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

In Five Volumes

**Walpole, Horace**

**London, 1798**

Remarks on a Letter signed Scrutator

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terton afterwards chose to allot them. As no one circumstance has come out to shake my veracity, but many to confirm it, and as no arrogance can be discovered in my first letter, is it probable that I should treat the poor lad with insolence afterwards without any provocation? True it is, that he did write to me in a manner that might have provoked me; and yet, so far from treating him arrogantly in return, I made not a word of reply, but returned his papers in silence. If *that* was the behaviour of arrogance, I am yet to learn the meaning of the term.

*Remarks on a Letter signed SCRUTATOR, which appeared in the Cambridge Chronicle of June 16th 1792.*

A LETTER in the Cambridge Chronicle, of June 16, 1792, signed Scrutator<sup>\*</sup>, and dated May 9th, swarms with blunders and false facts. A person totally

<sup>\*</sup> The letter was as follows:

To the Printer of the CAMBRIDGE CHRONICLE.

SIR, June 16, 1792.

A WRITER in The Gentleman's Magazine for last month having thought proper to call in question the authenticity of a letter inserted some time ago in your paper, from the hon. Horace Walpole to Thomas Chatterton of Bristol, I think it incumbent upon me to transmit you an attested copy of the above letter, as the best answer to any doubts or denials which may be entertained about it. I have only to add, that besides the notary-public's attestation, this letter agrees very exactly with other letters of Mr. Walpole's hand-writing—and that from its allusions, both to the two letters from Chatterton, to which it is an answer, and from the text and notes accompanying them, it is utterly impossible but that it should be genuine.

The fate of this curious controversy has indeed been very hard. *Fashion*, somehow or other, seems to have influenced it more than conviction.

tion—and the authority of a name or two of note in opposition to the authenticity of the poems, &c. has been substituted instead of fair enquiry and candid investigation.

In the present instance it appears, that so far back as the year 1769, Thomas Chatterton applied to the hon. Horace Walpole for his protection and patronage of the very curious specimens of ancient English poetry, &c. the whole of which he then tendered to him (Mr. W.) To these letters of application Mr. W. replied with many compliments, and in terms of much civility and deference, expressing his admiration of what Chatterton had already thought proper to communicate to him. Why, at any future period, this correspondence was to be *disavowed* on the part of Mr. W. is hard to conceive; but true it is, that in the year 1789, immediately after the death of Mr. Barrett, who, in his History of Bristol, had printed the two letters of Chatterton above alluded to, the following clause of a letter, or to the same purpose, from Mr. Walpole to a friend of his, was circulated with

totally unknown to Mr. Horace Walpole, and signing a name of which he had never heard, disputed the authenticity of a letter, published as the first written by that gentleman to Thomas Chatterton, and which, though Mr. W. had kept no copy of it, he believes is genuine, as it perfectly agrees with the account he had given of it. Doctor Farmer has shown the absurdity of supposing that Mr. W. should for no possible reason deny a letter, of which he himself had given the first account by memory, and which is one of the many proofs of his veracity in his relation of his correspondence with Chatterton.

Scrutator, with officious and trifling pomp, took the useless pains to verify by a notary-public the authenticity of the letter, and of Mr. W.'s handwriting. It would be more worth while (though perhaps no very grateful office to Scrutator) to get sight of Mr. W.'s friendly letter of advice to Chatterton, and authenticate the writing of that too, of which Mr. W. has demanded the publication, and of the suppression of which he so justly complains.

Mr. W. was glad of seeing his first letter printed, and hoped it would be followed by the other. Scrutator exults in Mr. W. having been a momentary dupe of Chatterton—has not he said as much himself? He did not indeed remain so, like Scrutator, who, to support his own obdurate blindness, imputes the total exposure of the forgery of Rowley's poems to the authority of a name or two of note, and laments that those forgeries have not undergone fair enquiry and candid investigation. Can a falser assertion be advanced? Pamphlets upon pamphlets, volumes upon volumes, were written on that enquiry. Was the laborious Mr. Tyrwhit, who first defended and then gave

much industry about the University of Cambridge :

“ Mr. Walpole gives all his friends full authority to say, that he never before saw those letters published by Mr. Barrett in his History of Bristol, as letters sent to him by Thomas Chatterton; and he wishes this to be generally known, lest, after his death, some pretended answers to them should be produced, as having been written by him.”

I shall make no other observation, than that

the letter, which you lately published, is most undoubtedly genuine; that it has been compared, as I have said above, with the handwriting of Mr. Walpole upon many other occasions, with which it exactly agrees; and as such, being now given to the world before Mr. Walpole's death, that gentleman can have no reason to complain of his being deprived of the power of properly explaining this transaction himself.

SCRUTATOR.

Cambridge, May 9th.

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them up, not a candid enquirer? Is the very learned, upright, and moderate Mr. Bryant not a fair investigator? Was the archæologist Dr. Milles biased by a name or two of note? If ever controversy was amply and candidly discussed, and utterly abandoned upon the fullest examination, the Chattertonian contest had that fate—the passionate dullness of Scrutator remains almost alone impenetrable by illumination from researches; and it is questionable, whether such a head could be purged of its Chattertonimania by the ablest and most ancient physician in the University of Cambridge.

Scrutator does avow himself hard of conception, as he certainly is, and cannot comprehend why Mr. W. should disavow his correspondence with Chatterton, after having given a clear and full account of it. It would be marvellous indeed, as has been said, if he should disallow his own assertions when verified—but Scrutator's statement is an entire blunder, if not a wilful misrepresentation. Here is the exact truth,

In poor Barrett's History of Bristol, he gave two new letters, which he said had been found among Chatterton's papers, and were the very originals pretended to have been sent to H. W. esq. They were so original, that no copy of them had ever been sent to Mr. W.; at least he never received them—and the probability is, that though Chatterton had designed to send them, yet finding Mr. W.'s distrust of Rowley's poems, he did not venture to send two pieces teeming with still grosser forgeries, and still more liable to detection. For instance, the lad, so very superficially tinctured with antique lore, in those letters ascribed the introduction of heraldry to Hengist, and of painted glass to one Afflem, who lived in the reign of K. Edmund.

On the publication of the two new letters, Mr. W. wrote to the late Dr. Lort, to desire he would deny Mr. W.'s having ever received them. That request was probably circulated by Dr. Lort at Cambridge; and out of a disavowal of two letters that Mr. W. never received, has sprung up his pretended denial of a letter that he actually did write himself, and has in print declared he did.

Is it blundering, or wilfully misrepresenting, when Scrutator states Mr. W.'s disavowal of having received the two new letters, as a corroboration of his denying his own letter? Was it possible to confound two circumstances so

diffonant, but by a head that confesses it does not conceive how Mr. W. could fall into so preposterous contradiction, and so destructive of his own unimpeached veracity in the narrative he has given of his correspondence with Chatterton?

But as Scrutator has bestowed such pains on authenticating Mr. W.'s first letter, he is called upon to be as just in verifying the friendly letter, and producing it while Mr. W. is living. If it exists, there can be no reason for withholding it—if it is not replete with as kind and wholesome advice as Mr. W. has asserted, let it be brought forth. Scrutator, so ready to load Mr. W. with contradictions, has probably not tenderness enough to spare him a more cruel detection; and when there is so much alacrity in charging him falsely, the presumption is, that a letter that would do honour to his sensibility is suppressed from malevolence. Should at any future period a letter of harsher complexion appear, than Mr. W. has affirmed he ever wrote to Chatterton, no notary-public, no similitude of hand-writing, which it is but too well known can be forged, will ever gain credit, when the possessor or fautors of the accusations above quoted are dared and defied to produce it at present. With so much industrious malice has Mr. W. been pursued, that no man living will believe that if he had treated Chatterton with harshness or arrogance, such a letter would have been suppressed. Mr. W.'s false accusers wanted even a shadow of truth to justify their assertions—would they have stifled a vindication of their charges, and left him to triumph in a detection of all their calumnies? So far from being able to fix a stain on him for his treatment of Chatterton, the bungler Scrutator is reduced to suppose, that he first notified and then denied his own letter, though to his credit; and then transfers Mr. W.'s denial of two letters which he never did receive, to a disavowal of a letter that he wrote, and declared he had written.

If Scrutator can believe that Mr. W. ever did deny his own letter, no wonder he still adheres to the authenticity of Rowley's poems. Incapable of reasoning himself, his head must be equally impervious to the arguments of others; and in proportion as he asserts false facts, he may have a propensity to believing them, especially if of his own coinage, as some men are more partial to their spurious issue than to their legitimate children.

If this is the case of Scrutator, he is heartily welcome to suppose, that his  
confounding

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confounding Mr. W.'s denial of the receipt of Chatterton's two embryo letters was a denial of his own actual letter, and that the verification of that letter by a notary-public is a corroboration of Mr. W.'s disavowal of it, though he never did disavow it, and does firmly believe it is his own genuine letter, and should be sorry not to have it thought so. He laughs at the ridiculous pains Scrutator has taken to identify it, and thinks, as others do think, that Scrutator himself wrote or procured the letter in the Magazine, which asserted that Mr. W. denied having ever written to Chatterton, though Mr. W. had in print declared, that he had wrote to that young man more than once:—So that, in fact, Scrutator may have only asserted and confuted himself, like a man that plays at cards alone, right hand against left—and to that merry pastime he is willingly abandoned.

PAPERS RELATIVE TO CHATFIELD

containing Mr. W.'s trial of the receipt of Chatfield's two letters  
was a kind of his own self trial, and the retention of the letters  
by a notary public is a confirmation of Mr. W.'s statement, though he  
never did believe it, and does hardly believe it is his own genuine letter  
and should be left not to have it thought so. He looks at the not-  
aries paper & returns on them to himself, and thinks as others do think  
that Chatfield himself wrote or procured the letter in the manner which he  
told that Mr. W. denied having ever written to Chatfield, though Mr. W.  
had before declared that he had written to that young man more than once—  
so that in Mr. W.'s statement may have been altered and confused, like a  
man that plays at cards along right hand against left—and so the party par-  
ticular he is willingly abandoned.