand alone, and when he is raised upon his feet is not higher than My friend

high honours paid him here, because of the great Zeal of Poland; And the Jesuits here have made the poor thing hope to be restored by a Miraculous Cure, and by this means draw great sums of mony from him: but however both these two Balls I was introduced to, and the Magnificence of them Exceeds anything I ever saw by many degrees. I will just tell you some few particulars of them which fell under my observation. The Prince Colonna's Ball was held in the famous Colonna Gallery, which is allowed to be finest and Compleatest Room in Europe; to make you Comprehend it, I must give you some short Description of the Pallace which Consists of two Great Courts the first Court is all built upon Porticos like Covent Garden; the Great Front next the Street is Lodgings and Offices for the Officers of the household, like Northumberland House in the Strand, and when you are come into this First Court the Great Gallery is the whole front of the house built over the Portico fronting you the first Court is not built all round, but the Communication between the Street front and the Second is by a Corridor, or the same Portico carried on on the sides; on the top of this portico on Each side are fine Oranges scoop't clean out and the peels left very thin, so that the light came thro' very Clear, and gave you a most distinct view of the whole, which lookd just like Orange trees bearing the fruit all of fire; it had the prettiest Effect Imaginable; when I came up into the Ball Room (after having past thro a Suite of a matter of fifteen Rooms, all most Nobly Illuminated &c) I was perfectly dazzled with the Sight; the Gallery is about a hundred and

Eighty foot long about 50 foot wide and forty foot high; it is pav'd with antique marbles of vast variety of Colours; it is fill'd with the finest pictures of Europe, mixt with a great many of the top Statues of Antiquity in Niches. Antique Vases of Oriental Granite, Serpentine, Verd Antique, and of the most Exquisite Workmanship, and both sides of the Gallery separated into so many Compartments by Pilasters of a Single Stone of these Varieties of fine Antique Marbles, within about fifteen foot of the Top, where the Cornice and Cov'd Ceiling begins, which is all painted with the history of the Illustrious Actions of the Ancestors of this family; here was seated in great order allmost all the Nobility of Rome, the Ladies all in Masquerade habits, of the prettiest invention in the World. (all without Masques allmost) in these things they excell greatly; Turkish Sultana's, Diana's, Flora's Wood Nymphs, and a hundred other pretty thoughts; all their heads without any covering but their own hair mingled with false Locks and Ringlets hangin down just like Tragedy Queens and drest up with Jewells; with which their whole habits were bespanelled and so said all the English Gentlemen in Rome anywhere so great a the reason of it is, it seems, that the Jewells of these families are Unalienable, and are the Collection may be of three hundred Years, in some of them. Between the Prince and PRincess Colonna sat the Prince of Poland; the Chevalier and his two Sons were here in Masques to avoid all Dispute of precedence with the Electoral Prince of Poland; the Father was in a Domino, and the two Sons in Turkish Dresses; however they all three Unmasked afterwards, and I had then a full view of them all, as I have had several times before and since; the Chevalier talked English for half an hour together while I was Close by him; but however I reserve him and his two Sons for my Account of the Marchese Bolognetti's Ball, where there happen'd some incidents which I was with great pleasure a perfect Eye and Ear

Witness of both, and which if I have room I will give you some Account of. But first I must give you some Account of our Carnival Diversions, which are now just over, the Carnival itself is a pretty long affair, we had two operas every night for about 6 weeks, in one of which was an actor that pleas'd me more than Faranelli, Senesino, or any I ever heard. his Name is Lorenzo Ghirardi, but he is called il Bavarese, because the Elector of Bavaria is his Patron; he Acted a Woman's part in the Opera (for no woman can appear upon a Stage in the Ecclesiastical State) with universal applause; their Opera houses are three times as big and twice as high as any Theatre in England, and make just a half Circle besides the Stage. There are not any Gallerys as in England, but the Pit from the bottom to the top of the house is enclosed by Seven Rows of Boxes one above another. The Stage is finely illuminated, but the house is in total Darkness except the reflection of the light from the Stage; however that the Company may have the pleasure of seeing one another, an hour and half before the Opera begins, they let down from the Top of the Theatre just over the middle of the Pit, a most prodigious great Lustre that would half fill your Parlour; When the Opera begins, it is drawn up again, by which means you see everything that passes on the Stage much better; as soon as it is over, it is let down again. the Scenes and Decorations of the Theatres far exceed anything in England; in the last Scene of the First Opera, the Hero comes upon the Stage in a very fine Triumphal Car drawn by four milk white horses all abreast: the last eight or nine days of the Carnival is the time of the Masquing and Races; which because it is something particular, I will give you a short account of. there is a long Street that runs in a Direct line, so that you can see from the one End to the other of it, of near a mile in length, and pretty broad, it is call'd the Corso, because in it are the Races. the Whole Street is strow'd with Mould and Sand for the horses to run, at two a Clock in the afternoon, all the Company of Rome come into this Corso, in Masquerade,

in open Sterzo's as they are call'd, things something like Landaus open at Top, so that you can perfectly see them; or in Triumphal Carrs, some made in the Shape of Gondola's and Gilt all over almost, with some fine Lady Cock't up atop of the Stern and drove by the Prince or head of the family, out of mask, with their horses all drest up with Ribbands &c. so they pass by one another constantly keeping their Ranks, and by this means in once going up and down this Corso you have a full view of all the Company, who salute by throwing Sugar Plumbs at one another as they pass, which is a Complement, and always return'd with a Bow: several of the Ladies who are pretty unmask their faces and by that means draw upon themselves many Showers of these Sugar Plumbs, which is as much as to tell them they are very pretty; they are much pleas'd with this small Shot, they smile, and bow very low to you; this Parade lasts till about five a Clock; when at a Certain Signal the horses Start by themselves without Riders, and run from one End of the Corso to the other thro the Void Space between the &c they have five or six or more heavy round pieces of lead stuck full of Spikes fastened to to a plaister of Pitch, and these plaisters of Pitch are laid upon different parts of their bodies, so as they run, these things spur them on devilishly, about an hour and a half after the Corso is ended begins the Opera which lasts till about twelve, and about an hour after that, there are twenty Different Balls open'd for Masques; but the last Day but one &c. &c.

From this point the letter has been printed in *Burford Papers*, pp. 106–8. It concludes thus:—

But here I must end for want of Room, else I could tell you a good deal more tho' I fancy you will think this is enough. My love to all Mr. Doughty's family and service to all other Friends. I have not yet heard from Mrs. Doughty.

Rome Feb 15. NS. 1739. Adieu Dr Doctor I am

yours sincerely, S Crisp

Postscript. Here is Excellent fresh Butter every morning all the year round we have had Collyflowers a good while, Green Peas are just come in, here are the best Turkeys I ever eat, and as good beef and Veal; the mutton is Vile; but the kid is as good as any house lamb, and very cheap; wild boar is the best Pork meat in the World; great plenty of woodcocks, Hares, Partridges and all game very cheap; but at the same stall frequently hang up, a brace of Woodcocks and a Kite; or a Crow, and a couple of Owls; the Chevalier's income from the Pope is 24 thousand crowns a Year and 6000 Crowns for New Years Gifts and other presents to his 2 Sons. on Sunday next is to be a Consistory, and 2 Cardinals are to be made; there have died 2 of the Cardinals, who were look'd on as Competitors for the Papacy, since I came to Rome, at which the old Pope is much pleas'd, and tells the people about him, that such a one and such a one are gone, but that the old Gentleman is alive yet, and shall live to bury some more of them, one of these dead Cardinals I saw lye in State, that is, himself drest in his Pontifical Robes, Mitre, Crosier in his hand &c in the Great Church of the Jesuits, and his face uncover'd.

When the writer returned to England I do not know, but he was certainly at Rome on April 24th, 1740, as a letter shows.

II. The middle period of Crisp's life is associated with his play of *Virginius*. This was produced in 1754. At least five years before that Mrs. Ann Crisp, his eldest sister, had come to live at Burford. A younger sister, named Sophia, two years older than Samuel, the only brother, had married Mr. Philip Gast, of Rotterdam, on August 18th, 1724. She had lived in different parts of France and the Netherlands till her husband's death, of which she tells in a letter on March 5th, 1743 (? $17\frac{43}{44}$), to her sister, her dearest "Scrip," who was then living "at the Revd. Mr. Golding's at Esher, Surrey." Poverty prevented her return to England till 1749. From that date she lived at Burford, still attractive

it seems, and thought of as eligible for matrimony. Mrs. Ann Crisp died on February 28th, 1776, Mrs. Sophia Gast on April 21st, 1791, the latter aged 85. I have given further details in my book called *Burford Papers* (Constable & Co., 1905).

Burford at that time had a good turnpike road communicating with London, Bath, Bristol, Worcester, Birmingham and Gloucester. A coach from Gloucester to London took up passengers at the "Bull" every evening at seven o'clock, and a later coach started at ten o'clock for a 17s. fare, four shillings cheaper than the first. From London both coaches left at noon and got to Burford early next morning. Several waggons for goods also passed through the town at regular intervals, one calling at the "George," another at the "Bull," and so on. There was, however, no good road, if any road at all, due southwards. A Directory of the period says, "A turnpike road has been lately projected to Lechlade, in Gloucestershire, and from thence to join the Marlborough and other roads at Swindon, in Wilts; which, when completed, will make the turnpikes to every part of England centre in the town; on which account, together with the excellent accommodation its inns afford, it attracts the attention of travellers, and is become the usual road, from London and Oxford, to Worcester as well as Gloucester." Stow ("on the great North road, no town between," it is added) is ten miles away, "over a heath called Blackheath."

Burford had the attraction also of frequent horse-races, two capital inns, the "George" and "Bull," a grammar school with town hall above, a fine corn country round it, a large cattle market weekly, and two chartered fairs a year; besides which "here are said to be sold the best rugs, and here is also a good manufactory of duffels;" and the residents included six gentry, two clergy, two surgeons, an apothecary and an attorney, as well as a good supply of "traders," of whose names several survive to-day. Here Mrs. Crisp and Mrs. Gast lived, says their

memorial in the church, over forty years, "blessings to the Poor and the Ornaments of Society."

But the prospect was far from attractive to the fashionable Mr. Crisp. I do not know if he ever visited his sisters: during the early part of their life at Burford he was busy with his play and its consequences. *Virginius* was produced on February 25th, 1754; it ran for eleven nights, and it was reproduced later at Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Garrick acted "Virginius," and Mrs. Cibber "Virginia"; her picture, with a hoop and with a large tower of hair upon her head, forms the frontispiece of the printed volume. The play was published, dedicated to the Earl and Countess of Coventry, and introduced by a preface, in which Crisp thanked Garrick not only for his "masterly performance in the representation —that is nothing new—" for the Prologue and Epilogue—in the former the author had been twitted with being too much of a scholar—but likewise "for his friendly advice, by which the Play is certainly rendered much more Dramatic than it was at first. By the same advice," Crisp continues, "some passages are restored in the printing which were omitted in the representation. The *Reader*, perhaps, may excuse this small addition to the length of the scenes, but with the *Spectator*, Brevity will atone for a number of Deficiencies. *Mrs. Cibber* in particular, and the other Performers in general, should have the author's thanks, for the great justice they have done him, did not the applauses of the Town make anything, that he could say, unnecessary."

A number of manuscript alterations for the play exist. These were evidently written after publication with a view to a new edition or another performance. They consist of the addition of a new speech and the careful revision of the first act, by which small details are altered and the words of speeches are transferred to other speakers. But the changes on the whole are few, and it seems as if the author abandoned the task of revising his play when he had made but short progress with it. It is very likely that he may have begun

the work within the last years of his life, perhaps at the time when (February 25th, 1782) a charming letter of his to Fanny Burney,[1] full of good advice about *Cecilia*, has this passage of personal reminiscence, "Whoever you think fit to consult, let their talent and taste be ever so great, hear what they say—allowed! agreed!—but never give up or alter a tittle merely on their authority, not unless it perfectly coincides with your own inward feelings. I can say this to my sorrow and my cost."

III. From about 1764 Samuel Crisp had lived at Chessington Hall, near Old Malden, the residence at one time of his friend Chrysostome Hamilton, but not with his friend (as the *Dictionary of National Biography* says, for Chrysostome—which was his name, not Christopher—had died before August, 1759, the date of the proving of his will[2]), but with his sister and heiress Sarah. She survived till 1797, with her niece Kitty Cooke. From the MSS. which remain I should be inclined to say that he went on writing. There are four lines among them which evidently laugh at his sister Ann (nicknamed "Scrip") for her lisp:—

> "Ther Scrip as near the Gentle Sprig she Sits
> Crys, Oh how tharminly thith Puthin Eaths!
> Each laughs aloud and Drinks and Stares and Chats,
> Cook Ruffian Doughty,[3] let him sing of Spratts."

It may be they are a picture of a repast of hers at Chessington, or even at Burford—but what was there to stare at there?—or more likely at some place of fashionable entertainment, Ranelagh or Vauxhall. They are certainly a parody, with special application, of some other lines—I do not know if they are Crisp's—which make mock of the composition of a Tragedy, at which he had himself had such meagre success:—

[1] Mr. Dobson's edition, ii. 68.

[2] "The Genealogy of the family of Hamilton of Ypres," *Genealogist*, N.S., vol. xiv., by H. W. F. Harwood.

[3] No doubt her cousin Henry. See *Burford Papers*, p. 15.

TO MAKE A TRAGEDY.

Nat Lee in Tragedy would often say
He had to sure Success a Certain Way
Take me, says he, a Princess young and fair
Then take a Blooming Hero flush't with War
Let him not owe to Vain Report Renown
But in the Lady's sight cut Squadrons down
Then let him whom themselves saw win the Field
Him to whose Sword they saw whole Armies Yield
Approach the Heroine with dread Surprise
And own no Valour proof against Bright Eyes
The Boxes are Your own, the thing is hit,
And Ladies as they near Each other Sit
Cry, Oh how Charmingly that scene is writ.

Write for the Heroes in the Pit, a Rape
For the first Gallery, a ghost, on the Upper
Bestow thro at that distance a Good Supper
Thus, all, their Fancies working their own Way
They 're pleased and think they owe it to the Play.

I may, perhaps, here add two more "Squibs" which I find among the Crisp MSS., though I have not been able at present either to trace them in any well-known book or to find an author for them. The first is simply headed "Lord Chesterfield to Lady Fanny Shirley," the second has a rhyming title :—

LORD CHESTERFIELD TO LADY FANNY SHIRLEY.

Mistaken fair lay Sherlock by
His Doctrine is deceiving
For while he teaches us to dye
He cheats us of our living

2. Alas to dye we all shall know
Too soon without a Master
Then only let us study now
The art to live the faster.

3. To live 's to love, to bless be blest
With mutual inclination
Then share the Ardor of my breast
And glow with equal Passion

4. But if t's not given me to live
And pity you deny
At least to me your Sherlock give
Tis I must learn to dye.

I wonder if this was really intended for Lady Selina Shirley, who became the famous Countess of Huntingdon?

TO THE QUEEN MOST MIGHTY MISTRESS
THE DORSETS COUNTESS ALL IN DISTRESS.

Your Petitioner sheweth humbly
That the Virtuous Lady Lumley
Looks like plenty, plump, and comely
And that the Spouse of noble Marquess
Sleek as mill-mouse keeps her Carcass
And is as fat as Buck in Park is
Whilst I, poor I, with heart thats aking
Hear the people oft mistaking
Me for Her, and them for Bacon
There is a nut from Indian Air
Makes all that feed on 't fresh and fair
Could I a pound or two but purloin
My Spare Rib soon would look like Sirloin
So your Petitioner Endeth her Line
Countess of Dorset.

I grieve that the printers have not given me time to identify this lady. I feel sure one could do so, from Collins's *Peerage*.

That Crisp retained his literary interests is clear enough not only from the very acute and valuable advice which he gave to Fanny Burney as to her own work, but from the

passages of criticism which he sprinkled over his letters. Here is one dated April 5th, 1782:—

"In the works of genius, fancy, imagination, 'tis not the long, learned argumentations of critics, *pro* and *con*, that come with the compass and line in their hands, to measure right and wrong, that will decide; no, 'tis the genuine, unbiassed, uninfluenced, inward feelings of mankind that are the true, infallible tests, ultimately, of sterling merit. In vain comes Voltaire, with all the powers of wit, satire, learning and art, to knock down Shakespeare and turn him into ridicule; when he has finished his harangue, Shakespeare stands out where he did—like a rock in the sea; and the universal voice of high and low, from their own impressions, without attempting to answer him in his own way, give him the lie and send him about his business."

From 1766 Fanny Burney was a visitor, and gradually became a constant one, at Chessington. When she was away the most charming letters passed between her and her "daddy." They are too familiar to all students of eighteenth-century literature to be quoted at length; but let me give extracts from a very few, written as the end drew near.[1] The first is from Mrs. Thrale to Fanny, November 22nd, 1781: "How happy Mr. Crisp is in his Fannikin. Take care of yourself for all our sakes, and do not go to church such weather as this; but keep the fear of the churchyard before your eyes." The next is an answer to Fanny's, written on December 10th: "Mr. Crisp is much gratified by your so kindly and constantly remembering him. He is vastly well this year, and has had no gout since I came; he is therefore grown somewhat unruly, and if I hint but at going away, storms and raves with such a vengeance you would stare to see and start to hear him."

Fanny Burney's *Journal* (vol. ii., p. 94) shows that on August 12th, 1782, Mr. Crisp and Mrs. Gast were both to be painted by Edward Burney. It is the former portrait, I

[1] Mr. Dobson's edition, ii. 53, 56.

suppose, that is reproduced in the second volume of Mr. Dobson's edition of the Letters, etc., showing a pleasant gentleman in a wig, for the treatment of which see Susan Burney's Diary in a passage which brings both Daddy and Mrs. Gast into the joke.[1] As Sir Joshua did not paint Mr. Crisp, his sister may be excused for calling him, as Fanny Burney tells us she did, "Mr. Quip,"[2] and wondering why he was not married:[3] a question no unmarried lady ought to be allowed to ask about a bachelor.

In Fanny's diary[4] for January 19th, 1783, there is a pleasant account of her call on Mrs. Delany, then 83, and still very charming, in St. James's Place. She remembered Ann Crisp very well. "A charming, an excellent woman she was; we were very good friends once; I visited her at Burford, and her sister Mrs. Gast." She talked of Mr. Samuel, and wondered "how he can so long have remembered so insignificant a body as I am." Then there came in the Dowager Duchess of Portland, Margaret, only daughter of Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford, in her childhood Prior's "noble, lovely Peggy," now the widow of William, second Duke of Portland, who had been dead twenty years. Said she, that Mr. Crisp was one of the most ingenious and agreeable men she had ever known, and she regretted his having sequestered himself so much from the society of his own former friends.

This year, when his friends so happily remembered him, was to be the last he should see begin. If he now sequestered himself from duchesses it was because of illness. A number of prescriptions which I find among the papers may have been tried upon him. One hopes not. Here are three for rheumatism:—

"A DYET DRINK FOR THE RHEUMATISM.

"Take liverwort, Maiden hair, femitary, agrimony, ash-keys, or the inner rhine of an Ash, of each a handfull;

[1] See *Burford Papers*, pp. 26, 27. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Letters, &c.*, ii. 164. [4] ii. 196.

Century, a pugil. Mugwort Maple, or Oak fern-roots, a pugil. Anniseeds, fenel seeds, Carraway seeds, of each 2 ounces. Liquorish, 2 oz.—Rasins stoned, 2 oz.—Spanish bay berrys, Juniper berrys of each 2 oz—Senna Alexandrina 1 oz and a half,—Rhubarb ½ an oz. Sassafras and Coldandella of each 2 oz.—the seeds and the berrys must be bruised. Then put all those ingredients in a bag, and boyle them in 2 gallons of good wort, an hour. Then let it stand 3 days with the bag in. Then bottle it, and take ½ pint of it morning and afternoon."

"AN EXCELLENT RECEIPT TO CURE THE RHEUMATISM.

"Put 4 Drachms of Lignum Vitae shavings into a Quart of cold Water.—Gently boil it till it comes to a Pint. Strain it off; and drink half a Quarter of a pint, night and Morning. It promotes Sweating and therefore the Patients should lye in Bed till the sweat is quite over."

The third is that recommended by Mr. Crisp's cousin, the Dean of Bristol, and there is a pleasant decanal amenity about it:—

"Take in the Morning soon after rising, 50 Drops of Tincture of Guiacum, in a little Treacle, washing it down, with, better than ½ a Pint of Dwarf Elder-Flower Tea. Do the same 3 hours after Dinner. And when you go to Bed, take a common-Spoonful of Bateman's Drops, in a Quarter of a Pint of Ale Blood-warm. Shake the Bottle of Drops, before you put them into the Ale. This last will keep you easy, and make you sleep a nights—Dean Chamberlayne's Receipt to cure the Rheumatism."

I am tempted here to quote two more quaint recipes from these MSS., though certainly if one may suppose that the first was tried there is not the slightest reason to suppose that any of the others were needed:—

"Take Lignum Aloes, Borax, Sassafras-bark and Amber of each half a Dram, cut Betony half an ounce, Rosemary

flowers or leaves a quarter of an ounce, and the same quantity of Tobacco. Mix all these together, and take it in a Pipe going to bed. For sore Eyes, Coughs, or Rheums: and to free the Head from Pains.

"It caused the Lady Mallet to leave off spectacles (after thirty years use) at her age of eighty three."

"A RECEIPT OF LADY ELISABETH LANGHAM. TO CURE MADNESS.

"Take of ground Ivy which is call'd Ale-hoof, three large handfuls, shread it small and boil it in two Quarts of white wine, pure without mixture, till two parts be consumed, then strain it, and boil with it six ounces of the best Sallad oyl till it grows like ointment, then anoint the mould of the Head upon the seam with this Ointment being made warm, doing it eight or nine times together, chafing it very well in, afterwards apply the Herbs to it Poultice-wise tying it very well on.

"At the same time the Poultice is made use of the Person is for nine mornings together to Drink the quantity of three large Spoonfulls of the juce of Ground Ivy, which is to be gather'd fresh every Morning and pounded, and afterwards squeezed thro' a cloth to get out the juce. The persons Head must be shaved before the Poultice and the Ointment are apply'd.

"This Receipt has cured above three score Persons without failing in any of them, and cured them in ten days time, God Blessing the means."

Lastly, a more stupendous thing; no less than—

"AN INFALLIBLE CURE FOR THE BITE OF A MAD DOG.

"Six ounces of Rue clean'd, pick'd, and bruised. Four ounces of Garlick peeled and bruised. Four ounces of Venice Treacle. Four ounces of filed Pewter or scrap'd Tin.

"Boil these in two quarts of the best Ale in a pan cover'd close over a gentle Fire for the space of one Hour, then

strain the Ingredients from the Liquor, give Eight or Nine spoonfulls of it warm to a Man or Woman three Mornings fasting, and cold to any Beast fasting, Eight or Nine spoonfulls is sufficient for the strongest, a less quantity to those younger, or of a weaker Constitution, as you may Judge of their strength, Ten or Twelve for a Horse or Bullock, Three Four, or five for a Sheep, Dog, or Hog.

"This must be given within nine Days after the Bite and it never fails either in Man or Beast, if you can conveniently Bind some of the Ingredients on the Wound."

This is referred to "Mrs. Rosier Compleat housewife." It is the only one that seems to be already in print.

Whatever prescriptions he may have used, Crisp's "resolutions as to diet and exercise" were not very strictly adhered to. Fanny compared him in 1779 to Dr. Johnson in that regard: "The old Adam, as you say, stands in the way."

So year by year the letters from Crisp to his sister at Burford tell more of his illness, and of the painful remedies to which he was subjected. Besides this, as Susan Burney tells, he spent his life "in perpetual apprehension of terrible national calamitys." But his kindly interest in others never failed, nor his affection for his sister, nor his pride in the author of *Evelina*. To the end Fanny continued to hope. She wrote to the sufferer in his long illness, "God bless and restore you, my most dear daddy! You know not how kindly I take your thinking of me and inquiring about me, in an illness that might so well make you forget us all."[1]

As he grew worse she went to Chessington, and she wrote to her father to tell him of Crisp's death on April 24th, 1783. Dr. Burney said in his answer:[2] "I have always thought that, in many particulars, his equal was not to be found. His wit, learning, taste, penetration and, when well, his conviviality, pleasantry and kindness of heart to me and mine, will ever be thought of with the most profound and desponding regret."

[1] *Letters, &c.*, ii. 208–10. [2] *Ibid.*, ii. 211.

A few weeks later, Alexander Allen, who managed Mrs. Gast's business for her, sent to Burford his last word of sympathy with her on her brother's death. The letter remains among the MSS. :—

POULTRY, LONDON, *4th June*, 1783.

MADAM

The character of poor Mr. Crisp, in one of the Morning Chronicles of last month, is printed verbatim in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May, and hereunder I trouble you with the copy of it. Yesterday I purchased for Miss Cooke, £100 three per cent. Consolidated Bank Ann^{s}, for which I pay £67/7/6 including the Broker's halfcrown for Commission. I am

Madam,

Your most obedt hble sert

ALEX. ALLEN.

23rd April (shd be 24th) 1783. Died at Chesington, Surrey, whither he had long retired from the world, Saml Crisp, Esq aged 75, whose loss will for ever be deplored by all who were admitted into his retreat, and had the happiness of enjoying his Conversation, which was rendered captivating by all that Wit, Learning and professed Knowledge of Mankind and a most exquisite taste for the fine Arts, could furnish.

This is endorsed by Mrs. Gast thus :—

Mr. Alex Allen 1783.
Poultry No 15 London June 4.
Recd Do 6.
Ansd Do 7

Bought for Mrs. Cooke £100 Consol. at £67/7/6 including commission 2/6. Character of Samuel Crisp Esq.

The Burford connection with the Allens and the Mathias family continued for some years. There are a number of drafts of Mrs. Gast's letters to them, with their replies. They extend from 1782 to 1787. All show personal friendliness, and some have details of interest. For example, a letter dated Burford, Jan: 26, 1784, to Gabriel Mathias, ends

thus: "Since I wrote the other side I am told we are certainly on the Eve of a Civil War. Should that be the Dreadful Case, it would be a wrong time to buy Stock. I who live quite a recluse cannot be a Judge; you who are in the Great World can better decide for me, I leave it to you to act for me, and shall acquiesce in whatever you do." Or again, January 10th, 1785, Mrs. Gast says to the same correspondent: "I think I must adhere to my old fashion stile formerly used to your Brother. I love you and thank you. No consequences can be drawn from that expression when infirm 78 pleads privilege."

Mrs. Gast lived on till 1791, and so the story closes.

Thus those who knew Dr. Johnson passed away from the Cotswold land. It was eleven years before (in September, 1780) that the party from Streatham had gone over to Chessington to call on Mr. Crisp, including, as he says, "the Great Dr. Johnson" with "civilities and invitations beyond Expression." Burford had never been honoured by the presence of the Great Doctor. I do not know if he was acquainted with many of those who lived in the near neighbourhood; I can only recollect (to employ his own precise use of the word) that he refers to one of them, Jimmy Dawkins of Over Norton, the planter, traveller and Jacobite. He gave him as "the only great instance that I have ever known of the enjoyment of wealth," for, "going to visit Palmyra, and hearing that the way was infested by robbers," he "hired a troop of Turkish horse to guard him." Dawkins had died in 1757. About half a century represents the whole period which these memories of those in this district who knew Johnson call to our minds.

As I close this paper I cannot but recall with most sincere gratitude the kindness of that enthusiastic genealogist and student of ancient things, Mrs. Edward Egerton Leigh, and her late husband, whose loss Gloucestershire so deeply deplores. I hope I have used with due care the manuscripts which they so generously allowed me to study.