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

In Five Volumes

**Walpole, Horace**

**London, 1798**

Detached Thoughts

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## DETACHED THOUGHTS.

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**I**T is said that Congreve had too much wit in his comedies. It is a pity that no comic author has had the same fault.

A Gothic cathedral strikes one like the enthusiasm of poetry; St. Paul's, like the good sense of prose.

I would never dispute about any thing but at law; for there one has as much chance as another of getting the better without reason.

A dead language is the only one that lives long: and it is unlike the dead; for, by being dead, it avoids corruption.

In former ages, men were afraid of nothing but cowardice. Even riches, which now make men fond of life, and consequently timid, then made men brave; for every body was forced to defend his own property, or the stronger would have invaded it.

Of all the virtues, gratitude has the shortest memory.

There are playthings for all ages: the plaything of old people is to talk of the playthings of their youth.

Man is an avaricious animal.

History is a romance that is believed; romance, a history that is not believed.

Montaigne pleased, because he wrote what he thought—other authors think what they shall write.

This world is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel.

Our passions and our understandings agree so ill, that they resemble a Frenchman of quality and his wife, who, though they live in the same house together, have separate apartments, separate beds, go different ways, are seldom together, but are very civil to each other before company: and then the passions, like the lady, affect to have great deference for their husband the understanding.

It is idle to attempt to *talk* a young woman in love out of her passion: love does not lie in the ear.

Whoever expects pity by complaining to his physician, is as foolish as they who, having lost their money at cards, complain of their ill-luck to their companions the winners. If none were ill, or unfortunate, how would physicians or gamesters get money?

Beauty after five-and-thirty is like a forfeited peerage, the title of which is given by the courtesy of the well-bred to those who have no legal claim to it.

Albano's boy-angels and cupids are all so alike, that they seem to have been the children of the Flemish countess who was said to be delivered of three hundred and sixty-five at a birth.

Persons extremely reserved are like old enamelled watches, which had painted covers that hindered your seeing what o'clock it was.

Many new pieces please on first reading—if they have more novelty than merit. The second time they do not please, for surprisè has no second part.

An author without originality is like a courtier who is always dressed in the fashion: nobody minds the colour or make of his coat: if it is ill made, it is criticised; if not, what can be said on it? hundreds are dressed as well. Booksellers and salesmen lay up the book or the coat, the moment the fashion of it is passed, till they can sell either into the country.

If a man's eyes, ears, or memory decay, he ought to conclude that his understanding decays also; for the weaker it grows the less likely he is to perceive it.

Envy deserves pity more than anger, for it hurts nobody so much as itself. It is a distemper rather than a vice; for nobody would feel envy if he could help it. Whoever envies another, secretly allows that person's superiority.

When flatterers compliment kings for virtues that are the very reverse of their characters, they remind me of the story of a little boy who was apt to tell people of any remarkable defect in their persons. One day a gentleman who had an extraordinarily large nose being to dine with the boy's parents, his mother charged him not to say any thing of the gentleman's large nose. When he arrived, the child stared at him, and then, turning to his mother, said, "Mamma, what a pretty little nose that gentleman has!"

Experience becomes prescience.

Nothing is more vain than for a woman to deny her age; for she cannot deceive the only person that cares about it, herself. If a man dislikes a woman because he thinks her of the age she is, he will only dislike her the more for being told she is younger than she seems to be, and consequently looks older than she ought to do. The *anno Domini* of her face will weigh more than that of her register.

Censorious old women betray three things: one, that they have been galant; the next, that they can be so no longer; and the third, that they are always wishing they could be.

No woman ever invented a new religion; yet no new religion would ever have been spread but for women. Cool heads invent systems, warm heads embrace them.

Posterity always degenerates till it becomes our ancestors.

It is unfortunate to have no master but our own errors. If we profit ever

so much under them, the unjust public always recollect the master, more than they take notice of the improvement of the scholar.

Men are often capable of greater things than they perform. They are sent into the world with bills of credit, and seldom draw to their full extent.

Warburton, in his ridiculous edition of Pope's works, quotes a passage from Winwood's Memorial, in which archbishop Abbot mentions Grotius with great contempt, who, being sent to England by the States, fatigued even that pedant king James with his pedantry and babbling dissertations on Arminianism and other foolish theological questions. He was warned that he would tire the scholastic monarch; but to no purpose. Warburton laughs at the bishop of Ely, *who wondered what a man he had there*, and seems astonished that they were not charmed with such profusion of misplaced literature. Oxenstiern was so unlucky as to think like the bishop of Ely: but Mr. Warburton thought it very sensible in an ambassador to shock a prince and minister with whom he was to treat, and of course with whom he ought to have ingratiated himself, by venting all he knew or imagined about grace, free-will, and predestination! Let us suppose that Warburton was archbishop of Canterbury, and commissioned to treat with the ambassador of the States on entering into a league for the restitution of the Palatinate: Grotius might then have written the following letter to his masters:

High and mighty lords,

After having delivered my credentials, and been admitted to a private audience of the king, in which I complimented his majesty on his profound knowledge of the question of the irremissibility of super-efficient grace working to the non-effectivity of original sin, I received his majesty's commands to treat with my lord's grace of Canterbury on the several points of my commission. Accordingly, by appointment, I waited on his grace at Whitehall: and having slightly touched upon the disposition of your high mightinesses to concur under-hand with his majesty of Great Britain for the restoration of his son-in-law, I laid aside matters merely temporal; and, with all the ability I was master of, I began to sift his grace, what might be his opinions with regard to the late proceedings of the synod against the followers of Arminius. I am confident I talked a good two hours and half on the single point of

retro-active grace, and endeavoured to convince his grace, that St. Austin never understood that a saving faith was necessary *in ordine ad*, but only *in ordine ab*; a point which the English Separatists have always confounded. His grace heard me with singular pleasure and good will; and in his answer and my replies we wasted four hours more, or somewhat better. His grace is a man of notable acuteness and irrefragibility; and, 'bating certain light and wanton gallicisms in his expressions, is a very Chrysofom; and though he be reckoned a man of aspiring towardness, he truly loves good literature, and readily passeth himself of such discourses as only tend to the settling of kingdoms, or dispatching of the intricacies of state-affairs. I can assure your high mightinesses, that if no good end comes of my embassy, yet at least the notions of grace and predestination will have been more amply discussed than they could have been even in a general council; and by the grace of God I trust, in convenient time after my return, to present your high mightinesses with the subject of our discourses reduced into such a method, as I may boast will tend to instruct and edify; the promulgation of good literature and abstract divinity being the sole end of all my labours, and the greatest piece of service which I think I can do my country.

Yours, &c. &c. &c.

HUGO GROTIUS.