AMONG the many country houses at which the Tragic Muse, Sarah Siddons, was always welcome, perhaps her favourite was that inhabited by the Mistress of Streatham, Hester Lynch Piozzi. The two women met about 1788, and, as their biographers have shown, their relationship was originally cultivated on a level of "social expediency and intellectual interest". The disparate backgrounds of the hard-working, sometimes itinerant, actress and the sophisticated gentlewoman would hardly seem sufficiently compatible to contribute to the cementing of any real friendship. But Mrs. Siddons was no mere performer. By most accounts, she was a genius in her art, as beautiful as she was talented. She was also somewhat of a national institution. Although she never was the intellectual or social lioness, as Garrick had been the lion, she could be at ease in the parlour as well as behind the proscenium. Johnsonians and Blue Stockings sought out her company, ever pleased to be seen with her and to be mentioned in the same public paragraphs. While they lived in different worlds much of the time, Mrs. Siddons and Mrs. Piozzi often shared the same world. They mixed with the same people, visited the same houses, shared the same gossip.

They were different kinds of women to be sure. Where Mrs. Siddons was usually careful and reserved, the other was inclined to be mischievous and of devastating wit. Where Mrs. Piozzi was often devoting her substantial leisure to quickening her intellect through study of theology, politics and poetry, the other was harnessed to the resolute demands of stage life, which, for all its public façade for glamour, tends to be gruelling and confining in its routine. Where Mrs. Siddons was sincere, Mrs. Piozzi was clever. Where the actress was slow, the gentlewoman was shrewd.

Nevertheless, their friendship was not to be shallow. With mutual respect and affection as its foundation, it grew into an
intimacy nourished by frequent long visits to each other's home, by caring for the other's children in time of trial, and by sharing in many family problems, especially those brought on by their respective daughters.

In an appendix to his book *Hester Lynch Piozzi* (Oxford, 1941), Professor James Clifford noted the existence of thirty-seven manuscript letters from Sarah and William Siddons to Mrs. Piozzi. Twenty-seven of these letters are in the John Rylands Library (English MSS. 574 and 892). My editing includes these twenty-seven, and two others to Mrs. Piozzi in Ryl. English MS. 574, one from the daughter Sally Siddons (No. 5) and the other from Patty Wilkinson (No. 19), both of which are relevant to the correspondence. These letters have never been published in toto, although several have been quoted in part by Yvonne Ffrench in her book *Mrs. Siddons, Tragic Actress* (London, 1954), sometimes without benefit of accurate chronological placement.

The manuscripts are in good condition, with some few tears, blots, and other aberrations which I have noted in square brackets, supplying the missing text when reliably conjectured. Dates provided by me from internal evidence or other sources are also found in square brackets, and are supported in the annotations. I have also been able to correct some errors which had been pencilled in the margin by an unknown hand. The numbering of the letters as they are marked in the collection has also been re-ordered. I have tried to identify all the people and events mentioned and to offer further explanatory notes when it has seemed useful to the reader. If I have committed the sin of over-annotation, it is because I think the letters warrant such minute care if they are to be most useful to the interests of scholars in the various ways that cannot be anticipated. Even so, I regret that several items have eluded me.

An editor of early letters must decide if anything is to be gained by following the punctuation of his writers precisely, especially if that punctuation is most inconsistent. I have ventured to provide guidance by modernizing some of the punctuation where the original seemed tangled and perhaps misleading. Such "modernizing" consists mainly of providing full stops to sentences and beginning the next sentence with a capital letter. In so doing I
trust the original intent, style and flavour have not been compromised.

The following letters are not distinguished as models of a literary art cultivated by more substantial correspondents of the eighteenth century. But they provide an intimate view of two important families linked by friendships, and they provide facts and insights about them—especially the Siddons family—not to be found elsewhere. Those letters written by Sarah's husband, William, who would remain fairly undistinguished except by virtue of his marriage, also offer a rich picture of his non-professional life and of his sometimes strange and ultimately estranged relationship with his wife. He seems to have been by other accounts a petulant and nagging man, considered by many, including Mrs. Piozzi, to be no match for his more attractive, more gracious, and more socially acceptable spouse. Yet toward the end of his life, if we judge by these letters, it is William who seems to have developed the more lasting friendship with the Piozzi family. Mrs. Piozzi came to regard him finally, from her comments in *Thraliana*, as the more sinned against than sinning.

There are several people whose expert assistance and patient co-operation have saved me much time and industry. They include Professor Philip H. Highfill, Jr., of the George Washington University and the Folger Library; Mr. C. Beecher Hogan of Yale; Mr. Peter Pagan, Director of the Bath Municipal Libraries and Victoria Art Gallery; and Dr. F. Taylor, Keeper of Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library, and Miss G. A. Matheson, the Assistant Keeper there. My debt to Professor Katherine C. Balderston's superb edition of *Thraliana* (Oxford, 1942) will be obvious throughout. I am also grateful to the Tufts University Faculty Research Fund for its assistance.

1

**Sunday [January-February 1793]**

I am going to keep my Brothers Birthday and shoud go with a lighter Heart for having heard from Streatham. I hope all goes

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1 Ryl. English MS. 574/13. Dated by references to John Philip Kemble's birthday, February 1. The letter seems to have been written on either January 27 or February 3, both Sunday.
well yet Something whispers me that it is not So—do, do my dear Mrs Piozzi—if you love me or think I care at all for you, do let me hear how you all are! I din’d with your old Friend Murphy the other day who desird a Thousand Comp’s, and good wishes to you. I am going to Act a Play of his call’d The Rival Sisters. Ariadne, for that is the Lady I am to represent, is a Character of so enormous length, that I am terrified when I look at it and think I am to hammer it into my crazy Head in a Month at farthest. God bless and preserve you all at dear dear Streatham, wou’d I were there! but there or elsewhere I am ever your

Aff

S. Siddons

I have a pain in my Side from the violent exertion of The G: D last Scene last night which makes me uncomft. Pray Send me one line and Say that you and your dear Husband are well—for I hope Cecy is more than convalescent.

Address: To Mrs Piozzi Streatham Park Streatham

2

My dear Soul I wish to God I coud Say or do any thing to com­fort you. And you will not take it unkindly I hope if I think

1 Arthur Murphy (1727-1805), lawyer and dramatist, and advisor and solicitor to Mrs. Piozzi.

2 The Rival Sisters opened March 12, 1793 at the Haymarket, and was acted six times that season, staged by J. P. Kemble, with Mrs. Siddons in the leading role of Ariadne. It had been published in 1786. See Howard Dunbar, The Dramatic Career of Arthur Murphy (New York, 1946), pp. 234 and 314.

3 She played Jane Shore on Saturday, January 26, and Euphrasia in The Grecian Daughter on February 2.

4 Cecilia Margareta Thrale (1777-1857), Mrs. Piozzi’s daughter by her first marriage to Henry Thrale (1728-1781). During that winter Cecilia had been very ill, but upon her recovery she was again in high spirits and “she flirted with every man who entered the house and kept Mrs. Piozzi in a continual state of nervous anxiety” (James L. Clifford, Hester Lynch Piozzi [Oxford, 1941], pp. 363-64).

5 Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/15. Dated from reference to plays in the Haymarket. In May of 1791, the old Drury Lane Theatre was closed for demolition and a new one built on the site, opening on April 21, 1794. In the interim Kemble’s company moved into the King’s Theatre in Haymarket for several years and then on January 26, 1793, to the smaller Haymarket Theatre.

4
your tenderness is so easily alarmed that it creates dangers where none exist. I am very much afraid that you yourself while you are so busy to torment your poor dear heart about others, are more ill than any of the party. ¹ I wish to God I could go to you but that's impossible, for I am as usual, in a worry from Morn till night in this odious Town made more odious still by perplexity and uncomfortableness in my business. The people are delighted with the Plays in the little Theatre however. That's one comfort. Write to me dear soul and tell me how you are and how you feel about Cecy and dear Mr. P: Give my kind love to them and believe me

Yr aff[
S. Siddons

Address: To Mrs Piozzi Streatham Park Streatham

Nuneham July 7th [1793]²

I have heart and time enough my dear friend to be glad at even the appearances of pleasure that surround you always, for, except one, who love I so well? If you have not already heard of it, I shall tell you of a distress I have escaped which will make you fear and tremble with rejoicing (to reverse it). Mr Siddons, Maria³ and George⁴ have been preserved with life by almost a miracle for that they were not all killed upon the spot has been the astonishment of all who were present. I thank God I was not of the number. They were got by way of Irish as you would say into a little market cart to take a drive by way of airing, when presently the shaft broke which frightened the horse who flew away with them it seems like a mad creature. In short Mr Siddons and Maria jumped out when providentially for my dear little baby the traces broke so that the horse got free of the cart

¹ Another attack of Mr. Piozzi's gout at the time when the Piozzis were experiencing trials with Cecilia. See Thraliana, The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale, ed. Katherine C. Balderston (Oxford, 1942), ii. 828.
² Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/11. Year dated by references to Nuneham and Mrs. Pennington's house. For Nuneham Rectory see p. 51, n. 3.
³ Maria Siddons (1779-1798), Sarah's second daughter.
⁴ George John Siddons (b. 1785), second son and sixth child of Sarah. He went into Bengal Civil Service about 1802, and became Collector of Calcutta Customs.
and left it Standing Still at the moment it came to the edge of the Pond, and the dear little Angel was left Safely Smiling at the Sport upon the very verge of the grave—Maria and Mr Siddons were very much hurt but are now in a fair way to get well. So you see I am nothing without a distress. I hope this weather is hot enough to content you, and that it will last in Spite of your prognostics till the Hay is all in. And so the Miss Thrales cannot celebrate the 25th with you. Well I am Sorry for Their Sakes that they cannot. What would Mrs Pennington and I give for their power of doing So. I am very glad to receive so charming an account of her House. I dare say it has made her very happy to fidget about it and get it into Such nice order. Pray remember me very kindly to her when you write. I was not at Oxford and have reason to rejoice at what I have often thought a blameable want of taste for a Sight and a Crowd. Adieu dear Soul, present me very tenderly to dear Mr Piozzi and give our loves to Cecy. I am always yours most gratefully and affy

S. Siddons

4

August 5th, 1793
Rectory Nuneham

I Suppose my dear Friend you are almost topsy turvy with joy at the good news with which every body’s heart and mouth overflows. I most heartily congratulate us all. And now I am to tell

1 Susan Arabella Thrale (1770-1858) and Sophia Thrale (1771-1824), daughters of Mrs. Piozzi. “The young Ladies refused Invitation for the Anniversary of our Wedding Day—they went to Southampton” (Thraliana, ii. 863, July 17, 1793).

2 Penelope Sophia Weston (1752-1827) married William Pennington on December 27, 1792. They settled at Clifton, Bristol, where he was Master of Ceremonies at Clifton Hot Springs.

3 Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/1. The Rectory House in Nuneham Park, where Mrs. Siddons sometimes spent part of her summers when not touring, was near her friends George, 2nd earl of Harcourt (1736-1809) and his wife Elizabeth. According to Mrs. Piozzi the Rectory House was “Sweet Siddon’s fairy Habitation.” It stood on a hill near the banks of the Thames, below Oxford, where the view from the cottage window was “enchanting” (Thraliana, ii. 814, and Yvonne Ffrench, Mrs. Siddons. Tragic Actress [London, 1954], p. 129).

4 Perhaps a reference to Captain Israel Pellew’s naval victory in the Channel over the French in June, 1793.
you that I leave this place on Wednesday Morning and go to Cheltenham for three weeks or a Month perhaps, where I am desired to drink moderately of the Water. I am told the place is as full as it can hold, which is no addition to my Felicity. Mr Siddons and Sally left us this day—oh how dismal this place is in bad Weather—I like it much better than I did and Mr Siddons is quite enamoured of its beauty insomuch that he has dropt all thoughts of giving it up—I hope Mr Gray was Struck with the charms of the place as well as with the beauty of its inhabitants—Apropos to Mr Gray, he has done me the honor to send me his last Publication, and I entreat of you to make him my grateful acknowledgements for So flattering and polite an attention. Mr Davies calld on us the other day and gave us as fine and intelligible an account of the 25th as he was able. And so dear Mr Piozzi is going into Wales, I hope he will have good Weather! What a blazing Summer it has been and no terrifying Storms. Thank God! Tell Cecy that Christian knocks down the apples with her usual perseverance and that George desires his love to her. Trudge gives his respects to Flo and Phillis and hopes they are well—Pray remember me very very kindly to Mrs Mackay. I have sent a Head of George to London which I have made very like and have just finishd one of Sally. They tell me this last is quite beautiful—but I am not delighted with the Sonnets My dear Mrs P: I have no ambition to appear before the Public in a new Character at this time of day for the Spleen and the spite will completely allay the s[seal over] of celebrity as

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1 Sarah Martha Siddons (1775-1803), called Sally, second child of Sarah.
2 Rev. Robert Gray (1762-1834), vicar of Faringdon, Berks., later Bishop of Bristol. The publication referred to is probably his Discourses on Various subjects, illustrative of the Evidence, Influence, and Doctrine of Christianity, published in 1793.
3 Rev. Reynold Davies (b. 1752), curate of St. Leonard's, Streatham, and head of "Streatham University."
4 "'Here is the hottest Summer known for many Years in England' " (Thraliana, ii. 863). For Mrs. Siddons's fear of thunder and lightning see ibid. ii. 814.
5 Her daughter Maria, who had recently returned from convent school in Calais.
6 Trudge, Flo, and Phillis were pet dogs of the families; see Thraliana, ii. 814 and 940.
7 Mrs. Lucy Eliza Mackay (née Jones), second cousin to Mrs. Piozzi.
you know. I hope and believe that Damer’s mind is as Superior as her Talent and that s[he] need not fear they will create a coldness in her and throw me to a distance from excellence which I love to contemplate and genius which I am proud to be capable of admiring. Adieu dearest and kindest Soul alive—give my true love to your dear Husband and believe that I adore you with all the frailties of my Mind and Love you with all the warmest affections of my Heart—Write soon to Cheltenham to y’

S. Siddons

Sally and Maria Send their loves to y’ All but Sally to you particularly. Why do you address your Letters to me at Lord Harcourts? I live at the Rectory—you shoud write to me under Cover to Lord H. which Saves Postage. Remember this important point another time darling.

Address : Mrs Piozzi Streatham Park Surry
Oxford august thirteen 93

Catton October 10th, 1793

You do not know my very dear Mrs Piozzi how much pleasure you gave me in desiring I would write to you, and I assure you I take the first opportunity of sending you some account of my Mother. We arriv’d at Catton last Tuesday week, and found my Aunt and her family all well. I have three nice little Cousins,

1 Mrs. Anne Seymour Damer (1749-1828), sculptress, who was named residuary legatee in the will of Horace Walpole and had Strawberry Hill for life. She was also a producer and player of amateur theatricals at Richmond House and did a bust of Mrs. Siddons as the tragic muse. Mrs. Siddons often worked in the studio at Strawberry Hill under Mrs. Damer’s tuition.

2 Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/2.

3 This letter is written by Sarah’s daughter Sally. On August 16, 1793, Mrs. Siddons wrote from Cheltenham to Lady Percival: “I am going from hence to London in about three weeks, where I shall stay only for a few days to arrange matters preparatory to my going to Ireland in October, and then go to visit Fanny in Norfolk with whom I shall leave my two dear girls till my return to London” (MS. letter in Harvard Theatre Collection).

4 Frances Kemble (1759-1822), called Fanny, the sister of Sarah Siddons. On May 1, 1786, she married Francis Twiss (1760-1827), compiler, who at one time supposedly nourished “a hopeless passion” for Sarah. On her marriage Fanny gave up her not-too-distinguished stage career.
the eldest a boy of seven years old has taken a violent affection
for me, and has declared his passion to me in very plain terms.¹
I am to wait till he is one and twenty, and then we are to be
married—He is an exceeding clever child, and has given an early
proof you perceive of his *discrimination* and *good taste*—

My sweet Mother has been, and is, in perfect health. You
can imagine far Better than I can express, the joy I feel in being
able to say so—She has been trying to model here, but after
having form’d the Head & Shoulders, it all fell to pieces from the
badness of the Clay, and she has not begun another, as there will
not be time to finish it—Next Wednesday my Father and Mother
leave us, and go to Liverpool, where my Mother is to perform.²
They will stay there I believe about a fortnight and then go to
Ireland. I shall send you all the news of her from thence that
I can. I am sadly afraid they will not return before Christmas,
and tho’ I like this place very much, I cannot help regretting the
presence of my dear Mother. We all went to a Ball at Norwich
Last Night. It was very much crouded. I dance’d a great deal
and thought the Dance much too short—Pray when you write to
me tell me all you can of the dear little Pisani’s.³ They call’d to
see me on the very day we left London—With my Mother’s
tenderest love to you and Mr Piozzi, I will with all sincerity sub-
scribe myself your affectionate—

S[ally] Siddons

Pray give my kind love to dear Mr Piozzi and remember Maria
and me to Cecilia. I send you my address and I shall expect to
hear from you soon my dear Mrs Piozzi.
at F. Twiss’s Esq. Catton near Norwich

*Address*: Mrs Piozzi Streatham Park Surry

¹ Horace Twiss (1787-1849), later wit and politician, who was to write Mrs.
Siddons’s address of farewell from the stage, June 29, 1812, and was also an
executor of her will (*D.N.B.*, xix. 1318).

² According to R. J. Broadbent, *Annals of the Liverpool Stage* (Liverpool,
1908), p. 86, Mrs. Siddons played Rosalinde at Liverpool on October 5, 1793.
But Sally’s letter indicates that she was still at Catton on that date.

³ Alvise Pisani, Venetian ambassador to France, who, with his two daughters,
had a near escape from the Revolution. “The Rebels unroost’d him & he came
hither to wait further Orders” (*Thraliana*, ii. 857, April 4, 1793).
I was very truly grievd my dear friend to receive so uncomfortable a Letter from you but I hope by this time the cloud has entirely disappeard and that dear Mr Piozzi is recoverd from his terrible fit of the Gout— I hope to be at home in about a Month, and I leave you to judge whether it will be long before I haste to embrace you. I have reaped my laurels plenteously and have considerably encreasd the weight of my purse. Pray tell my dear Sir Lucas so, but I am not yet well—We must not expect all the good things: how many more of them have I than I deserve. The last accounts from Norfolk were tolerable, but I count the Minutes till I return to my poor Girls whose tender reproaches for Staying so long (Silly children for whose Sake do I encounter these fatigues and inconveniences?) almost destroy me Sometimes—Pray let me find an account of you and yours to refresh me after my tiresome Journey lying on the Round Table in the eating room. On Fryday the 17th Shoud the wind be fair we spread our Sails for dear dear England which contains all my Comforts. Give my kind love to my dear Mr Piozzi and tell him the people here woud Satisfy him in the adorations they offer to his and your most afft and faithful

S. Siddons

Give my love to Divine Cecilia and remember me to all the friends of Sweet Streatham.

I fear the Enthusiasm of these dreadful Scourges will make

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1 Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/3.
2 "My poor Husband has been very ill; seriously, if not dangerously ill: Gout flying to his Neck, Breast, Sides & Back" (Thraliana, ii. 866, January 23, 1794).
3 Mrs. Siddons had gone to Ireland in October, 1793, as indicated in Letter No. 5.
4 Sir Lucas Pepys, Bt. (1742-1830), physician to both families.
5 Where she had left the children (Letter No. 5).
6 "Mrs. Siddons is come home, handsome, celebrated, enriched, adored. Everybody worships that admirable Creature except her own Family—To them She is no Heroine—tho' contented to make herself Valet de Chambre" (Thraliana, ii. 867, January 23, 1794).
them invincible. When did that ever fail to effect its purpose? Mr Sid. desires kind Compns.

Stephens Green Dublin
Janr the 5th

Address: Mrs Piozzi, Streatham Park Streatham Surry London

[London, April 11, 1794]

In the first place how are you my dear Mrs Piozzi? I hope you did not suffer from so kindly coming hither. I long to hear that you are pretty well again. And now let me thank you for my Book2 which came last night, and Mr Siddons was so taken with it that he read for an hour even after he was in Bed. I suppose I shant be able to get a glance at it till he has quite done the first Volume. I am very eager to know "what will be thought and what will be said" about it; Lady Harcourt's Mother, the Dowager Lady Vernon,3 died the day before yesterday So wisdom at that entrance is quite Shut out. We are not going to Mr Slack's.4 They are painting their House and I dare not encounter the Smell of it. All our loves attend ye all and I am your own

S. Siddons

My Potpouri is not Sweet at all. What can be the reason that it shoud be So Sweet at Streatham and So insipid here in London?

Address: To Mrs Piozzi Streatham Park Streatham Fryday 11th of April

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1 Ryl Eng. MS. 574/10. Year dated by Lady Vernon's death and Mrs. Piozzi's book. See also Clifford, p. 373, n. 3.
2 Mrs. Piozzi's British Synonymy; or, an Attempt at Regulating the Choice of Words in Familiar Conversations (London, 1794).
3 Lady Martha Vernon, mother of Elizabeth, Countess Harcourt (1746-1826). Lady Vernon died on April 8, 1794.
4 Mr. Slack unidentified.
Wednesday [April 30, 1794]

My dear Friend

The whole world’s liking your Book, I hope will content your thirst of Aprobation, tho’ I can tell you Some of us are offended at your giving our conversation the oprobrious term of “Green Room Cant” and to say the truth we all wish to know what that term implies—for we flatter ourselves that those of us here about, who have the happiness to know you, Speak, as well bred people in general do speak. Lysons told me last night of a bookseller in Holborn who has bought a hundred Copies—I fancy my dear your Printer has made a goodish bargain for himself. I am in too great a hurry to thank you and my dear Piozzi as I ought for all the good things you have Sent me. Tomorrow I play Catherine and have all my Lady Macbeth’s finery to make up in other forms—I am quite delighted that you like our House So well and am sadly vexed that I did not see you there or here yesterday. I hope the new Comedy will give me some holidays and then I will fly to lovely Streatham for a Day or two. In the mean time take care of yourself and do not choak again for God’s Sake!!! Mr Whalley and Lady Perceval have offerd

1 Ryl. Eng /MS. 574/4. Year dated by reference to impending birth of Cecilia Siddons (1794-1868), 7th child and 5th daughter, on July 25, 1794, in London. She was named for Cecilia Thrale, Mrs. Piozzi’s youngest child. 2 See p. 56, n. 2. 3 Samuel Lysons (1763-1819), antiquarian and artist, or his brother Daniel Lysons (1762-1834), the topographer, both friends of the families. 4 Mrs. Siddons played Lady Macbeth that night (April 30) and Catherine in Henry VIII on May 1, 1794, at Drury Lane (Harvard playbills). The new DL Theatre opened that month. “Mrs. Siddons is going to act Lady Macbeth on the new Theatre Drury Lane next Easter Monday [April 21]; She is big with Child, & I fear will for that reason scarce be well received: for People have a notion she is covetous, and this unnecessary Exertion to gain Money will confirm it” (Thraliana, ii. 876, April 3, 1794). 5 “I had like to have been made a speedy end of, Thursday last week, by a bone in my throat, which called Surgeons and Doctors round me, all in vain, for three long hours... but all is safe and well again,” Mrs. Piozzi to Penelope Pennington, April 26, 1794 (The Intimate Letters of Hester Piozzi and Penelope Pennington 1788-1821, ed. O. G. Knapp [London, 1914], p. 110). 6 Thomas Sedgwick Whalley (1746-1828), poet, traveller, and prebendary of Wells. The Whalleys frequently spent summers at Mendip Lodge, where Mrs. Siddons often visited. 7 Bedina Wynn Perceval, wife of Viscount Perceval, later 3rd earl of Egmont. See also Thraliana, ii. 838.
themselves for my Bratling & I want to know if it be likely you Shou’d be present at the ceremony (which cannot be before August), as in case of your absence in Wales, Sally Might be your Substitute and I Shou’d have no good reason for rejecting her offer, which has been offer’d very kindly and affectionately. It is most likely She will herself be absent and in that case will have her Proxy too, to perform the ceremony and pay the customary compliments to the Nurse, but I am always you know for preventing if possible any disagreeable and uncomfortable feels [sic]. All above board fair and open is my Motto. God Bless you dearest Soul. Give all our kindest loves to our beloved Mr P: and remember us kindly to Cecy—tell her there’s no doubt but I shall present her with a Cecy—and not go without a William¹ either, for I am sure there must be two I am so frightfully large and heavy.

God bless again

Another accident. My brother has hurt his Arm by his fall in Macbeth² & is very perverse in cooking it himself. Sally is not well, nor very ill.

[S. Siddons]

Address: To Mrs Piozzi Streatham Park Streatham
Wednesday April 30th

9

Nuneham Rectory
June 13th 1794³

Dear Madam

Deeply entrench’d between two rows of Peas—Sarah deliverd me your kind Letter. But before I open’d it we had both of us

¹ Mrs. Siddons named neither of her two sons after her husband William. Perhaps she intended to name this expected child so, if a boy.

² John Philip Kemble played Macbeth regularly at DL from April 21 to May 12, 1794. In the next performance of the play, May 19, the part was played by Palmer; Kemble was absent from the bills until June 6, when he acted Norval in Douglas. There seems to be no other record of Kemble’s accident. (Courtesy of Mr. C. Beecher Hogan.)

³ Ryl Eng. MS. 574/17. Lord Howe’s victory over the French fleet on June 1, 1794, occasioned widespread public celebrations similar to the one described here by William Siddons. In London the victory was celebrated by “three successive nights illuminating the metropolis” (Gentleman’s Magazine, lxiv. 532).
our fears, doubts and alarms—for we knew Mrs Sid. was with you, however the first line set all to rights—for you said she was extremely well—but I think twice round in one day was rather too much for swell'd Ancles. Tis a proof of strength however—but don’t let her do too much—here is charming weather for you and how are you enjoying beautiful Streatham—Tis very pretty here too I assure you. But what a day—and what a night was the last. Even around this tranquil spot. Oxford was all in a blaze on account of the glorious news, and so was Abingdon, both of which we could see from our Hill, as well as hear the Bells ringing—and the sound of Cannon and Musquetry might make you fancy you were between Tournay and Lisle—and even little Nuneham I assure you might surprize a passing stranger (except that I believe all the Villages around did the same). The Lord and Lady are not yet arrived, so I was conceited enough to think myself the next great Man in the Parish—and sent forty two pound of Candles to the forty two Houses, and forty two Gallons of Ale for the Villagers to drink success to the Wooden Walls of old England. Only think Mrs Siddons—of Jack Falkner 2 and two more musicians almost as good as himself with all the village at their heels parading up and down the town for two hours singing God save the King till they were all hoarse—and our sitting at Mrs Cowdons and enjoying it—what have you lost—well tis a noble stroke and I think we may all sleep safe for some time without fear of an Invasion. Admiral Boyer of whom I bought the House in Marlborough Street and who now owns the House I am looking on opposite here has lost a Leg 3—when he recovers which I hope he will, and has got a wooden one—he may retire with honour and enjoy the said opposite House. And a comfortable place it seems—I wish every one who had a [fear : similar] suffering had a similar birth [sic] for the [end of] their days—Sally and Maria are joining in a Letter to their Mother.

1 Sarah was pregnant (Letter No. 8).
2 Perhaps Mr. Faulkner, of Lincoln, who died c. August 20, 1795, in Lincoln Gaol for Debt. He had been a provincial actor, dancer and musician, who in later years “took to recruiting for his Mty’s Service” (Folger MS. T.a. 141).
3 Sir George Bowyer lost his leg during the naval action (John Charnock, Biographia Navalis [London, 1798], vi. 511-514). The Siddonses had moved to 54 Great Marlborough Street, London, in 1790.
They will tell her of George who yesterday I saw under Arms at Wallingford making himself fit with one and twenty others—equally able Men—to guard the land as Lord Howe does the Sea. With my sincere esteem and love for all at Streatham and many thanks for your obliging Letter

I am &c. &c. &c.

Wm Siddons

Address : Mrs Piozzi  Streatham Park Surry

10

London, August 9th, 1794

Dear Madam

You wish to hear the news going forward in the public and private world—why then since the days of Adam there never was such a total Dearth—if you see no London papers the Chester or Shrewsbury are capable of telling you all—Take a paragraph from the Times of this morning—"we scarcely recollect such a dearth of news from every part of Europe as during the present week; not a single dispatch or newspaper having been received from the Continent since Sunday last."—but two or three days ago we had Mr Este, who has been for seven weeks upon the Continent, and with the Duke of York and Lord Moira [sic] Army. You know his opinions pretty well. He says the French hold nothing but trumps and that our game is nearly or quite up, and that there is no doubt but the Emperor is negotiating a separate peace—and we must be left alone to support our good allies the Dutch. But pray says I how is it that our Stocks are increasing and rising amidst all this (for so they are). Why to own the truth says he I can perceive amongst all nations that this little Island is reckoned the safest harbour, and into our funds they are pouring their money—This I understand to be the case—and heaven keep it so say I—With respect to the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert various are the reports—that he is going to wed a

1 Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/18.
3 Francis Rawdon-Hastings, 2nd earl of Moira (1754-1826).
German Princess,¹ that he is too fond of an English Countess, that he is going to take upon him affairs of state which will leave no time for softer dalliances—&c. &c.—The Lady has left Brighton for Margate to the great joy of Mrs Greatheed² who writes word they are very gay and pleasant and that they all like that place beyond expectation—In a letter from Mrs Pennington to Sally is mentioned the death of pretty Phyllis by the accident at Brinbella, but as neither you or Cecelia say a word about it we will not believe it, no. Dear little creature we hope it is quite well again, and that Mrs Pennington’s fears have conjured up that mistake.³

Well we are all going on charmingly here. Mrs Sid. has been down to dinner two or three days past and eats like a tyger as Samuel Lysons⁴ woud say (who is in London at present)—and Baby Cecelia does nothing but sleep and suck, and suck and sleep, and grow—tomorrow she is to have a little cold Water thrown on her face and Then you know we are To hope it will cry—or it will not live long—and that will be a pity for tis a nice Baby enough—the two matronly Babies as I now call them are very well too. Sally has not had an Asthma since she came home—They all send their loves and wish for more fine weather on your accounts. Tis of great value amongst your beautiful Mountains—My best respects to Mr Piozzi and Miss Cecelia. Believe me dear Madam yours very truly—

Wm Siddons

Address : For Mrs Piozzi Denbigh North Wales

¹ Maria Anne Fitzherbert (1756-1837) had been secretly married to the Prince of Wales in 1785. He later married Caroline of Brunswick. See Letter No. 13.
² Mrs. Anne Greatheed, wife of Bertie Greatheed (1759-1826), dramatist. As a young girl Mrs. Siddons had spent two years (1771-72) as maid companion of Lady Mary Greatheed, mother of Bertie, at £10 a year. Thereafter she was a frequent guest at Guy’s Cliff, Warwick. She appeared in an unsuccessful production of Bertie’s play, The Regent, DL, March 29, 1788, with an epilogue written by Mrs. Piozzi. The published version was dedicated to Mrs. Siddons.
³ "Immortal Phyllis, to the astonishment of physicians, friends, and nurses, now promises to be once more her own dog again. I never did see so surprising a recovery. The fall was above four yards perpendicular height," Mrs. Piozzi to Mrs. Pennington, August 4, 1794 (Intimate Letters, p. 115).
⁴ See p. 57, n. 3.
August 27 [1794]
[London]

I fancy that you will all be rather glad to see my hand writing again, dull as my letters are. I will first thank ye all very sincerely for the concern you have so kindly felt for me, and your Solicitude for my recovery which would be perfect could I gain a little more Strength, but Such a lumping baby was neither brought forth, or can be now Sustaind without humling [sic] and bringing Low its Mother. I had a very Safe, tho a long, and Laborious time, and I bless God that I have brought you as perfect and healthful a Baby as ever the Sun Shone on. How I long for you to See the little dear fat lump. Pray dont be jealous but I really think She looks sometimes very like our dear Mr Piozzi—her eyes and her hair are as black as his. Her father doats on her and Maria does nothing but dandle about with her all day. Tell her little Mama that her little indiscretion and Namesake will do her no discredit, and that I hope she will not Set her down upon the floor if She Shoud happen to cry. I shall be so happy to take her to See you at Streatham—that happy time is a long way off. We were all very glad to hear of pretty Philley’s escape and hope you are got into a tolerable comfortable way of living in Wales, and that the House and all things go on well. I know you will both be glad to hear that Mr Sheridan has been here to Settle our business. We expect him here again in a day or two to conclude upon the manner of discharging the account between us and I believe it will be by installments, heaven farther it to us any way !! And if we do not visit the Treasury every Saturday morning in time to come, I think [we] Shall deserve to lose all I work for. Miss [hole] was So good as to Send me kind congratulations from Tunbridge, and had I known how to address

2 See p. 61, n. 3.
3 The Siddonses always had great problems in getting their wages from Richard Brinsley Sheridan when he was patentee of DL. “The personified uncertainty of Sheridan as to money matters was most intolerable” (Thomas Campbell, Life of Mrs. Siddons [New York, 1837], p. 190).
her (for they left that part of the world immediately after) I shoud have troubled her with grateful acknowledgements of her politeness; pray Say so much for me when you write to them. I know no publick News, except that I playd Mrs Beverly for Mrs Stephen Kemble’s benefit at the little Theatre in the Haymarket last Wednesday,¹ and have kept my room with a pain and weakness in my back ever since. Tomorrow I hope to be able to go to my Brothers at Stanmore and think the country air as usual will do me good. We shall soon go to Ramsgate. I hate all those places, but I believe one half of the world is born for the convenience of the other half—My husband likes it, and it is very natural that the girls shoud. I shall never begin to live for myself I believe and perhaps I shoud not like it, were it in my power. Does Cecy Model Still? and does she like it? I Shoud think She would do it very well. I’m sure I coud, if I knew as much of Drawing as She does. I am very glad my dear Mr Piozzi has got a Print of me. Give my kind love to the dear good Soul and think & talk Sometimes of her who loves and admires ye both So Sincerely

S. Siddons

Address: To Mrs Piozzi Denbigh Wales

12

London Octo’ 21st 1794²

Dear Madam

You wish to know how I liked the chapter of Regicides—very much indeed and I ought to have told you so long ago, but I received it a day or two before I went to Margate, and I fear that gay place put it from my head—before I went I took it to Sadlers Wells where it has been sung with great applause for many nights together, and chiefly with loud encores³—tho’ as that place is shut up I had not the pleasure to hear it—Well, and how are you

¹ Wednesday, August 20, 1794, Haymarket, The Gamester, Mrs. Beverley—Mrs. Siddons (“ for that night only ”), benefit of Mrs. Stephen Kemble (Courtesy of Mr. C. Beecher Hogan.)
² Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/19.
³ “I have written a Ballad for the Blackguards to brawl about the streets, imitated from Newberry’s well known Chapter of Kings; written at first to teach Babies the English History, but lately set and sung at Catch Clubs, Bow
all, Ladies Gentlemen and bow wows—and how goes on your pretty place. Mr Piozzi I expect busy and in good spirits with what is going on.¹ Tis a delightful thing to be about in my opinion. Shenstone² says, "if I had a fortune of twenty thousand a year I woud build myself a neighbourhood", if I had half the money, or a quarter, I shoud like to build myself a single house in yours—either Streatham or Brynbella I shoud not care which—

London I think is very dull and free from any sort of news just at present either public or private. Or if there is any public 'tis bad enough. Nothing but French advancing and English retreating, alas and a well a day—I am afraid we must strike the Pen across our old English Ballads, Garrick's for instance, who says—

You true honest Britons who love your own land
Whose sires were so brave so victorious and free
Who always beat France when they took her in hand

The last line to be sure must go—³

As to private talk nothing but about the Princess of Wales that is to be, the Houses she is to have fitted up in Town and Country, her Beauty, her accomplishments.⁴ The same play you

Meetings, etc.," Mrs. Piozzi to Mrs. Pennington, September 11, 1794 (Intimate Letters, p. 116). The nine stanzas of the "Chapter of King-Killers" appear in Thraliana, ii. 887-89. Perhaps the ballad was included that season in a "Burletta Spectacle," The Sons of Britannia, at Sadler's Wells, "in the course of which are introduced... great variety of Comic and Loyal Songs, Recitatives, &c., expressly written and prepared for the occasion" (clipping in bound volume of Sadler's Wells bills in the Harvard Theatre Collection).

¹ The Piozzis were building a new home in Brynbella, Wales, and Mr. Piozzi, who had drawn up the plans, was busy with contractors (Thraliana, ii. 847 and 887).

² William Shenstone (1714-1763), poet, who made a life-work of beautifying his estate at Leasowes.

³ David Garrick's song, "The Beer-Drinking Briton," set to music by Thomas Arne, and first sung by Beard at DL, 1756-57, in Mercury Harlequin:

Come, join honest Britons in chorus with me.
Let us sing our own treasures, Old England's good cheer,
That profits and pleasures of stout British Beer;
Your wine-tippling, dram-sipping fellows retreat,
But you beer-drinking Britons can never be beat.

(Thel Poetical Works of David Garrick [London, 1785], ii. 377).

⁴ See p. 61, n. 1, and p. 67, n. 1.
know was acted a little while ago with Prussia's Daughter and York's Wife, poor Soul, how little is she thought of now. But her conduct is surely exemplary and her situation to be pitied.¹

Come let me descend—and tell you we all are in good health round our humble hearth—Mrs Sid. never in better looks or better spirits. And so think the Public I am happy to find. Sally just recoverd from one of her (not the worst) fits is very pert. Maria as usual. But the Baby—the little Cecilia—I am sorry to say, is come amongst us to create a good deal of contention and almost constant quarrels about—who shall dandle and nurse her—she is a pretty little laughing smiling minikin—and is this day put into short Petticoats—and looks like [an] old Woman cut short in the middle—Send you all health. And accept the best wishes of those around me as well as yours

truly and sincerely

Wm Siddons

13

London, March 25th [1795]²

Indeed my dear Mrs Piozzi we all participate [in] your happiness with the warmth of friends that love and honour you as much as you yourself can desire; I am Sure I coud not be more thankful even if one of my own children were as happily disposd of.³ Thank God you will now I trust Soon See an end of those cares which have harrassd you so long: and as to what the London Lords and Ladies think of it I hope there is but one and that's the Chancellor⁴ whom we need care about. I Shall be in a State of uneasiness almost painful till the business is concluded. I pray

¹ Frederick Augustus, Duke of York (1763-1827), second son of George III, married in September, 1791, Frederica Charlotte (1760-1820), daughter of Frederick William II of Prussia. She was received with great enthusiasm in London. They soon separated.
² Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/5.
³ In that month Cecilia Thrale became engaged to John Meredith Mostyn (1775-1807).
⁴ Since Cecilia was a ward in Chancery and Mostyn was a minor, consent for the marriage had to be gained from the Lord Chancellor, Lord Loughborough. Mrs. Piozzi had suffered considerable concern, especially regarding possible legal complications. See Clifford, pp. 380-91.
heav’n that nothing may prevent it. I can’t tell you how the girls jumped for joy and Mr Siddons is as glad as any body in his quiet way. And tho’ we all love dear Cecy and wish her with all our hearts all the good that can befall her, yet for your sakes my dearest friends more much more do we rejoice. We Shall not inhabit at Putney yet, for I play twice a week, and you know it will not do to divide our little establishment and otherwise I must go there after the play.—Oh there never was so wretched a thing as Mrs D’arblaye’s Tragedy. Even your friend Dr. Delap’s was inferior in point of laughable circumstances. She was at the representation in Spite of all I could Say of the ill effects so much agitation as She must necessarily feel woud have upon an invalid for she has been extremely ill it seems Since her lying in. In truth it needed no discernment to See how it woud go, and I was grieved that a woman of So much merit must be So much mortified. The Audience were quite angelic and only laughed where it was impossible to avoid it. The famous couplet of Pope occurr’d to me repeatedly during the performance for it was exactly So—“Laugh where ye must” &c. &c. Her brother negotiated the whole business. I never saw herself, but she went to my brothers the next day and nobly Said, She had been deceiv’d [sic] by her friends, that She Saw it was a very bad thing, and withdrew it immediately. That was done like a woman of an exalted Spirit, and has wonderfully rais’d her in the opinion of all those who know the circumstances. Tis rumours’d that the Prince will not marry the Lady, because his debts are so enormous that they are afraid to bring them before the public in order to raise the money to pay them, and it was he Says upon condition.

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1 There appears to be no other record of the Siddonses having lived in Putney.
2 Edwy and Elgiva, DL, March 21, 1795, by Frances Burney D’Arblay. Madam D’Arblay thought the wretched acting of the cast, with the exceptions of Mrs. Siddons and J. P. Kemble, was responsible for its failure.
3 Rev. John Delap (1752-1812), rector of Lewes, Sussex, whose play, The Captives, was given at DL, March 9, 1786. J. P. Kemble wrote that “The captives were set at liberty last night amidst roars of laughter” (D.N.B., v. 762).
4 “Laugh where we must, be candid where we can; But vindicate the ways of God to man” (An Essay on Man, Epistle i, 1. 13).
5 Charles Burney, Jr. (1757-1817). When he was reading the play in the Green Room at first rehearsal, “the Actors dropt silently off, one by one and left him all alone” (Thraliana, ii. 916).
of their being paid only, that he consented to marry. ¹ I hear nothing now of Mr Sheridan's marriage. But that preparations are going on for both those great events is certain. Tho' it is said that Miss Ogle has thought better of it.² Her account of him is, that he is "the most agreeable witty Ugly Dog she ever Saw." I hope you will not be later than the 15th for if you are I Shall Scarcely catch a glimpse of you before I go to Scotland where my restless fate drives me this Summer.³ We are all well except my poor Husband who has been almost a cripple with a pain in his foot for about three months. We dont know what it is but I'm afraid it will not leave him. God bless you all

S. Siddons

Pray give all our loves and congratulations to Cecelia. Her little namesake is very witty and pretty.

Address: To Mrs Piozzi Denbigh North Wales

14

Tuesday [April 1795]⁴

My dear Friends

If you are come home Safe I Shall be truly happy, but I can Scarcely wish that you commenced your journey in this tremendous weather at the time you named to me in your last Letter. But pray let me be favour'd with a line to tell me you are all well, as soon as you arrive! I have been a wretched invalide for some weeks and the little dear Baby is just recovering from cutting two

¹ The Prince of Wales and Caroline of Brunswick were married on April 18, 1795, but not until Parliament voted to increase the Prince's income from £60,000 to £125,000 per year, and provide £71,000 for marriage expenses and a jointure of £50,000 per year for his wife.

² Richard Brinsley Sheridan married his second wife, Esther Jane Ogle, eldest daughter of Newton Ogle, Dean of Winchester, on April 27, 1795.

³ After her benefit as Lady Macbeth (DL, April 25, 1795) she left for a summer engagement at her brother Stephen Kemble's theatre in Edinburgh. There she made £800 for herself and brought £1600 into Stephen's treasury (Ffrench, p. 159).

⁴ Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/12. Month and year dated by mention of "the dear little Baby," who could only be Cecilia, born July 25, 1794, and now cutting teeth. The Piozzis left Denbigh on April 8 and were home at Streatham by April 17 (Thraliana, ii. 919).
teeth. The Fogs are so heavy that I dare not send her out but She is better without inhaling Such a “foul and pestilent con­gregation of vapours.”¹ What a dreadful winter for the poor. God help and relieve them and give us thankful hearts!² I am vex’d to the heart to find that I am no nearer you at Putney than I am here, nay I am farther off as to time on account of the cross road.³ All here congratulate ourselves on the near prospect of Seeing our beloved Streatham friends but who with So much tenderness as

Your own
S. Siddons

I embrace my dear Mr Piozzi from my heart. Pray tell him So and that I love him dearly.

Address: To Mrs Piozzi Streatham Park

[April 23, 1795]⁴

Dear Madam

I am commanded to inform you that it will be Thursday next before Mrs Sid. can again enjoy her country quarters at Streatham and then but for one night. On Saturday she plays for the last night and on Sunday or Monday elopes for Scotland⁵—you saw poor me on my crutches at Streatham, but I never was quite a cripple till within these two days, for to the foot on one side is added a sciatica on the other. So I cannot move off my chair nor on it without a good roar.⁶ But every body that comes in say[s] there will be a peace this year certainly—and that for a

¹ Hamlet, II. ii. 316.
² In this harsh winter, influenza killed many: “three hundred Hackney Coachmen have perished—Old people sink under the Complaint immediately, and Bloomsbury Parish buried 132 Corpses in St. George’s Church one Week” (Thraliana, ii. 912).
³ At this time Mrs. Siddons was living at her house in Great Marlborough Street.⁴ Ryl. Engl. MS. 574/27.
⁵ Lady Macbeth on April 25, 1795, at DL. “Mrs Siddons had as good a Benefit and acted as well as ever this Time; She is going to Scotland now” (Thraliana, ii. 924; see also p. 67, n. 3).
⁶ The seriousness of William Siddons’s condition prompted Mrs. Piozzi to write, “Dear lovely Siddons seems likely to be a Widow soon,” and to wonder on a possible match for her with Robert Ray, lawyer, “a prodigiously valuable young Man” (Thraliana, ii. 924).
moment gives me ease—I hope the three young Ladies¹ are well. Tell them little Cecys cold’s better, and she is very laughing and pert.

comps. to Mr Piozzi and believe me
yours very truly
Wm Siddons

Fryday Night—I mean Thursday April 23d
—Your Box for Monday is No 14 on the first flight
Address: Mrs Piozzi Streatham Park Surry

16

[Post June 8, 1795]²

Now my dear Friend I know you are in a State of agitation that I tremble to think of, but for all our Sakes call to your recollection the consciousness of having done what a tender Mother could do to promote the happiness of her Child under your own wing, and let us hope that the protection She has now So decidedly chosen for herself will not lessen it.³ What can I Say to comfort you which your own pious mind has not already Suggested to you? Nothing. I will therefore not outrage your feeling by any of the commonplace arguments which are always urg’d on these trying occasions But I will earnestly pray for the best alleviation your affectionate heart can find—The happiness of dear Cecelia. It is but this day that I have heard of her departure from Maria, and I have Stolen a moment “from other affairs” to tell you how Sincerely I Sympathise in your present distress and I hope and trust future content. Give my love to dear Mr Piozzi who I fear is half wild⁴—and believe me your affe. and faithful

S. Siddons

Thursday
Newcastle/95

Address: To Mrs Piozzi Streatham Park Near Streatham Surrey

¹ “The Siddons Girls are with us” (ibid. ii. 923).
² Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/6.
³ On June 8, 1795, Cecilia Piozzi eloped with John Meredith Mostyn (see Letter No. 13) and ran off to the north.
⁴ “Oh Lord! Oh Lord! Mostyn & Cecilia are run away to Scotland sure enough, and here is M’ Piozzi in an Agony about his Honour w’th he fancies injured by the step” (Thraliana, ii. 931).
Dear Madam

On the 7th of last month yours to Mrs Siddons is dated and on the 9th I suppose reach'd Marlborough Street, just after we had turn'd our backs upon it for this place, and forgetting to tell the persons left in the House to send Letters after us. There has it been laying till yesterday when little George arrived to spend his Holydays and brought it with him. Well may you think all here have forgotten you, and yet never any thing was farther from the truth—many's the time and oft you have been remember'd and talk'd about, not only by us, but several of your old acquaintance. The Penningtons, the Whalleys, the Lees, little Mr Gray, the Clergyman, General Paoli and c. &c. &c.—who are here and hereabout, who all speak of you with cordiality and esteem, who all lament that Streatham has lost you, and that Brinbella—tho a mighty pretty place, and under the dominion of George the Third "whom God long preserve," shoud almost be as inaccessible as Kamschatca or Siera Leoni. Tho we hope ere long to prove it otherwise when the barb of the arrow shall point Mrs Sid. that way as it does now Mr and Mrs Holman, whom we understand by a Letter receiv'd from her this morning are soon to be at Liverpool, and after that under your friendly roof.

I wish I coud send you any consoling or pleasant news. But all seems lowring as the weather has been here for some days (so I hope all your Trees & Shrubs reprendor vita e vigora) and yet I think, I can see the Irish faces which I meet at Mrs Ann Yearsly's Library brighten up a little, (by the by, I am here three weeks and every day in the above shop without once seeing the Heaven born genius. She confines herself in the upper apartments drinking as they say, not of the Helican fount, but that of Nantes—I believe tis there the best French Brandy is made). I confess I have ill bodings of this unhappy business,

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3 General Pascal Paoli (1725-1807), Johnsonian.
4 Joseph George Holman (1764-1817), actor, and Jane Hamilton Holman (d. 1810), actress.
5 Mrs. Ann Yearsley (1756-1806), verse writer and eccentric, the "Bristol milkwoman," who had a circulating library at the Colonnade, Bristol Hot Springs.
and fear its termination is yet far distant. By retakeing [sic] Wexford I hop'd everything. I thought it impossible they shoud make head after that. Still do we hear of new bodys mustering and like "Hell broth bubbling up" at various times and places. I was at the Bush Tavern Bristol this morning—a sort of Loyds—there was an extract of a Letter just put up from a Gentleman in Dublin to his friend here. It ran thus—

"another defeat of the insurgents 2000 kill'd
I fear we shall grow callow to these accounts ..."

T'is indeed horrid—and yet tis all we've left." The example of Ireland a warning to England, crush it there you bury it here—shoud the Monster there prevail, mercy upon us—but come let us take hope, and laugh at the Bug o bo-invasions however—(you have flatter'd me much by asking for that trifle which I have copied on t'other side).¹ I think if they were ever serious this had been the time, but Napper Tandy cannot persuade them to it—No—while we have "Hearts of Oak" within our Wooden Walls we'll yet sing Rule Brittania—Talk of Wooden Walls and here go by just at the moment, under our very Windows, four or five fine West India Ships, richly laden, sailing beautifully between St Vincents Rocks. We are indeed pleasantly situated at No 6 Princess Row Clifton Hill—but fear our Invalid finds but little improvement, tho providing all the means that Medical abilities point out. Change of scene is some relief and makes her think she's better, but the two Mauvaise symptoms still remain, frequent Cough and feverish pulse (more than ninety). There must be alteration here before I think she's mended. All besides are well. Mrs Siddons remarkably so, having found returning appetite and pleasant sleep—little Sallykin absolutely fat—Bella nor Bala, tho on their native Sod can scarce out do her—Cecy put to a little school because her prattling hurt Maria's head, and your humble Servant only a few Rheumatic pains, which he is grown us'd to and learn'd to bear almost without complaining, as Baron Trenck did his ponderous Bolts and Chains. On Sunday sennight we leave this place (all except Maria who remains

¹ "Did you read Mr. Siddon's incomparable Ballad upon the Great Nation? 'Tis really excellent in its kind"—Mrs. Piozzi to Mrs. Pennington, September 24, 1798 (Intimate Letters, p. 162).
with Mrs Pennington through the Summer) and go to Cheltenham, where Mrs Sid. performs a night or two. She has charged me to say all kinds of loving things, which you will better conceive, than I express—that she begs to hear from you again and knows you will excuse her from writing till that happens. With Sally and Maria I beg to join best wishes to yourself and Mr Piozzi Whose Leathern Shoes we hope—declare No Gouty feet inhabit there

I am most truly and sincerely yours Wm Siddons

P.S. Have you and do ever any of the Anti Jacobin papers reach you. I could almost wish not, that I may be the first to desire you wou’d get somebody in London to send you No 30 (Monday June 4th) down. I think you will be admirably amus’d with the caricature plot of a German Tragedy calld the Rov[ers] or the double arrangement. We all think it excellent and have laugh’d our sides sore, particularly at the Ballad which I have ventur’d to transcribe at a venture tho you may have seen or heard of it. The minuteness of description, so like the German taste, where it is introduc’d is surely excellent, as follows—

Scene changes to a Subterranean Vault in the Abbey of Quedlinburgh ;—with Coffins, Scutcheons, Death’s Heads, and cross bones—toads and other loathsome reptiles are seen traversing the other parts of the stage. Rogero appears in chains in a suit of Rusty Armour with his beard grown, and a Cap of a grotesque form upon his head, besides him a crock or pitcher supposed to contain his daily allowance. A long silence, during which the wind is heard to whistle through the Cavern. Rogero rises and comes slowly forward with his arms fold’d, takes his Guittar, tunes it and begins the following airs

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1 Maria Siddons never recovered and died several months later, October 7, while still living in the care of Mrs. Pennington at Clifton. For accounts of her last days with her family, see Thraliana, ii. 990, and Ffrench, pp. 172-79.

2 The Rovers, or, the Double Disappointment, a burlesque in imitation of German drama, was printed in Nos. 30 and 31 of The Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner (1798), wherein the author is identified as a Mr. Higgins (Courtesy of Sister Mary Andrea Corcoran). Allardyce Nicoll, A History of Late Eighteenth Century English Drama, 1750-1800 (Cambridge, 1927), p. 241, gives the author as George Canning. There seems to be no record of a performance.
I
When 'er with haggard eyes I view
This Dungeon that I'm rotting in
I think of those companions true
Who studied with me at the U—
iversity of Gottingen
iversity of Gottingen

II
Sweet kerchief checkd with heavenly blue
Which once my love sat knotting in—
Alas Matilda then was true
At least I thought so at the U—
iversity of Gottingen
iversity of Gottingen

III
Barbs, barbs alas how swift you flew
Her neat post Waggon trotting in
Ye bore Matilda to my view
Forlorn I languish'd at the U—
iversity of Gottingen
iversity of Gottingen

IV
This faded form, this pallid hue
This blood my veins are clotting in
My years are many. They were few
When first I enterd at the U—
iversity of Gottingen
iversity of Gottingen

V
There first for thee my passion grew
Sweet, sweet Matilda Pottingen
Thou wast the daughter of my tu
Tor Law Professor at the U—
iversity of Gottingen
iversity of Gottingen

[The following is his ballad, found at the end of the letter.]

Ist
Of all the great Wonders of Wonderful Story
The Wonder of Wonders I now lay before ye.
It is so very Wonderful I fear you will doubt it,
and yet tis passing true, so I beg you will not scout it.
For I tell you a tale of a great and mighty Nation
who frightened all the world with their Bug-o Bo invasion.
2d

A twelve month or more have they kep'd [sic] their vain paradeing
Rafts, Bomb-boats—flatt Bottoms—and other gasconadeing
and poor little England, whenever they decree Sirs
must bend to the yoke, and humbly bow the knee Sirs
to this heathenizing, equalizing, great & mighty nation
who frighten all the World—&c &c—

3d

But before they had brought their grand project to bear Sirs
a bit of rehearsal they thought it but fair Sirs.
They fixt on a Theatre scarce seen in the Ocean
[fear] few of their performers begin to set in motion
Do this fraternizing, brutalizing great & mighty Nation
who frighten all the World &c &c

4th

The month of May was fix’d upon, the night was very dark oh
Seven thousand strong they leave La Hogue, and soon they reach St Marcou
ah—ah—Jack Bull, the Frenchman cry beware of your [fear] ah
Do you be damn’d Monsieur—Jack cries t’will never grease your teeth ah
Nor any of your Thundering, plundering great & mighty Nation
who frighten all the World &c &c

5th

and now upon this little spot there chanc’d to be abiding
a few of the old Staple that their Country cou’d confide in.
In judging of these Monsieurs they were not very Nice Sirs
Themselves they rated pretty high, because they knew their Price Sirs
and well they know the Brags of this great & mighty Nation
who frighten all the World &c &c

6th

and now the gallant Work begins—our little band so glorious
Their mighty preparation marr [?] and prove themselves victorious
So now—by changing of a phrase, the saying may remain Sirs
Seven thousand French march’d up the Hill, and then march’d down again Sirs
and thus you have a taste of this great and mighty nation
who frighten all the World &c &c

7th

and now my noble countrymen be you but all united.
You plainly see what wondrous cause we have to be affrighted
and from St Marcous little band, this truth it is unfurl’d Sirs
Be England to herself but true, defiance to the World Sirs
But chiefly to this thundering, plundering, great and mighty Nation
who frighten all the World with their Bug-o-Bo Invasion
London Sept' 29th 1804

I thank God most Sincerely my dear Soul for your good Spirits and my dear Mr Piozzi's good Appetite for, till I'm quite apathis'd by disgust and disappointment, I Shall Still find a warm corner in my heart for you both; I think all my happiness made to itself wings and flew away with ye from dear Streatham. I wish to God you woud come there for I am quite Sure a great deal of it woud return with you again. And So I told dear Susan and Sophia when I saw them at Worthing last week, with whom I Spent the most comfortable Evening I have known for many a day, for I have been very unwell indeed all the Summer. I was really well that Evening—as if the power of the dear Mother, was communicated to her children. It runs in the blood of her I believe to do me good. Sophia has been not well, but they both think She is better. I was Sincerely grievd to See her pretty face discouloured by an irruption, which they Say has been occasiond by drinking water. So now poor dear, She is to drive it away by drinking Port Wine which I think a very pleasant remedy. She dont like it.—My little Cis is a great Source of anxiety to me, she has that cruel tendency in her Constitution that has already cost me so many Sighs and groans and tears—these will never cease to flow, and grief has done more than time to destroy those Eyes, which Shew no Symptom of decay to common observers, but which fail me very much indeed when I stand in need of them.—Mr Charles Kemble put himself into a Ship that was bound to St. Petersburgh about three Months ago, thinking he shoud be returnd by the opening of the Theatre, but we hear nothing of him—and we all begin of course to be very uneasy about him, tho if any thing had happend to the Vessel we must of course

1 Ryl. Eng. MS. 547/7.
2 Mrs. Siddons was suffering from a rheumatic condition which sometimes kept her in bed for weeks, in agony, deprived of the use of her left side (Ffrench, p. 215).
3 Frail, delicate and pale Cecilia Siddons was always a great anxiety to her mother. In March of 1799, Mrs. Piozzi described her as “sick and spoild, and fretful & fragile... they are fearful that She will not live” (Thraliana, ii. 992). Cecilia, however, outlived most of the family, married in 1833 George Combe, and died childless in 1868.
have heard of it.\(^1\) Mrs. H. Siddons is going to produce another Baby,\(^2\) but as for the Baby with a Woman's name, I must get Patty\(^3\) to tell you what She knows about her, and the young Roscius\(^4\) as he is calld, for I hear a great deal, and remember nothing, my concerns “ are of So floodgate and oerbearing nature, that they engulph and swallow up ” all indifferent things.\(^5\) Pray did the Newspaper inform you that Mr Siddons had “ done me the honour of a visit to Bannisters.”\(^6\) I only wish I could have Seen and heard you read this Senseless Paragraph! Oh! how you would have killd me with laughing!! I know of no deaths, births, or Marriages, except one of the latter Sort which I am very Sorry for because I know it will afflict his poor Mother and Sister—and you will be Sorry too for you have both been very good to them. It is the Marriage of Michael Sharpe to (I'm

\(^1\) Charles Kemble had toured Germany in the summer of 1801 (clipping, Enthoven Collection, V. & A. Museum), and according to the D.N.B. had travelled in the summer of 1803 to Vienna and St. Petersburg before joining his brother’s company at Covent Garden, appearing on September 12, 1803. I find no notice of his return from this apparent second trip to St. Petersburg in 1804, but on October 22, 1804, he was playing Laertes at Covent Garden (clipping, Enthoven Collection).

\(^2\) Henry Siddons (1774-1815), actor, first child of Sarah, married the actress Harriet Murray (1783-1844) on June 22, 1802. They had three children: Sarah Elizabeth, born June 18, 1803 (St. Paul’s Covent Garden Registers, Christenings, ii. 185, July 8, 1803), William, born in 1815, and this middle child, a daughter (see Letter No. 24), whose name, birthdate and deathdate have not yet been uncovered.

\(^3\) Patty Wilkinson, the daughter of the provincial manager Tate Wilkinson, had come to live in the Siddons household in 1799, originally as company for Sally, but she became “ almost more of a companion to the mother than to the daughter, accompanied Sarah on all her travels, and until her death never left her ” (Ffrench, p. 180). See Letter No. 19 to Mrs. Piozzi.

\(^4\) William Henry West Betty (1791-1874), the child actor who had phenomenal success in the provinces and enjoyed two triumphal seasons in London, opening at CG, December 1, 1804, as Selim in Barbarossa. The military was called out so great was the crush to see him. During the Master Betty “ craze ” Mrs. Siddons played several times. Young Betty supposedly got his inspiration to act from a performance by Mrs. Siddons at Belfast in 1801.

\(^5\) Othello, I. iii. 55.

\(^6\) Mrs. Siddons was close friend to Mrs. Fitzhugh of Bannisters, near Southampton, wife of William Fitzhugh, M.P., and “ seldom spent a year without visiting her at Bannisters” (Campbell, p. 215). The Siddons marriage was in the process of breaking up, and they formally separated in the next month, October 1804, but continued to visit one another.
afraid) a naughty little dancing Girl at Drury Lane calld Miss Menage.¹ I am calld here much Sooner than is agreeable to me, and the welfare of the Theatre has made me consent to play next Monday in Pizzaro.² I must go this minute to order my dress. So God bless ye both my very dear friends.

I am ever and ever

Yr affte

S. Siddons

Address : [Mrs Piozzi, Brynbella, Denbigh, North Wales]

[October 5, 1804]³

Dear Mrs Piozzi—

All that I know of Master Betty as you call him, is that he has electrified all the People at Edinbro, Dublin, Birmingham; and in short every place that he has shown his little person in—(he must be an astonishing Child) but that he can be a true portrait of Richard the 3d, Macbeth, Hamlet, &c—is quite impossible; it [tear : is ?] expected by the people who has [sic] seen him perform to cause the same sensation of delight and astonishment as was excited at the appearance of Garrick, Siddons, Kemble, Cook &c—Oh Lord—Oh Lord—he is only 13 years of age—Mrs Sid. begs to know what she is to do with the Puppet—she thinks it will be quite absurd her playing with him & begs you will give her your Opinion and advice⁴—(There is the Infant Billington,⁵

¹ Michael William Sharpe (c. 1771-1840), musician and painter, married Arabella Menage (d. 1817) in September 1804. His mother, Elizabeth Hopkins Sharpe (1756-1821), wife of Michael Sharpe (d. 1800), the musician, was the sister of Priscilla Hopkins (1758-1845), the wife of John Philip Kemble.

² "October 8 PIZZARO Mrs. Siddons also made her first appearance this season in Elvira . . ." (Monthly Mirror, November 1804).

³ Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/8. This letter is written by Patty Wilkinson. It is dated by reference to performance of Pizzaro at DL, October 4, 1804, and by the previous letter, No. 18.

⁴ Mrs. Siddons did not appear with Master Betty, and sat out most of that season.

⁵ Catherine Leesugg, actress and singer, later married James H. Hackett. The Harvard Theatre Collection has an etching of her, when a child, as Rolla in Pizarro, with caption: "The Infant Roscius and Billington. Born July 27, 1799. Patronized by the Prince of Wales at Brighton, Aug. 29, 1804."
a Little Strutting child who has Surpris’d the Multitude at Worthing, Brighton &c. She is a Little vulgar I fancy—; So much for the wonders of this age. Dear Mrs Siddons is very poorly indeed—Mr S. is at Bath—Mr Kemble and his Little Lady are well¹—The old Lady² very poorly & very cross. (What do you think of Miss Lee’s Book).³ I saw Pizarro shockingly ill acted at Drury Lane Last night, but every thing is palatable to the Public at present. Mrs H. Siddons is going to produce another Little Sidonian. God bless you dearest Madam. With kind love to Mr Piozzi believe me very much y’ obligd and sincere friend. We spent a pleasant fortnight at Goodwood with the Duke of Richmond, [and 4 days] at Worthing.

M. Wilkinson

Address: To Mrs Piozzi near Denbigh North Wales

My good Friends

For this is meant for both tho Superscrib’d to one—I promis’d Mr Piozzi if any thing interesting happend I woud communicate it to Brinbella. Little did I imagine so very important, so very interesting an occurrence woud afford me the occasion. To stop farther conjecture—know then, about the third day after your departure,⁵ word was brought me up stairs that puss had been missing all day and kittens were squealing for food—I desird a spoon might be put to their mouths with warm milk—but alas they were too young and simple to know what it meant—and still squeald on. I was distressd when lo in comes Mrs Puss at the moment and put us all to rights again—Well—she staid all the next day, and was so kind as to kill us two Rats—at which

¹ Apparently J. P. Kemble and his wife.
² Sarah Ward Kemble (1735-1807), matriarch of the Kemble-Siddons clan, who now lived in London since the death of her husband Roger Kemble on December 6, 1802.
³ Sophia Lee (1750-1824), The Life of a Lover (1804). “Sophia Lee’s Verses on Love are pretty” (Thraliana, ii. 1022).
⁵ The Piozzis were at Bath from the end of January until May 10 (Thraliana, ii. 1065).
my maid rejoiced. The day after that off she was again, and woful to relate has never returnd again—Now what was to be done—still to young to lap and a fine uproar they made—my whole Family in distress. When in comes Mrs Twiss, and hearing our situation, said their Puss had Kittens a few days back. They had destroyd all but one—and that one had died during the last night. Here was a circumstance—away was sent our Kittens to Campden place. Puss received them with the greatest joy—and they her, and there they are, fattening and skipping about as Kittens shoud do—and there at present Ends "their strange eventful History"—

I have nothing else for you very interesting. Bath is getting thin consequently very dull, tho we had a fine show yesterday at Sydney Gardens, being the Gala given by the White Hart Harmonic Society. I suppose there was about a thousand people—seven hundred of which I shoud think were Ladies beautifully dressd. The weather was lovely—and all went on charmingly till the Ices and Jellies were to be distributed. And then such a confusion and scramble, I never saw—waiters running to particular Boxes—Gentlemen, nay Ladies too—snatching as they passed. Tis not to be described but the worst of all a serious discord happend—which is likely to make some work for the long Robe—The Revd Mr. Bowen¹—who I believe every body knows—one of the principal of the Society—was accosted by Sir George Colebrooke,² and chargd with being inattentive in his office. Mr Bowen, being from Wales—look you went into a passion, and spoke hot words, when Sir George thinking to cool him threw a Glass of Ice in his face. But this had a contrary effect when fists were held up and sticks brandished—but the combatants were separated—without the appearance of blood outwardly. However Sir George is looked upon as the aggressor, and the

¹ Rev. John Bowen (d. 1835), of 13 Portland Place, Bath, was minister of Margaret Chapel from 1796 to 1829. He founded the Royal Harmonic Society in Bath in 1799. This society held its meetings at the White Hart. The Local Collection in the Bath Reference Library contains two silhouettes and a caricature of Bowen, and three songs written by him (one in manuscript). (Courtesy of Mr. Peter Pagan, Director, Bath Municipal Libraries.)

² Sir George Colebrooke, Bt. (1729-1809), banker and promotor, a kind of moral censor at the Bath Assemblies.
Rev'd is to proceed against him accordingly. Hoping you had a pleasant and safe journey home, and are well—allow me to say a line to 12 Oxford Building will always be a pleasure and gratification to your ever oblig'd

and very sincere friend

Wm Siddons

Address: For Mrs Piozzi  Brinbella near Denbigh North Wales

21 Bath Oct' 12th 1805

My good Friends

Here I am safe in my closet with Books. It woud be laughable to call it either a Library or study

Yesterday I executed as many commissions as the time woud allow—dispatch'd all your Letters, and saw No 22 Pulteney Street. There has been no Lodgers in it since May, for which the Woman seemed griev'd. I put the questions to her Mr Piozzi desir'd, if she woud permit you to sleep there Saturday the last night of Novem and one or two of your Servants perhaps a night or two before. She said certainly if she had no Lodgers to prevent it, and I think now it is not likely she will. Tis extremely clean at present. I talked with Mr Gibbons at the Library about the Books. He said the price of those Volumes was generally reckon'd seven shillings, but that he woud take half that Sum from you. I told him if that was the case you woud likely bring it back to him. You must expect but little news from Bath, at present. Tis, as usual at this time, very thin. The Balls begin Monday the 28th of this month, the Concerts about the middle of the next, but the New Theatre opens this evening. I was in it last night when it was lighted up for the Inspection of a few private friends. Tis

1 Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/22.
2 William Siddons had been visiting at Brynbella, whence he returned to Bath about September 17 (Thraliana, ii. 1069).
3 A house usually occupied by the Piozzis at Bath (ibid. ii. 1070, n. 2).
4 Thomas Gibbons was a bookseller and stationer at 7 Bridge Street, Bath. He also ran a cheap circulating library with a small stock and issued a catalogue for this in 1800. He moved to 5 Argyle Street between 1800 and 1805 (Mr. Peter Pagan).
5 The new theatre in Beaufort Street, erected by the city architect, Palmer, in conjunction with the architect George Dance.
very handsome indeed, and to all appearance very commodious both for performers and Spectators. They expect something of a riot this evening on account of there not being a Shilling Gallery which they have been always used to.

I found my relations the Twisses all well. There was a Letter from Mrs Siddons upon my Table when I arrived telling me she was well and pressing me to come up directly to see her little Box, which she continues to think is very pretty. I have wrote her word I had rather she first woud come to Bath, as I had rather pay my visit in London after Christmass. She performed on Wednesday Evening in Isabella. The News papers of yesterday were all very liberal in their praise, but all agree as to the “en bon point,” since her last engagement. In her last Letter is this paragraph. “I hope our dear friends at Brynbella are well. Give my kind love when you see or write to them. For my own part it is so great an effort for me to write, that I hope and trust none of my friends will blame me for the in-frequency of my Letters—”

I did not pick up the Miss Lees as I thought I might at Llangollan, tho driving down the Street I saw two Ladies in dark Habits standing opposite the Inn. They happend to be more curious to me than those I expected, being no other than Miss Ponsonby and Lady Butler whom I had never seen before, I did not find out which was which, as the saying is, but I perceived one was tolerably well looking, but the other—“uckely von.” They were preparing at the Inn to receive Count Woronzow the Russian Ambassador whom they expected to sleep there that night. I asked the waiter if he knew where he was going; only

1 In April, 1805, Mrs. Siddons moved into her new cottage at Westbourne Farm located on the present Harrow Road. A visit there prompted William to write an ode “On Mrs. Siddon’s Cottage at Westbourne,” printed by Ffrench, pp. 222-23.

2 Isabella; or, the Fatal Marriage, CG, October 9, 1805—“her first appearance this season” (Harvard playbill).

3 See Letter No. 22.

4 The “Ladies of Llangollen”, the Hon. Sarah Ponsonby (1755-1831) and Lady Eleanor Butler (1745-1829), who established themselves in a country cottage in the Vale of Llangollen, about fifteen miles southeast of Denbigh, a convenient stopping place on the way to Bath.

5 Simeon Romanovitch Woronzoff (1744-1832), Russian ambassador to London, 1784-1806.
to make a Tower Sir he reply’d, what says I a Martello—the fellow star’d and we parted. I was glad I was not to sleep there, for I thought his excellency would create a great bustle, when Lo when I got to the Cross Foxes, Oswestry, there he was, and going to rest. But no Bustle, for the poor gentleman was unwell and his attendants but few—I found he had been on a visit to Powis Castle—Before my paper is quite fill’d let me not forget to say that Puss is safe and well, and very handsome—When I arose on Thursday Morning at Rodborrow it was pouring so with rain and looked so black, that I really was sorry for you at Abergelly—however yesterday & today are charming. I hope you enjoy your dips and that they will be of great Service to you, and that Mr Piozzi is still able to eat a good dinner, if he can but get it where he is—and now good friends have pity upon an idle Man and load him with as many Commissions as you can. At the same time believe that he is yours very faithfully and sincerely—

Wm Siddons

Address: For Mrs. Piozzi

Bath—Octo’ 29th 1805

My Dear Madam

Am I the first to inform you of the meloncholly event that happend here last week. I will venture to describe it, for tho you may have heard or even seen some mention in a news paper, perhaps I can give more particulars. How often in the course of my visit to you have we lamented and been surpriz’d at the frequency of accidental deaths, Suicides &c—little expecting that one woud happen which I am going to describe. On Wednesday last Miss Ann Lee² was found suspended from the top railing of her Bed, by a rope, quite dead, but warm—She and Harriot³ you know were just returnd from their Tour in which I was so near joining

¹ Ryl. Eng. MS. 892/57. The reference to the beginning of the dress balls “last night” confirms the remark in Letter No. 21 that the “Balls begin Monday the 28th of this month.” This letter was sent the morning of the 30th.

² Anna Lee, the younger sister of Harriet and Sophia Lee, who assisted with the Belvidere School. The D.N.B. entry on the Lees avoids any mention of her.

³ Harriet Lee (1757-1851), novelist and dramatist.
them. On their return on the fatal morning she was call’d up to breakfast but beg’d they woud let her lay a little longer being sleepy—upon which Mrs Lee¹ and Harriot after their breakfast walk’d into Bath for their Marketing. On their return finding she was not up, went to call her, but found the door lock’d. Upon calling and receiving no answer they were alarm’d, got the door forc’d and there she was, as I have describ’d. What a terrible shock for the poor Sisters. The Coroner sat, and with great difficulty it seems brought in the Verdict Lunacy. She was buried early on Sunday Morng in Widcombe Church yard, and now we find that very lately in the course of her Tour in Wales She made an attempt in the following way—She was walking with two young Ladies by a brook or river, went nearer it than was necessary, and slip’d in as by accident. The young Ladies had courage enough to assist, and pull’d her out, but it seems she appear’d as if she did not want assistance and wav’d her hand, for them to desist—poor Soul. She certainly was very unwell all last winter, a slow fever and very nervous—The cause we cannot tell. Report says a disappointment of the Heart, but the person not nam’d. I hear, in a day or two they leave their House and never intend to come near it again, but settle at Manchester where their Brother² has a Wife and family. What numberless, melancholly, and Sudden changes There are in this World.

Now pray let me have a line from you soon to tell me how you far’d at the Sea, how long you staid, and how you and Mr Piozzi are at present. Well I hope—Not very full yet at Bath. The Dress Balls began last night with their new Master of the Ceremonies Mr King from the Lower Rooms³—

Mr & Mrs Fitzhugh dind with me in my little Oxford Cabbin yesterday. She lamented much she shoud leave Bath before your arrival, but I think you have a great chance of meeting with Mrs Sid. here in the course of Dec’.—wether she will perform or not I cannot yet tell. I rather think not.⁴ Their new Theatre

¹ Sophia Lee (1750-1824), novelist and dramatist, and the sister, not the mother, of the other two girls.
² George Augustus Lee (1761-1826), partner in the Manchester cotton-spinning firm, Philips and Lee (D.N.B., xi. 801).
³ James King; see p. 87, n. 3.
⁴ There is no record of Mrs. Siddons performing at Bath that season.
is elegant and commodious and consequently very attractive of itself, not wanting [an] auxiliary—at least not for some time.

I think we stand a good chance now for the assistance of Prussia. I heard a Letter read yesterday of a Mrs Jackson who lives here—and whose Son is envoy at Berlin. The Letter was from a younger Son just arrived from his Brother—and one paragraph of the Letter is; "Mother I shall see you soon and shall bring you pleasant news from Prussia"—and yesterday, or the day before, said Mr Fitzhugh's relation Lord Harrowby⁴—as Ambassaor Extraordinary to that Court. If this is the Case—and with the aid of Sweden, if we cannot beat this Corsican and bring him to reasonable terms—the Lord have Mercy upon Europe. I see Col. Glover² frequently. All the family are well and he says Lintern³ has promis'd Mr Piozzi a famous Instrument. I think he said one of the Princesses had it at Weymouth last Summer. The weather is now Cold and very damp—and I think you will have no Objection of getting into winter quarters here, and that no accident may prevent it is the sincere wish of your most truly

Wm Siddons

Address: Bath Oct't. thirty 1805 Mrs Piozzi Brynbella
Denbigh, N.W.

23

Bath—Sunday Nov't 10th 1805⁴

Dear Mrs Piozzi

I write to you so quick on the business of your House Maid. I sent Samuel directly to seek after your old Cook at Miss Praeds and he found her, but she knew of no Chambermaid out of Place—but there has since been a Girl to visit my Servants now wanting such a Service and luckily can be well recommended, if you can

---Footnotes---
⁴ Dudley Ryder, 1st earl of Harrowby (1762-1847).
² Colonel John Glover, who had been commanding officer of the Infantry Corps of the Bath Volunteers, raised in 1798 and disbanded in 1802. His address was 36 Henrietta Street, Bath.
³ James Lintern was partner in a firm of music publishers and musical instrument makers with premises in Abbey Churchyard and later at 13 The Grove (now Orange Grove) (Grove's Dictionary, v. 250).
⁴ Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/23.
agree with her respecting Wages—She liv’d a year or more with Mrs Twiss. I have seen Mr Twiss and ask’d her Character, which he says is very good indeed—that they were sorry to part with her but she got better Wages by going to live with General and Mrs Tarlton.  

There she has liv’d a year, and given Satisfaction, but they have left Bath—She had eleven Guineas a year, but will come to you for ten, and not less—which I believe are common enough Wages at Bath. She will have no objection of going to Wales with you if you approve of her—and is not afraid of Work, she says, for the General’s family were twenty and she was the only House Maid—You must let her have an answer immediately, which she will wait for, and if you agree will attend you on your arrival at Pulteney Street.

I went a few days ago to see if there was any Lodgers in the House. There was a Family, but they were to go away on Fryday last. I think it unlikely they will let it again for the short time—and that you may enter on Saturday Night, and your Servants a night or two before, upon enquiry. I found there was a Sopha in the Drawing Room with a Cover suitable to the Furniture. I hope to hear my Friend is better, and that nothing will prevent you coming at the time propos’d. Tho as you rightly observ’d there is no dependence upon events in this unstable life. I wrote you word Mrs Siddons would be here the beginning of next month—That is defer’d but does not much signify as tis but for a short time. She is to visit Mrs Fitzhugh at Southampton, and tis convenient she shoud do it first, as they (the Fitzhughs) are oblig’d to go to London the beginning of January, he being in Parliament. From there, Mrs S intends coming here—if no other frustration happens. After next Wednesday, she does not perform in London again till Easter.

Heres News—heres joy and lamentation—Heres a Subject for the Muse. Has not yours been at work. I warrant it has—

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1 Sir Barnastre Tarleton (1754-1833) and his wife Susan Priscilla.
2 Mr. Piozzi was suffering from gout again. They occupied their lodgings at Pulteney Street, Bath, from December 1 to March 7 (Thraliana, ii. 1070).
3 At this point in the manuscript William drew two wreaths: one a laurel wreath inscribed within, "Rejoice Britain Rejoice," and the other, shaded around in black, inscribed within, "Mourn Britain Mourn." The reference, of course, is to Admiral Nelson’s victory and death at Trafalgar on October 21, 1805.
mine has I assure you and I am vain and hardy enough to send it before your scrutinizing eye—Tis a hasty effusion and meant for a particular purpose. Of that more presently. Cast your eye on the opposite and let the hurry it was done in excuse its defects.

1st
What a difficult Task o Brittania is thine,
The Laurel and the Cypress at once to entwine.
How grievd is the Muse, when she raises her Voice
To think she must mourn, with such cause to rejoice.
To our Annals is added another proud day
But our own gallant Nelson is lost in the fray.

2nd
Yet willing this Tribute we pay to his name,
For he died as he liv’d full of glory and fame.
From Memory his Valour can never depart,
And his Tombstone will be every Englishman’s Heart.
Thus our Navy has added another bright day
Tho its own gallant Nelson is lost in the fray

3rd
Oft has the Foe by his Thunder been scar’d.
That different Regions his prowess declar’d.
From the Shores of Old Nile to the coasts of proud Spain,
His fame has been echo’d again and again.
And Trefalgar has added another bright ray,
Tho each Briton must mourn one event in the fray.

4th
And now let the gloomy soul’d Corsican boast
Of his Conscripts, Himself, and invincible Host.
His Navy thus shatter’d how much must he dread
That his Commerce and Colonys too are all fled.
And this to old England is sure a proud day
Tho our gallant Nelson is lost in the fray.

5th
Farewell Valiant Hero—intrepid and bold.
With the Worthys of Yore shall thy name be enrol’d.
But Brittania now speaks, and is heard to declare
We have reason to mourn, yet we must not despair.
We have Collingwood left us—to fight, beat, and Pray
Tho our own gallant Nelson is lost in the fray.

This scribble you must know was intended to b[e read] at the Theatre last night, which accounts for its haste. It was to have
been accompanied with a decorative Scene—but the Scene could not be got ready—so I believe it will be done next Saturday. For they perform here but once a Week at present— if the accounts are true about Bologne we must have something added—

I was sorry to read your Account of Lady Kirkwall. Pray when you see her make my respectful comps. and say (what is the truth) how much she has my good wishes for her better health.

With the same good wishes towards you and Mr Piozzi— yours &c &c &c

Wm Siddons

Mr Tyson is not dead but return'd with five hundred per Ann. for his life allowd by Mr King his Successor—

Address : Mrs Piozzi Brynbella near Denbigh North Wales

24

July 7th—1806

I begin to want to know how our good Friends do at Brinbella. Tis six weeks today since I left Bath—and have all the time been enjoying pretty good Air—tho so near the great Brick kiln call'd London—which being thin'd does not send up quite so much smoak and sulphur as it does in the Midst of Winter.

Tis a very pretty Birds nest Mrs Siddons has made here—

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1 There is no mention of Siddons's poem being read at the Bath Theatre on Saturday, November 16, 1805, either in the bills or in the Bath Chronicle.

2 Anna Maria Fitzmaurice, Viscountess Kirkwall, who separated from her husband, John, Viscount Kirkwall about May, 1805.

3 Richard Tyson (d. 1820) was Master of Ceremonies at Tunbridge Wells until he succeeded Major Brereton at the Lower Assembly Rooms, Bath, in 1780. He removed to the Upper Rooms in 1785, where he was Master of Ceremonies for 20 years. His obituary appears in Gentleman's Magazine (1820), pt. 2, p. 571. James King, an Irishman who had distinguished himself in the British Army during the American Revolution, was elected Master of Ceremonies of the Bath Lower Rooms in 1785 and the Upper Rooms in 1805. He was also Master of Ceremonies at Cheltenham. King was well informed, elegant in person and manners, and assiduous in his duties. Obituaries and an epitaph appeared in the Bath papers at his death in October, 1816 (Courtesy of Mr. Peter Pagan).


5 At Westbourne Farm.
and would do very well with a snug House in Town for the damp and dreary months. Otherwise it would not suit me who towards the end of Sep’ shall wish to house myself under the Shelter of one Oxford. And in two months after I hope to find somebody else [sic] safe harboured under the Shelter of one Pulteney [sic].

I think Mrs Siddons is in better health, and looks handsomer in the Face than for some years past. So much does she enjoy “This Shepherds Life”—Yet in three weeks we shall be in a different scene, namely the Sea side. You must know we have two as pretty Grand daughters, at least we think so, as any England boasts. One three years old, the other one and a half. Darlings, I assure you. Their Father and Mother are gone to pick up crumbs for them. They have just had the Measles—and Sea Bathing is recommended to strengthen them again. Tis for their sakes that Grandpa and Grandma make this excursion. We have fix’d on Broadstairs for the purpose, as so much more retir’d than Brighton, Margate or Ramsgate. We leave this on the 24th and shall stay six weeks—but before we go, hope to have a line from Brinbella—and shall be happy to hear that all is well there.

But they will say, what not a bit of news from the great Manufactory. If there were not such things as English Chronicles that fly three times a week across the Country, and record every transaction, one might say something new. As it is, we are fore-stald—and one might as well send word that “Queen Anns dead” as that [smudge] great dinners and rejoicings amongst Lord Melvilles Friends on account of his accquittal, that Mr Fox is seriously very ill, that the Stocks are amazingly rose—on the prospect of Peace, nay perhaps forestall’d in the intelligence that L’d Holland sets out for Paris this morning to endeavour to

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1 Their respective lodgings in Bath.
2 Henry and Harriet Siddons, on summer tour. See p. 76, n. 2.
3 Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville (1742-1811), against whom impeachment proceedings were introduced in parliament for misappropriation of naval treasury funds.
4 Charles James Fox died September 13, 1806.
5 Henry Richard Vassall Fox, 3rd Baron Holland (1773-1840), who in 1806 was a negotiator with the United States over the impressment of American seamen.
negotiate preliminaries—that Charles Kemble was married on
Wednesday last to Miss De Camp—&c &c &c. I will not there­
fore attempt any news, but conclude with our best and most
sincere good wishes to both our friends, hoping to hear from them
soon when they will direct W Siddons to Westbourn Farm
Paddington

Address : Mrs Piozzi Brinbella near Denbigh

25

[August 7, 1807]²

" Each day reminds us all, that such things are—
" I cannot but remember—such things were—

On the 7th day of August 1805 I was looking upon the blue
Neptune across the beautiful Vale of Clyw’d—from the com­
fortable Mansion of Brinbella. On this day August the 7th 1807
I am looking on the same grand object across a little cornfield and
from a very humble Tenament situate on the Coast of Sussex at
a place call’d Worthing. Tis so long since I have had any in­
formation of my good friends, tho I have often thought of them,
that this comes begging they will afford me some, and very soon
I hope—and very good I pray. Our last encounters were but
melancholly—they will not bear to be dwelt upon—may the next
be different³—

What prospect does your Harvest bear. You have not yet
put sickle to the Corn, for they have but just began it here. But
it looks abundant, and the Hay was prodigious. And is all this
store providing think you for the Conqueror of Europe—Heaven
forbid. But we hear that his triumphant Legions, at least many
of them, are again gazing on " the White Cliffs of Albion "—
and that the ensuing spring, so think many of our Legislators,
will the great trials come. Well—let it. " Who’s afraid "—I am

¹ Charles Kemble married the actress Marie Thérèse De Camp (1774-1838)
on July 2, 1806. She thenceforth appeared on the stage as Mrs. Charles
Kemble.
³ Mr. Piozzi’s health had so deteriorated that he was now to be a permanent
invalid until his death in 1809. See Clifford, pp. 420-25.
not I declare. But come let me hear something about Brinbella, within and without. Has gout kept its distance. In London I am told it did—you were not well, on your first getting home. That I hope, did not last long—and that you are running about looking at the out door creatures, Black Jack, ¹ Sofia [?], Bella and Bala—pig, poultry &c &c &c.

You will ask perhaps what I am doing and what brought me here—First let me tell you that I left Bath the last day of June for Christ Church and spent the month of July there with Cecelia, who is indeed in very good health at present. When her Holy-days were over, I came here, where are my Son Henry—his Wife—and their two beautiful Babies—brought here for Bathing. And here we shall all stay till the beginning of the next month Septem'¹. I then go to Mrs Siddons at Westbourne (who has been performing at Liverpool and York and is now at Cheltenham) where I shall stay a few weeks. And then to my Winters nest—may I expect to see you there—

News from here I have none, except here is the little Sprig of Royalty, the Princess Charlotte, learning to ride upon a Donkey—for that is all the rage from the Prince to the Peasant at these Watering Places.

You must have known Worthing when you were used to be so much at Brighton, but you do not know it now as it is larger I dare say than Brighton was then. It looks like a place built but yesterday—and I can now count Seventy new Houses rearing for another Season—which seem to be wanting, for familys are coming daily, who cannot get a Lodging—which shows you what a rage this dipping is become—I am still a sad cripple, and always must be—but always yours and Mr Piozzi's true friend and well wisher

Wm Siddons

A line will find me at No 4 Prospect Row Worthing—

Address : Mrs Piozzi Brinbella near Denbigh North Wales

¹ Did the Piozzis name one of their farm animals for John (“Black Jack”) Philip Kemble?
Bath—Decr 24th—1807

I have no fresh news ; tonight as usual, Rauzzini's night, with Braham and Storace. And Betty Sharp, well enough to add her sweet pipe—

I had heard of your new Son in Law, first from the Rev'd Thelwall and next from Miss Williams, who I talked a little with yesterday, and she was pretty well.

Most of the Bath Characters you must be pretty well acquainted with and you will discover strong but severe painting. As far as I can guess Ramrod is King, Master of Ceremonies; Rattle, Mathews; Mrs Vehicle, Mrs Carr; Miss Speakplain, Miss Stammer; Sir Geoffry Croaker, Sir G. Colebrook; Signiora Rattana, Miss Wroughton; Dr Faddle, Dr Gibbs—(I believe you were in the room when the scene of Mrs Broadbottom and Lady Nettle was acted—at least you heard of it.) Counsellor Morose, Counseller Morris; Old Hircius, a Rev'd

2 Venanzio Rauzzini (1746-1810), singer and composer, who settled in Bath after 1787, where he taught and conducted fashionable concerts.
3 John Braham (1777-1856), tenor and composer.
4 Anna Storace (1766-1817), vocalist and actress.
5 Probably Mrs. Elizabeth Hopkins Sharpe (1757-1821).
7 John Thelwall (1764-1834), reformer and lecturer on elocution.
8 Probably Helen Maria Williams (1762-1827), authoress and sometime friend to Mrs Piozzi.
9 Bath Characters: or Sketches from Life. By Peter Paul Pallet was printed that fall in London, 1807. Its author was not the suspected Dr. Falkner, but Richard Warner (1763-1857), divine and antiquary. His Literary Recollections, 1830, are full of anecdotes about many of the Bath fashionable. See p. 87, n. 3.
10 Captain Mathews (Notes and Queries, 2nd series, ii. 253).
11 Miss Carr, an actress who married a gentleman of Bath. See Monkland, Supplement to the Literature and Literati of Bath (Bath, 1855), p. 63.
12 Miss Stammer unidentified. See p. 97, n. 2.
13 Miss Wroughton unidentified. See p. 97, n. 2.
14 Sir George Smith Gibbes (1770-1851), physician and a prominent figure at Bath (D.N.B., vii. 1127).
15 John Morris, a barrister, who lived in Bladud's Buildings (1809 Bath Directory).
Mr Morshed; Madam Villianois, Mrs Villars; Dr Vegetable, Dr Gardner; Dr Barecat, a Dr Burkit; Mr Mixum, Mr Bowen; Dr Vellum, Dr Falkner; Dr Harmony, Dr Harrington; Bow wow, Parson Bowen (the musical glass man); Mr Resin, Rauzzini; Mr Drawcansir, Daubeny; Dr Shipper, Dr Sheperd (a Huntingtonian); Dr Smut, Stafford Smith; Sir Clerical and Lady Orange, Mr and Mrs Laman; Revd Mr Chip, Mr Wood of Newton; Dick Sable, Dr Warner.

Dr Falkner being so well spoken of, it was no wonder that suspicions fell upon him as the author. Therefore there was written upon all the dead Walls, "Peter Paul Pullet, at No 14 Circus" (where Falkner lives). He thought fit to put a Letter in the news papers to confute the innuendo—

So much for the Bath Characters. Next are to appear "Pump Room Conversations," and I say to those that laugh at the characters—don't laugh to [sic] soon. Who knows who is to be plac'd in the Pump Room—

Well here is better Political news however. The people are rejoicing about this Brazil Business—and today a Merchant, who has been dining at the public table I do, sets out to London tomorrow in order to fit out a ship for that trade—

And now with the comps. of the ensuing Season most truly yours &c

W Siddons

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1 Rev. Mr. Moreshead (Notes and Queries, 2nd series, ii. 253).
2 Ibid.
3 Rev. Dr. John Gardiner, proprietor and minister of the Octagon Proprietary Chapel, Milsom Street, Bath.
4 Probably Dr. Birkit, M.D., 3 Trim Street (1800 Bath Directory).
5 Mr. Bowen, Bath apothecary, with whom the Piozzis frequently traded.
6 Dr. Henry Harington (1727-1816), physician and amateur musician, "composer and physician" to the Bath Harmonic Society (Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, iv. 70-71).
7 See p. 79, n. 1.
8 Charles Daubeny (1745-1827), Archdeacon of Salisbury.
9 Rev. Dr. Sheppard, 9 Chapel Row, an eccentric and preacher at the Countess of Huntington's Chapel in the Vineyards.
10 Rev. Martin Stafford Smith, 18 Queen Square, Bath, chaplain to Bishop Warburton.
11 Thomas Leman (1751-1826), antiquary (D.N.B., xi. 901).
12 Rev. John Wood, incumbent of Newton St. Loe, a village about 3½ miles west of Bath.
Have you heard of the two little Poems that every body seems to be reading here. One call'd the "Peacock at home," where all the birds are invited, and attend—the other the "Butterflys Ball." They are really playful things, and amuse "children of a larger growth"—

Address: Mrs Piozzi

27

Thursday [undated]¹

My dear Friend

How happy are my children now! and when when Shall I be So happy? alas! God knows when I Shall again See dear Streatham, but do not my beloved creature do not let them be foolish and catch cold (for I dont [know] how I am Somehow uneasy about them) and then I Shall be happy enough. But they take no care of themselves and I have So much to do, and think of, that they Shoud So do in mere kindness to your

Aff²

S. Siddons

I rejoice to hear that you are all going on So well. God long con­tinue every blessing to you and dear Mr Piozzi—I know not why but I coud weep at every word I write to you. Adieu Adieu Adieu—

Address: To Mrs Piozzi Streatham Park Streatham

28

[Undated]²

My dear Mrs Piozzi

I am so ill and in Such pain at this Moment that I know not how you will be able to read my more than ever unintelligible

¹ Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/16. Internal evidence is insufficient to date except sometime in early or mid-1790s, on one of the frequent occasions when Mrs. Siddons left her children with the Piozzis at Streatham.

² Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/14. Internal evidence is insufficient to date, but probably 1790-1792, when Mrs. Siddons was suffering from a malady which she believed was "Nerves and Nerves only." The diagnosis finally came and in October 1792 Mrs. Piozzi wrote to Penelope Weston Pennington that "poor Mrs. Siddon's Disorder that we have all been at such a stand about, turns upon close Examination to be neither more or less than the P—given by her Husband" (Intimate Letters, p. 74). See also Thraliana, ii. 771, and Ffrench, p. 152.
Scrawl. I cannot however any longer delay to thank you for your kind Solicitude and to assure you that my firm belief is that I Shall be better in a few days. An application of the old remedy is necessary and I doubt not of its good effect on your present very miserable

S. Siddons

Give my love to yr d' husband and Cecy

Address : To Mrs Piozzi Streatham Park Streatham
Fryday P : Post

29

Fryday Morning ten o Clock
[January 1793 ?]

My Dear Madam

I do believe the Fleet is now at Sea. The King sent a particular Message yesterday to a Gentleman in the drawing room yesterday who was at a distance from him that he had just receiv'd an express to that purpose—and that all wou'd be well. Let us hope so too, and that frightened Europe will soon have a peace. I do think it will be so.

But I write this to say how sorry I am to hear that poor Mr Piozzi has suffer'd so much and is still so poorly. I really did intend to come down yesterday to Streatham to have seen him but Mrs Siddons was oblig'd to finish all her take leaves and I cou'd not have the Carriage. The time has been when I cou'd have walk'd as far, but that alas is past. Well I commit my daughter to your kindness for ten or twelve days, when I certainly will come over and hope most sincerely I shall find you all in better health and spirits. We are all here at Breakfast and very dismal indeed—tears standing in every eye for the Boxes and Bundles stand all about and the Chaise is expected in half an

1 Ryl. Eng. MS. 574/28.
2 This letter may be probably dated sometime in January 1793, but the evidence is marginal. In January 1793 the fleet was sailing to the Mediterranean for the protection of Italy.
3 "Mrs. Siddons has called home Sally," January 10, 1793 (Intimate Letters p. 74); "Sweet Siddons has been here to careen and refit after her terrible cold," January 24, 1793 (Intimate Letters, p. 78).
hour. We shall sleep tonight I believe at a place call'd Towcester and tomorrow dine with the Greateheeds at Guys Cliffe—she has been very poorly ever since she has been there with an obstruction in her Bowels.

Farewell. My kindest and sincerest condolments wait on Mr Piozzi. Let him soon be well and believe me his and your very faithful and very truly

W Siddons

Address: Mrs Piozzi Streatham Park Surrey