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The Works Of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford

In Five Volumes

Walpole, Horace

London, 1798

Preface By The Editor.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-54372](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-54372)

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The edition now offered to the public of the works of

the late earl of Orford includes not only the manu-

scripts bequeathed by his lordship for publication, but

much new matter communicated by himself during his life-

time to the editor. It has been still further enriched by

the contributions of his executors and others of his friends,

who, admiring his epistolary talents, had preserved every

line of his writing; and who thought that, by enlarging the

collection of his letters, they were adding to a valuable and

entertaining present to the public.

Lord Orford so early as the year 1768 had formed the

intention of printing, and soon after actually began, a

quarto edition of his works, to which he purposed to add several pieces, both in prose and verse, which he had either not before published or never acknowledged as his own. A first and part of a second volume printed under his own eye at Strawberry-hill were already in a state of great forwardness. But his frequent indispositions, and the unimportant light in which, notwithstanding the very flattering reception they had met with from the world, he always persisted in considering his own works, seem to have combined in deterring him from carrying this design into execution.

The completion of this work he entrusted to the editor, to whom he also bequeathed all the notes, additions, and alterations which he had himself collected and arranged. Lord Orford may therefore still be considered as his own editor: every thing that he had selected is faithfully given to the public; and his arrangement, as far as it had gone, is in every respect strictly adhered to. Fidelity to the author's intentions and wishes is indeed the principal merit of an editor; and as no further appeal can now be made to the judgement and taste of the author, the friend to whom he has entrusted the care of his posthumous works has thought proper implicitly to follow the track which he found already prescribed for him.

In the Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors considerable additions are made under the respective divisions of the original work; notices of several pieces omitted in the former

mer editions are here inserted, and a postscript and an appendix are subjoined.

The Historic Doubts upon the life and reign of king Richard III. are followed by a large supplement, by two replies to attacks made on the original work, and by a postscript occasioned by the late revolution in France.

The whole contents of the second volume subsequent to the *Ædes Walpoleanæ* (the Essay on Gardening and the Counter Address on the late Dismissal of a General Officer excepted) are new to the public.

The dramatic piece, though represented with considerable applause at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket in June 1778, was never acknowledged by lord Orford, or with certainty known to be his.

The detection of a forged account of his father, published in Holland under the title of *Testament politique du chevalier Robert Walpoole*, completely exposes its falsehood; but as the original work was never translated into English, nor ever emerged from the obscurity which it deserved, lord Orford thought it unnecessary to publish his vindication at the time, but left it behind him as a last proof of filial anxiety for the character and fame of a father.

The advertisement which he had himself designed for the quarto edition of his works, marks with what satisfaction

he reflected on being able to refer to all the letters which had passed between him and various ministers on the subject of the places which he had held under government, and of the whole of his intercourse with successive administrations. A laudable anxiety that his motives might not be misrepresented, nor his opinions relative to those places confounded with a venal opposition to public economy, suggested the faithful and accurate account of himself and his conduct, which he has prefixed to the Letters to and from Ministers.

The Catalogue and Description of Strawberry-hill has been hitherto in the hands of those only to whom lord Orford bequeathed the few copies which he had himself printed there. The principal reason which he gives in his preface to this Catalogue for having composed it, that of its serving hereafter as a well-attested genealogy of the objects of virtù contained in the collection, is a still stronger argument for its more general dispersion.—But, in truth, in describing Strawberry-hill lord Orford must be considered with indulgence as a fond and partial parent dwelling with delight on the merits of a favourite child—of a creation of his own—of a place which has acquired a sort of classic celebrity, perhaps still more from its author and its press than from any part of the collection it contains—but which, after all the prepossessions of fashion and prejudice are passed away, will be justly dear to the English antiquary, the artist, and the man of taste, and remembered with
pleasure

pleasure by those who have ever partaken of the lively, interesting and polished society of its late owner.

The remaining contents of this volume, it is presumed, require no comment.—They are the last, and certainly not the least interesting tracts in criticism and biography of an author whose excellence on both those subjects the public has long acknowledged.

The Letter to the Editor of the Miscellanies of Thomas Chatterton, now first published in the fourth volume, was printed at Strawberry-hill in the year 1779. Immediately following it will be found an advertisement from lord Orford, relative to the additional papers which he has left for publication on that subject. To these the editor is fortunately enabled to add a third and last letter from Chatterton, repeatedly alluded to by lord Orford in the above-mentioned pamphlet. This letter, which his lordship had not been able to find, with the others, was recovered by his executors from amongst a quantity of waste paper. It exactly answers the account which lord Orford had given of it, and forms, together with his last Declaration on the subject of Chatterton, dated 1792, and his Remarks on the Letter of Scrutator of the same year, such a body of evidence, such a complete demonstration that his conduct towards that marvellous and ill-fated youth was in every respect unimpeachable, as must assure all who are not wilfully prejudiced (if indeed any prejudice can yet remain on the subject)

ject) how perfectly guiltless he was of hastening a catastrophe, which none of the greatest dupes to Chatterton's forgeries, nor of the greatest admirers of Chatterton's real genius, could more regret, or, perhaps, would have done so much to prevent as himself.

We see by lord Orford's last declaration upon the occasion of one of his letters to Chatterton appearing in a periodical work¹, how earnestly desirous he was that those persons who were in possession of any other letters of his to Chatterton should publish them during his life, and how forcibly he deprecates the idea of being considered as the author of counterfeited letters which might be brought forward and imputed to him when he should no longer be alive to disprove them.

Nor can we wonder that he felt anxious upon the subject, or that the unwarrantable manner in which his name and conduct had been involved in the history of the unfortunate Chatterton had given him real concern.—That a man endowed with judgement to discriminate, taste to relish, a heart to feel for and a fortune to encourage genius, should be accused, not only of repressing its early efforts by his chilling reception, but of having treated its further applications with the arrogant neglect of a little mind in a superior station, and the jealous coldness of a little genius towards

¹ The European Magazine for February 1792.

superior

superior abilities—accused of having been thus instrumental in hurrying it to the last act of despair, at an age brightened to others by the dawn of a thousand hopes—To a warm heart, to lively feelings—in short, to lord Orford, could there be a more painful, a more cruel accusation?

Its complete refutation is now before the public. In fact, lord Orford never saw, never had any intercourse, except by two or three short unimportant letters, with the person who addressed him, and consequently was totally ignorant of all the favourable or interesting circumstances that distinguished poor Chatterton from any other young man tired of his business, and desirous of more liberty and more money;—and to Mr. Walpole's practised and penetrating eye on the subject of English antiquities this young man had unfortunately placed himself in no other light than that of a daring but unexperienced impostor!

Happy had it been for himself and the world, if he had addressed himself to lord Orford's heart, instead of endea-

<p>* Mr. Walpole thus expresses himself on the subject in a letter to Dr. Lort, of August 1789:</p> <p>“———my accusers never considered that it was utterly impossible for me to conceive, from his sending me some verses which he pretended were very ancient, and which he re-demanded as not being his own property, but to be</p>	<p>“restored to the lender, that he would prove, if he should live, a miracle of poetic genius. He did not even mention his ever having written a verse.— I must have been inspired, to have supposed that my correspondent, in the guise of an attorney's clerk, was a Milton in embryo.”</p>
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vouring to impose upon his understanding; and had been aware that, by producing himself as he really was, by discovering his own native character, he would have exhibited a more wonderful, a more interesting rarity than any of his pretended discoveries of the works of others.

The Narrative relating to Hume and Rousseau, and the letters which immediately follow it, will chiefly interest those who were personally acquainted with either of the characters in question, and who must have regretted that Hume's affectionate well-meaning heart, and cool unromantic head, should ever have come in contact with the eccentricities of a Being formed to captivate and interest mankind, but not to live with them.

The Reminiscences were written for and given to the two persons to whom they are addressed; but they cannot suppose that their friend intended so interesting and original a selection of anecdotes to be always confined to themselves alone; and it is presumed that the curiosity of the public to see such a work in the exact words and form given to it by its witty and well-informed author, will excuse the apparent vanity which has retained those passages that particularly indicate how and for whom it was composed.

To the Hieroglyphic Tales, as lord Orford always intended them for publication after his death, he has himself left a preface, not less lively, original and whimsically satiric

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ric than the Tales themselves, and also a postscript, which to the graver order of readers (if they should appear to require it) will surely best plead their apology.

The Miscellaneous Pieces, both in prose and verse, are almost entirely of lord Orford's own selection. It is however impossible that the public can consider the latter in a more trifling light than their author avows considering them himself.

The Correspondence with Mr. West consists of the unstudied letters of very young men; but these letters indicate such ingenuous minds, devoted to such elegant pursuits, and exhibit such a love of letters and of poetry as it is to be wished were more frequently associated with that age at which the cultivation or neglect of the growing powers of the mind, and of the impressions received in early education, generally stamp

————— “All the colour of succeeding life.”

Mr. West has been already introduced to the notice and acquaintance of the public by his letters published in Gray's Correspondence, by his elegant Latin verses, and by his tender and affecting poetical epistle to his friends at Cambridge. Few persons so early lost have given such promise of distinguished worth, displayed such marks of superior genius, or left behind them such interesting remembrances. The early

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intimacy formed between Walpole, West, Gray and Asheton at Eton, and called by Walpole their *Quadruple Alliance*, we see remembered with fond and enthusiastic pleasure by poor West during the short remainder of his sickly, suffering life. The correspondence here given commences from their first separation on leaving school and removing to different universities.

Mr. Walpole's subsequent letters to Mr. West, from abroad, are marked by that singular liveliness of thought and expression, which through life distinguished both his writings and his conversation.

In this correspondence there may possibly be found some circumstances which are repeated afterwards in other letters of the same period; but as the language is always varied, and the observations are often new, it has been thought best not to withhold any of them merely on that account.

The letters to field-marshal Conway contain the uninterrupted intercourse of two friends for the singularly long period of fifty-five years; from the year 1740, when the two cousins, who had gone abroad together with Mr. Gray, parted at Geneva, to the death of marshal Conway in the summer of 1795.

These letters are the careless effusions of unbounded confidence on all subjects, between two persons, both eminent

ment for their abilities, during the unbroken duration of a friendship which almost began, and only ended with their lives. Such letters were certainly never originally intended for publication; but as from that very reason they become doubly interesting, affording indubitable proofs, not only of the liveliest wit and the happiest expression, but of the most disinterested attachment, the soundest integrity and the most anxious affection, to suppress them would be to suppress one of the best eulogies on both their characters, and would deprive the world at once of a bright example, and of a consoling instance of real, rare, uninterrupted friendship.

Indeed, so arbitrary is the distribution even of posthumous fame, that it may, perhaps, be chiefly from these letters, and other works of his friend, that the character of marshal Conway will be best known to posterity. The pure, tried, unshaken integrity of his soul, his cool determined valour, the mild domestic virtues of his heart, his unwearied search after knowledge, his admirable taste and various accomplishments, were accompanied by such modest, such philosophic diffidence of his own opinion and acquirements, and were exalted by such noble and extraordinary simplicity of character, as rendered him inattentive to the acquisition of popular applause, while satisfied with the consciousness of deserving it.

To his public conduct on many great occasions the political and military history of his country will bear honour-

able testimony. His opinions and conduct with respect to America have already received that sanction of applause from all parties, which the soundest policy, as well as the most perfect probity, often obtain only from distant posterity. The part he took on the memorable repeal of the stamp act, when considered as the efficient minister in the house of commons, is happily not intrusted to the indiscriminate relation of some future half-informed historian, but is circumstantially recorded in the glowing, sublime and immortal eloquence of a contemporary; and the editor, conscious of his inability to do justice to the excellence so strongly impressed on his mind, turns with delight to borrow words equally worthy of their subject and of their author'.

"I remember, sir, with a melancholy pleasure the situation of the honourable gentleman who made the motion for the repeal; in that crisis, when the whole trading interest of this empire crammed into your lobbies, with a trembling and anxious expectation, waited almost to a winter's return of light, their fate from your resolutions.

"When at length you had determined in their favour, and your doors thrown open shewed them the figure of their deliverer in the well-earned triumph of his important victory, from the whole of that grave multitude there arose an involuntary burst of gratitude and transport. They jumped

* See Mr. Burke's speech on American taxation, 19th April, 1774.

upon

upon him like children on a long-absent father. They clung about him as captives about their redeemer.

“ All England, all America joined in his applause.—Nor did he seem insensible to the best of all earthly rewards, the love and admiration of his fellow-citizens—*Hope elevated and joy brightened his crest.*—I stood near him; and his face, to use the expression of the scripture of the first martyr, ‘ his face was as if it had been the face of an angel.’—I do not know what others feel; but if I had stood in that situation, I never would have exchanged it for all that kings in their profusion could bestow.”

The reputation of marshal Conway as a public man may be safely rested upon such evidence; but it is only those who, like the editor, have had the opportunity of penetrating into the most secret motives of his public conduct, and the inmost recesses of his private life, that can do real justice to the unfulfilled purity of his character—who like the editor saw and knew him in the evening of his days, retired from the honourable activity of a soldier and a statesman to the calm enjoyments of private life, happy in the resources of his own mind, and in the cultivation of useful science in the bosom of domestic peace—unenriched by pensions or places, undistinguished by titles or ribbons, unsophisticated by public life and unwearied by retirement.

The letters to Mr. Gray are interspersed with several of their

their answers, and followed by fifteen original letters from Mr. Gray, which, though forming no part of a regular correspondence, will be received with pleasure by all those who are capable of appreciating the merits of that exquisite writer—by all those who, while they admire the refined taste and accurate judgement which forbade his risking from his pen that which would have charmed every one but himself, must lament his having left so small a sample of the perfection he had attained in every department which he cultivated. For perhaps his odes are not more perfect models of true, pure, unalloyed poetry of the higher order, than his letters are of a correctly-elegant epistolary style, enlivened by easy unexpected wit. The friends of genius will see too with pleasure, from the date of these letters, how short the duration was of that coolness between him and Mr. Walpole, which separated them when abroad, but which arising only from casual circumstances and different habits of life, and not from any serious quarrel or ill-usage, vanished on the first overtures of reconciliation, and never for a moment prevented them from doing mutual and ample justice to each other's merits.

The different series of letters are so arranged in chronological order as to form a sort of history of the character, pursuits and sentiments of the author, from his almost boyish days at college to a period within six months of his death.—This, it is conceived, was the best and most satisfactory arrangement of letters, many of which might be thought trifling, if they were not considered as links of a chain intended to make

make the author's amusements, occupations, and correspondents so intimately known to the reader, as to allow him, in some degree, to adopt them for his own; and will, it is presumed, give them an interest far beyond that inspired by the mere matter of fact which it is their purpose to record.

Any further comment upon the remaining contents of the fifth volume is deemed unnecessary.—Letters of eminent persons not written for publication have always been sought for with eagerness by the intelligent public, who justly conceive that by their means the most intimate and most satisfactory acquaintance both with the author and his contemporaries is often acquired. To no letters can this apply so perfectly as to those of lord Orford. None can more truly be considered as the effusions of an informed and benevolent mind, a lively and whimsical imagination, and a friendly heart. As such, and as appearing to do honour both to himself and his correspondents, they are submitted to the public.

In the arrangement of the two last volumes, in the notes to the letters and in the elucidation of many passages contained in them, the editor has been materially assisted by a daughter, to whose retentive memory most of the names, dates and circumstances alluded to in the correspondence were consigned by the author himself, during the course of that intimate friendship, and almost parental regard, with which for several years before his death he had honoured both her and her sister.

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The reader, it is hoped, will pardon from the heart of a father overflowing with affection for a child, who from her infancy to the present moment has rendered his retired life a scene of domestic comfort, this public acknowledgment of the assistance he has received from her on the present occasion.

Any further comment upon the remaining contents of this little volume is deemed unnecessary. I trust of course that the reader will pardon from the heart of a father overflowing with affection for a child, who from her infancy to the present moment has rendered his retired life a scene of domestic comfort, this public acknowledgment of the assistance he has received from her on the present occasion.

In the arrangement of the two last volumes, in the first to the letters and in the second to the collection of notes, I have endeavored to place the choice as far as possible in the hands of the reader, to whose attentive memory and to whose assistance I am indebted in the execution of the work. I am, however, sensible that the author himself, during the course of his inauspicious and almost painful career, with a view to a few years before his death he had intended to publish and the following

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