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### **The Works Of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford**

In Five Volumes

**Walpole, Horace**

**London, 1798**

Advertisement to the Life of Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T  
TO THE  
\* L I F E  
O F  
E D W A R D L O R D H E R B E R T  
O F C H E R B U R Y,

Written by himself.

SOME years ago the following pages would have been reckoned one of the greatest presents which the learned world could have received. The Life of the famous Lord Herbert of Cherbury, written by himself, would have excited the curiosity of the whole republic of letters. Perhaps a less proportion of expectation may attend this its late appearance. Not that the abilities of the noble writer have fallen into disesteem. His reign of Henry VIII. is allowed to be a masterpiece of historic biography. But they were his speculative works, which, raising a multitude of admirers or censors from their acuteness and singularity, made lord Herbert's a name of the first importance. The many great men, who illustrated the succeeding period, have taken off some of the public attention; for it is only a genius of the first force, whose fame dilates with ages, and can buoy itself up above the indifference which steals upon mankind, as an author becomes less and less the subject of conversation. Speculative writers, however penetrating, however sublime their talents, seldom attain the seal of universal approbation; because, of all the various abilities which Providence has bestowed on man, reasoning is not the power which has been brought to standard perfection.

\* Printed at Strawberry-hill.

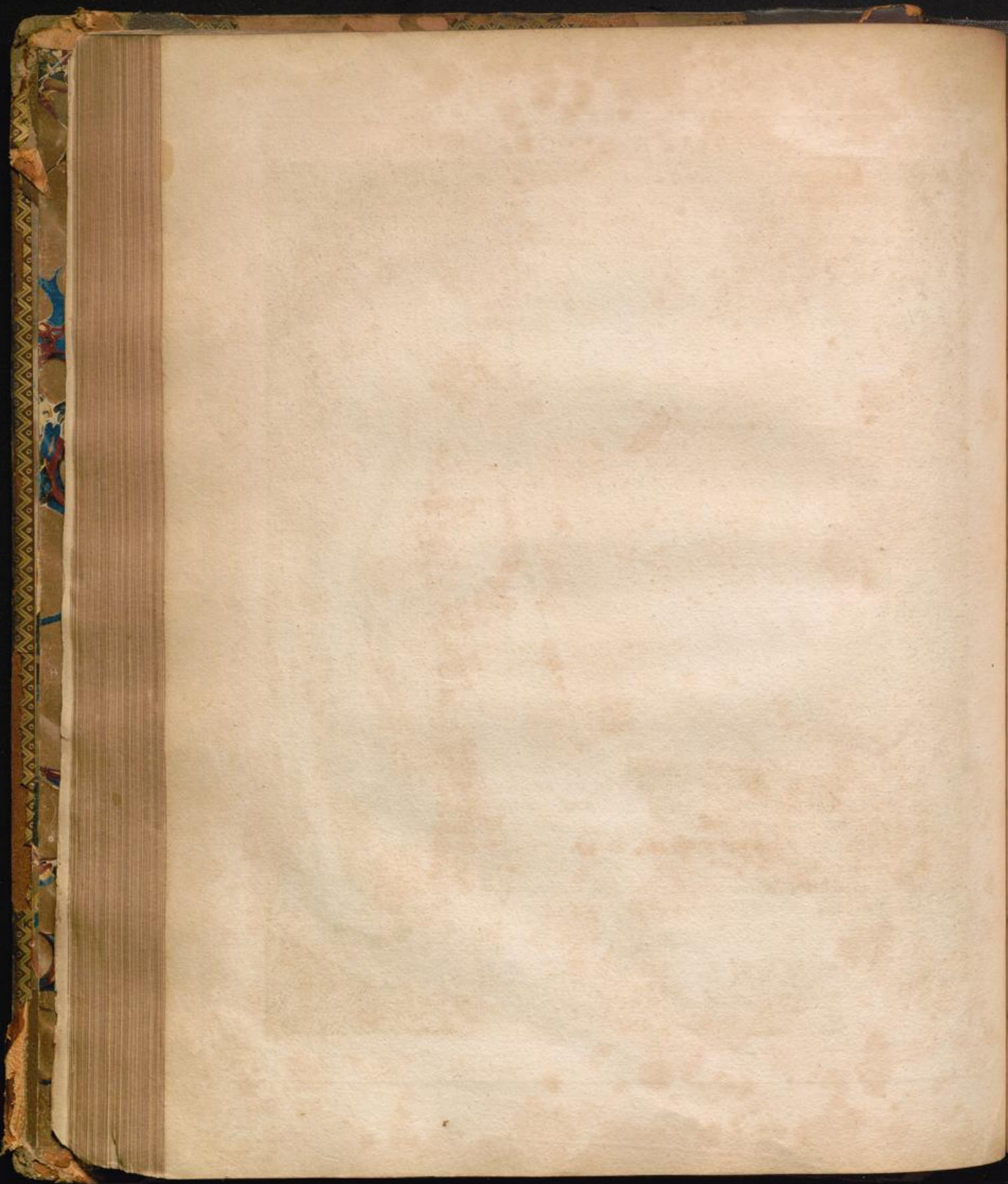
Poetry





*Edward Lord Herbert of Chisbury.*







Poetry and eloquence have been so far perfected, that the great masters in those branches still remain unequalled. But where is that book of human argumentation, where that system of human opinions, which has not been partly confuted or exploded? Novelty itself in matters of metaphysical enquiry often proves, in effect, a confutation of antecedent novelties. Opponents raise the celebrity of the doctrine they attack: newer doctrines stifle that celebrity. This is a truth, which the bigots of lord Herbert's age would not have liked to hear; but what has happened to many other great men, has been his fate too: they who meant to wound his fame, extended it: when the cry of enthusiasts was drawn off to fresher game, his renown grew fainter. His moral character recovered its lustre, but has fewer spectators to gaze at it.

This Introduction to his Life may not be improper, though at first it may mislead the reader, who will hence perhaps expect from his own pen some account of a person's creed, whom a few sottish zealots once represented as having none at all. His lordship's thorough belief and awful veneration of the Deity will clearly appear in these pages; but neither the unbeliever nor the monk will have farther satisfaction. This life of a philosopher is neither a deduction of his opinions, nor a table of philosophy—I will anticipate the reader's surprize, though it shall be but in a word: to his astonishment he will find, that the history of don Quixote was the life of Plato.

The noble family, which gives these sheets to the world, is above the little prejudices which make many a race defraud the public of what was designed for it by those who alone had a right to give or withhold. It is above suppressing what lord Herbert dared to tell. Foibles, passions, perhaps some vanity, surely some wrongheadedness; these he scorned to conceal, for he sought truth, wrote on truth, was truth: he honestly told when he had missed or mistaken it. His descendants, not blind to his faults, but through them conducting the reader to his virtues, desire the world to make this candid observation with them, "That there must have been a wonderful fund of internal virtue, of strong resolution and manly philosophy, which in an age of such mistaken and barbarous gallantry, of such absurd usages and false glory, could enable lord Herbert to seek some better founded, and could make him reflect that there might be a more desirable kind of glory than that of a romantic duellist." None shut their eyes so obstinately against see-  
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ing what is ridiculous, as they who have attained a mastery in it: but that was not the case of lord Herbert. His valour made him a hero, be the heroism in vogue what it would; his sound parts made him a philosopher. Few men in truth have figured so conspicuously in lights so various; and his descendants, though they cannot approve him in every walk of glory, would perhaps injure his memory, if they suffered the world to be ignorant, that he was formed to shine in every sphere, into which his impetuous temperament or predominant reason conducted him.

As a soldier, he won the esteem of those great captains the prince of Orange and the constable de Montmorency; as a knight, his chivalry was drawn from the purest founts of the Fairy Queen. Had he been ambitious, the beauty of his person would have carried him as far as any gentle knight can aspire to go. As a public minister, he supported the dignity of his country, even when its prince disgraced it; and that he was qualified to write its annals as well as to ennoble them, the history I have mentioned proves, and must make us lament that he did not complete, or that we have lost, the account he purposed to give of his embassy. These busy scenes were blended with, and terminated by, meditation and philosophic enquiries. Strip each period of its excesses and errors, and it will not be easy to trace out, or dispose the life of a man of quality into a succession of employments which would better become him. Valour and military activity in youth; business of state in the middle age; contemplation and labours for the information of posterity in the calmer scenes of closing life: this was lord Herbert: the deduction he will give himself.

The MS. was in great danger of being lost to the world. Henry lord Herbert, grandson of the author, died in 1691 without issue, and by his will left his estate to Francis Herbert of Oakly-park, (father of the present earl of Powis), his sister's son. At Lymore in Montgomeryshire (the chief seat of the family after Cromwell had demolished Montgomery-castle) was preserved the original manuscript. Upon the marriage of Henry lord Herbert with a daughter of Francis earl of Bradford, Lymore, with a considerable part of the estate thereabouts, was allotted for her jointure. After his decease, lady Herbert usually resided there; she died in 1714. The MS. could not then be found; yet while she lived there it was known to have been in her hands. Some years afterwards it was discovered at Lymore  
among



among some old papers, in very bad condition, several leaves being torn out, and others stained to such a degree as to make it scarcely legible. Under these circumstances, enquiry was made of the Herberts of Ribbisford (descended from sir Henry Herbert, a younger brother of the author-lord) in relation to a duplicate of the memoirs, which was confidently said to be in their custody. It was allowed that such a duplicate had existed; but no one could recollect what was become of it. At last, about the year 1737, this book was sent to the earl of Powis, by a gentleman whose father had purchased an estate of Henry Herbert of Ribbisford (son of sir Henry Herbert above mentioned), in whom was revived in 1694 the title of Chirbury, which had extinguished in 1691. By him (after the sale of the estate) some few books, pictures, and other things were left in the house, and remained there to 1737. This manuscript was amongst them; which not only by the contents (as far as it was possible to collate it with the original) but by the similitude of the writing, appeared to be the duplicate so much sought after.

Being written when lord Herbert was past sixty, the work was probably never completed. The spelling is in general given as in the MS. but some obvious mistakes it was necessary to correct, and a few notes have been added, to point out the most remarkable persons mentioned in the text. The style is remarkably good for that age, which coming between the nervous and expressive manliness of the preceding century, and the purity of the present standard, partook of neither. His lordship's observations are new and acute; some very shrewd, as that to the duc de Guise, p. 148; his discourse on the reformation, very wise. To the French confessor his reply, p. 168, was spirited; indeed his behaviour to Luynes, and all his conduct gave ample evidence of his constitutional fire. But nothing is more marked than the air of veracity or persuasion which runs through the whole narrative. If he makes us wonder, and wonder makes us doubt, the charm of his ingenuous integrity dispels our hesitation. The whole relation throws singular light on the manners of the age, though the gleams are transient. In those manners nothing is more striking than the strange want of police in this country: I will not point out instances, as I have already perhaps too much opened the contents of a book, which, if it gives other readers half the pleasure it afforded me, they will own themselves extraordinarily indebted to the noble person, by whose favour I am permitted to communicate to them so great a curiosity.

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