

Florence, January 5th 1765.

THE death of Churchill, the poet, was thought of such importance that the Court of France sent an account of it in their ministerial gazette,<sup>1</sup> with their reflections on the importance which they thought it would be at this crisis to the ministry in England. Surely nobody can grieve for so violent and worthless a fellow, whose only talents consisted in outrageous satire which, I should think, must revolt both his friends and enemies. The few of his things that I have accidentally seen, I own, produced such an abhorrence for his character in me that I should not have been displeased to hear that he had been severely chastised by the hand of some stout porter, since there was no other way of punishing such unsufferable abuse. There is something very whimsical in the laws of honour that will permit a man to pass over the grossest insults in print at a time that he would be thought infamous if he did not resent the slightest affront to his face. What must foreigners think of a nation where any low-born fellow who happens to have a knack of rhyming and impudence to say what he pleases, shall be permitted to insult the Crown, dictate to its ministers, and in the grossest manner to abuse all ranks of people. I have often wondered that the French, whom Wilkes has treated so contemptedly in print, should suffer him to remain so peaceably among them. It is said that he is going to Berlin, and from thence will come into Italy.<sup>2</sup> Such characters are quite lost here: both their satire and wit make but a poor appearance in a foreign language. Count Lorenzi's ministerial gazette, too, acquaints him that Deon has published something<sup>3</sup> more severe than his first work<sup>4</sup> (which, by the by, you long ago announced to me, though I have not received it<sup>5</sup> and Mr Palgrave,<sup>6</sup> Grey's friend, bids

1. This account may have resembled that in the *Mercurie historique*, Dec. 1764, clvii. 662: 'En attendant le parti opposé au ministère continue de s'affaiblir; il vient du faire une nouvelle perte par le mort du Sieur Churchill, célèbre poète satirique, homme singulier et admiré par la fertilité de son imagination dont ses ouvrages sont preuve.'

2. See *ante* 15 Nov. 1764.

3. An attack on Vergy in the *Mercurie historique* Jan. 1765, clviii. 75-6 suggests that Vergy's *Lettre à Monseigneur le Duc de Choiseul* (which was printed at Liège)

may have been a collaboration with d'Éon: 'ils se sont raccommodés pour faire de concert cette infâme lettre.' Nothing by d'Éon himself appears to have been printed at Liège at this time.

4. *Lettres, mémoires et négociations* (*ante* 9 April 1764).

5. The rest of this parenthesis has been added by Mann at the bottom of the page and the top of the next page.

6. Rev. William Palgrave (ca 1735-99), fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, 1764-99, friend and correspondent of Thomas Gray (GRAY ii. 184, n. 3).