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The Works Of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford

In Five Volumes

Walpole, Horace

London, 1798

The Entail, a Fable

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T H E
E N T A I L*,
A
F A B L E.

IN a fair summer's radiant morn
 A BUTTERFLY, divinely born,
 Whose lineage dated from the mud
 Of Noah's or Deucalion's flood,
 Long hov'ring round a perfum'd lawn,
 By various gusts of odour drawn,
 At last establish'd his repose
 On the rich bosom of a rose.
 The palace pleas'd the lordly guest:
 What insect own'd a prouder nest?
 The dewy leaves luxurious shed
 Their balmy essence o'er his head,
 And with their silken tap'stry fold
 His limbs enthron'd on central gold.
 He thinks the thorns embattled round
 To guard his castle's lovely mound,
 And all the bush's wide domain
 Subservient to his fancied reign.

* This piece was occasioned by the author. traits and arms of his ancestors] if he did not
 being asked [after he had finished the little castle design to entail it on his family?
 at Strawberry-hill and adorned it with the por-

Such

Such ample blessings swell'd the FLY!
 Yet in his mind's capacious eye
 He roll'd the change of mortal things,
 The common fate of flies and kings.
 With grief he saw how lands and honours
 Are apt to slide to various owners;
 Where Mowbrays dwelt how grocers dwell,
 And how cits buy what barons fell.
 "Great Phœbus, patriarch of my line,
 "Avert such shame from sons of thine!
 "To them confirm these roofs," he said;
 And then he swore an oath so dread,
 The stoutest wasp that wears a sword,
 Had trembled to have heard the word!
 "If law can rivet down entails,
 "These manours ne'er shall pass to snails.
 "I swear"—and then he smote his ermine—
 "These tow'rs were never built for vermine."

A CATERPILLAR grovel'd near,
 A subtle flow conveyancer,
 Who summon'd, waddles with his quill
 To draw the haughty insect's will.
 None but his heirs must own the spot,
 Begotten, or to be begot:
 Each leaf he binds, each bud he ties
 To eggs of eggs of BUTTERFLIES.

When lo! how Fortune loves to tease
 Those who would dictate her decrees!
 A wanton BOY was passing by;
 The wanton child beheld the FLY,
 And eager ran to seize the prey;
 But, too impetuous in his play,
 Crush'd the proud tenant of an hour,
 And swept away the MANSION-FLOW'R.

EPIGRAM