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

In Five Volumes

**Walpole, Horace**

**London, 1798**

Miscellaneous Letters

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MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS

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MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS.

TO THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE.

LETTER I.

A Ferney près de Geneve,  
6 Juin, 1768.

MONSIEUR,

J'APPRENDS dans ma retraite que vous avez fait un excellent ouvrage sur le pirrhonisme de l'histoire, et que vous avez répandu une grande lumière sur l'obscurité qui couvre encor les temps des roses blanche et rouge, toutes deux sanglantes et fanées.

Il y a cinquante ans que j'ai fait voeu de douter. J'ose vous supplier, monsieur, de m'aider à accomplir mon voeu. Je vous suis peut-être inconnu, quoique j'aie été honoré autrefois de l'amitié *of the two brothers*<sup>2</sup>.

Je n'ai d'autre recommandation auprès de vous que l'envie de m'instruire. Voyez si elle suffit. Voulez vous avoir la bonté de m'envoyer votre ouvrage par la poste sous l'enveloppe de M. le chef du bureau des interprètes à Versailles? Ma témérité va plus loin encor, monsieur: j'ai toujours douté de l'assassinat de M. de Genonville qui a produit en France plus de mauvais vers que de represailles. Je vois que dans aucune piece juridique, dans aucun manifeste, dans aucun écrit des ministres respectifs, il n'est question de cet assassinat prétendu. Si cependant il est vrai que vos soldats aient commis cette barbarie sauvage ou chrétienne en Canada, je vous prie de me l'avouer: S'ils n'en sont pas coupables, je vous prie de les justifier par un mot de votre main. Tout ce que la renommée m'apprend de vous, me persuade que vous pardonnerez à toutes les libertés que je prends.

Vous pardonnerez encor plus à mon ignorance de vos titres; je n'en

<sup>2</sup> Sir Robert Walpole and his brother Horace.



respecte pas moins votre personne. Je connais plus votre mérite que les dignités dont il doit être revêtu.

J fais avec l'esti me la plus respectueuse, monsieur,

Votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

VOLTAIRE.

LETTER II.

TO MONSIEUR DE VOLTAIRE.

Strawberry-hill, June 21, 1768.

SIR,

YOU read English with so much more facility than I can write French, that I hope you will excuse my making use of my own tongue to thank you for the honour of your letter. If I employed your language, my ignorance in it might betray me into expressions that would not do justice to the sentiments I feel at being so distinguished.

It is true, sir, I have ventured to contest the history of Richard the third, as it has been delivered down to us: and I shall obey your commands, and send it to you, though with fear and trembling; for though I have given it to the world, as it is called, yet, as you have justly observed, *that* world is comprised within a very small circle of readers—and undoubtedly I could not expect that you would do me the honour of being one of the number. Nor do I fear you, sir, only as the first genius in Europe, who have illustrated every science; I have a more intimate dependence on you than you suspect. Without knowing it, you have been my master, and perhaps the sole merit that may be found in my writings is owing to my having studied yours: so far, sir, am I from living in that state of barbarism and ignorance with which you tax me when you say *que vous m'êtes peut-être inconnu*. I was not a stranger to your reputation very many years ago, but remember to have then thought you honoured our house by dining with my mother—though I was at school, and had not the happiness of seeing you: and yet my father was in a situation that might have dazzled eyes older than mine. The plain name of that father, and the pride of having had so excellent a  
father,



father, to whose virtues truth at last does justice, is all I have to boast. I am a very private man, distinguished by neither dignities nor titles, which I have never done any thing to deserve—but as I am certain that titles alone would not have procured me the honour of your notice, I am content without them.

But, sir, if I can tell you nothing good of myself, I can at least tell you something bad: and after the obligation you have conferred on me by your letter, I should blush if you heard it from any body but myself. I had rather incur your indignation than deceive you. Some time ago I took the liberty to find fault in print with the criticisms you had made on our Shakespeare. This freedom, and no wonder, never came to your knowledge. It was in a preface to a trifling Romance, much unworthy of your regard, but which I shall send you, because I cannot accept even the honour of your correspondence, without making you judge whether I deserve it. I might retract, I might beg your pardon; but having said nothing but what I thought, nothing illiberal or unbecoming a gentleman, it would be treating you with ingratitude and impertinence, to suppose that you would either be offended with my remarks, or pleased with my recantation. You are as much above wanting flattery, as I am above offering it to you. You would despise me, and I should despise myself—a sacrifice I cannot make, sir, even to you.

Though it is impossible not to know *you*, sir, I must confess my ignorance on the other part of your letter. I know nothing of the history of monsieur de Genonville, nor can tell whether it is true or false, as this is the first time I ever heard of it. But I will take care to inform myself as well as I can, and, if you allow me to trouble you again, will send you the exact account as far as I can obtain it. I love my country, but I do not love any of my countrymen that have been capable, if they have been so, of a foul assassination. I should have made this inquiry directly, and informed you of the result of it in this letter, had I been in London; but the respect I owe you, sir, and my impatience to thank you for so unexpected a mark of your favour, made me choose not to delay my gratitude for a single post. I have the honour to be, sir,

Your most obliged and most obedient humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.



## LETTER III.

Au Chateau de Ferney, Pais de Gex par Verfoi et Lyon,  
15 Juillet, 1768.

MONSIEUR,

IL y a quarante ans que je n'ose plus parler Anglais, et vous parlez nôtre langue très bien. J'ai vu des lettres de vous écrites comme vous pensez. D'ailleurs, mon âge et mes maladies ne me permettent pas d'écrire de ma main. Vous aurez donc mes remerciements dans ma langue.

Je viens de lire la préface de vôtre Histoire de Richard trois; elle me paraît trop courte. Quand on a si visiblement raison, et qu'on joint à ses connaissances une philosophie si ferme, et un stile si mâle, je voudrais qu'on me parlât plus longtemps. Vôtre père était un grand ministre et un bon orateur, mais je doute qu'il eût pu écrire comme vous. Vous ne devez pas dire, *quia pater major me est*.

J'ai toujours pensé comme vous qu'il faut se défier de toutes les histoires anciennes. Fontenelle, le seul homme du siècle de Louis XIV qui fut à la fois poète, philosophe et savant, disait qu'elles étaient des *fables convenues*. Et il faut avouer que Rolin a trop compilé de chimères et de contradictions.

Après avoir lu la préface de vôtre Histoire j'ai lu celle de vôtre Roman. Vous vous y moquez un peu de moi. Les Français entendent raillerie, mais je vais vous répondre sérieusement.

Vous avez fait accroire à vôtre nation, que je méprise Shakespear. Je suis le premier qui ait fait connaître Shakespear aux Français; j'en ai traduit des passages il y a quarante ans, ainsi que de Milton, de Waller, de Rochester, de Driden, et de Pope. Je peux vous assurer qu'avant moi presque personne en France ne connaissait la poésie Anglaise. A peine avait-on même entendu parler de Loke. J'ai été persécuté pendant trente ans par une nuée de fanatiques pour avoir dit que Loke est l'Hercule de la métaphysique qui a posé les bornes de l'esprit humain.

Ma destinée a encor voulu que je fusse le premier qui ait expliqué à  
mes



mes concitoyens les découvertes du grand Neuton, que quelques fots parmi nous appellent encor des sistèmes. J'ai été vôtre apôtre et vôtre martir. En vérité il n'est pas juste que les Anglais se plaignent de moi.

J'avais dit il y a très longtems que si Shakespear était venu dans le siecle d'Adisson il aurait joint à son génie l'élégance et la pureté qui rendent Adisson recommandable. J'avais dit, *que son génie était à lui, et que ses fautes étaient à son siecle.* Il est précisément, à mon avis, comme le Lopez de Vega des Espagnols, et comme le Caldéron. C'est une belle nature, mais sauvage, nulle régularité, nulle bienséance, nul art; de la bassesse avec de la grandeur, de la bouffonnerie avec du terrible; c'est le cahos de la tragédie dans lequel il y a cent traits de lumiere. Les Italiens, qui restaurèrent la tragédie un siecle avant les Anglais et les Espagnols, ne sont point tombés dans ce défaut; ils ont mieux imité les Grecs; il n'y a point de bouffons dans l'Œdipe et dans l'Electre de Sophocle. Je soupçonne fort que cette grossiereté eut son origine dans nos fous de cour. Nous étions un peu barbares tous tant que nous sommes en deça des alpes. Chaque prince avait son fou en titre d'office. Des rois ignorants élevés par des ignorants ne pouvaient connaître les plaisirs nobles de l'esprit; ils dégradèrent la nature humaine au point de paier des gens pour leur dire des sottises. De là vint nôtre *mère folle*; et avant Moliere il y avait un fou de cour dans presque toutes les comédies. Cette méthode est abominable.

J'ai dit, il est vrai, monsieur, ainsi que vous le raportez, qu'il y a des comédies sérieuses, telles que le Misantrope, qui sont des chef-d'œuvres; qu'il y en a de très plaisantes, comme George Dandin; que la plaisanterie, le sérieux, l'attendrissement peuvent très bien s'accorder dans la même comédie.

J'ai dit que tous les genres sont bons hors le genre ennuyeux. Oui, monsieur, mais la grossiereté n'est point un genre. Il y a beaucoup de logements dans la maison de mon père; mais je n'ai jamais prétendu qu'il fut honnête de loger dans la même chambre Charle quint et don Japhet d'Arménie, Auguste et un matelot yvre, Marc-Aurèle et un bouffon des rues. Il me semble qu'Horace pensait ainsi dans le plus beau des siecles; consultez son Art Poétique. Toute l'Europe éclairée pense de même aujourd'hui, et les Espagnols commencent à se défaire à la fois du mauvais goût comme de l'Inquisition, car le bon esprit proscriit également l'un et l'autre.



Vous fentez si bien, monsieur, à quel point le trivial et le bas défigurent la tragédie, que vous reprochez à Racine de faire dire à Antiochus dans Bérénice,

De son appartement cette porte est prochaine,  
Et cet autre conduit dans celui de la reine.

Ce ne font pas là certainement des vers héroïques. Mais ayez la bonté d'observer qu'ils sont dans une scène d'exposition, laquelle doit être simple. Ce n'est pas là une beauté de poésie, mais c'est une beauté d'exactitude, qui fixe le lieu de la scène, qui met tout d'un coup le spectateur au fait, et qui l'avertit que tous les personnages paraîtront dans ce cabinet qui est commun aux autres appartements, sans quoi il ne ferait point du tout vraisemblable que Titus, Bérénice et Antiochus parlassent toujours dans la même chambre

*Que le lieu de la scène y soit fixe et marqué,*

dit le sage Despreaux, l'oracle du bon goût, dans son Art Poétique, égal pour le moins à celui d'Horace. Notre excellent Racine n'a presque jamais manqué à cette règle. Et c'est une chose digne d'admiration qu'Athalie paraisse dans le temple des Juifs, et dans la même place où l'on a vu le grand prêtre, sans choquer en rien la vraisemblance.

Vous pardonneriez encor plus, monsieur, à l'illustre Racine, quand vous vous souviendrez que la pièce de Bérénice était en quelque façon l'histoire de Louis XIV. et de votre princesse Anglaise sœur de Charles second. Ils logeaient tous deux de plein pied à St. Germain, et un salon séparait leurs appartements.

Vous n'observez vous autres libres Bretons, ni unité de lieu, ni unité de tems, ni unité d'action. En vérité vous n'en faites pas mieux ; la vraisemblance doit être comptée pour quelque chose. L'art en devient plus difficile, et les difficultés vaincues donnent en tout genre du plaisir et de la gloire.

Permettez moi, monsieur, tout Anglais que vous êtes, de prendre un peu



le parti de ma nation. Je lui ai dit si souvent ses vérités, qu'il est bien juste que je la caresse quand je crois qu'elle a raison. Oïï, monsieur, j'ai cru, je crois, et je croirai que Paris est très supérieur à Athène en fait de tragédies et de comédies. Moliere et même Regnard me paraissent l'emporter sur Aristophane, autant que Démosthène l'emporte sur nos avocats. Je vous dirai hardiment que toutes les tragédies Grecques me paraissent des ouvrages d'écoliers en comparaison des sublimes scènes de Corneille, et des parfaittes tragédies de Racine. C'était ainsi que parlait Boileau lui-même, tout admirateur des anciens qu'il était. Il n'a fait nulle difficulté d'écrire au bas du portrait de Racine, que ce grand homme avait surpassé Euripide et balancé Corneille.

Oïï, je crois démontré qu'il y a beaucoup plus d'hommes de goût à Paris que dans Athène, parce qu'il y a plus de trente mille ames à Paris uniquement occupées des beaux arts, et qu'Athène n'en avait pas dix mille ; parce que le bas peuple d'Athène entrait au spectacle et qu'il n'y entre point chez nous ; parce que ceux qui parmi nous jugent des beaux arts n'ont guères que cette occupation ; parce que nôtre commerce continuel avec les femmes a mis dans nos sentimens beaucoup plus de délicatesse, plus de bienfaisance dans nos mœurs, et plus de finesse dans nôtre goût. Laissez nous nôtre théâtre ; laissez aux Italiens leurs *favole boscarecie*. Vous êtes assez riches d'ailleurs.

De très mauvaises pièces, il est vrai, ridiculement intriguées, barbarement écrites, ont pendant quelque tems à Paris des succès prodigieux, soutenus par la cabale, l'esprit de parti, la mode, la protection passagère de quelques personnes accréditées ; mais en très peu d'années l'illusion se dissipe, les cabales passent, et la vérité reste.

Permettez moi de vous dire encor un mot sur la rime que vous nous reprochez. Prèsque toutes les pièces de Driden sont rimées. C'est une difficulté de plus. Les vers qu'on retient de lui, et que tout le monde cite, sont rimés. Et je soutiens encore que Cinna, Athalie, Iphigénie étant rimés, quiconque voudrait secouer ce joug en France serait regardé comme un artiste faible qui n'aurait pas la force de le porter.

En qualité de vieillard, il faut que je vous dise une anecdote. Je demandais



un jour à Pope pourquoi Milton n'avait pas rimé son poëme, dans le tems que les autres poëtes rimaient leurs poëmes à l'imitation des Italiens; il me répondit, *because he could not.*

Je vous ai dit, monsieur, tout ce que j'avais sur le cœur. J'avoue que j'ai fait une grosse faute en ne faisant pas attention que le comte de Leifcester s'était d'abord appelé Dudley; mais si vous avez la fantaisie d'entrer dans la chambre des pairs et de changer de nom, je me souviendrai toujours du nom de Walpole avec l'estime la plus respectueuse.

Avant le départ de ma lettre j'ai eu le tems, monsieur, de lire votre Richard trois. Vous seriez un excellent attornei general; vous pesez toutes les probabilités; mais il paraît que vous avez une inclination secrète pour ce bossu. Vous voulez qu'il ait été beau garçon, et même galant homme. Le bénédictin Calmêt a fait une dissertation pour prouver que Jesus Christ avait un fort beau visage. Je veux croire avec vous que Richard trois n'était ni si laid, ni si méchant qu'on le dit; mais je n'aurais pas voulu avoir à faire à lui. Votre rose blanche et votre rose rouge avaient de terribles épines pour la nation.

*Those gracious kings are all a pack of rogues.*

En lisant l'histoire des York et des Lancastre, et de bien d'autres, on croit lire l'histoire des voleurs de grand chemin. Pour votre Henri sept, il n'était que coupeur de bourfes.

Be a minister or an anti-minister, a lord or a philosopher; I wil be with an equal respect, sir,

Your most humble obedient servant,

VOLTAIRE.

Be so kind as to tell me frankley if Jumonville was affassinated near the river call'd Ohio.

LETTER



## LETTER IV.

Strawberry-hill, July 27, 1768.

ONE can never, sir, be sorry to have been in the wrong, when one's errors are pointed out to one in so obliging and masterly a manner. Whatever opinion I may have of Shakespeare, I should think him to blame, if he could have seen the letter you have done me the honour to write to me, and yet not conform to the rules you have there laid down. When he lived, there had not been a Voltaire both to give laws to the stage, and to show on what good sense those laws were founded. Your art, sir, goes still farther; for you have supported your arguments, without having recourse to the best authority, your own works. It was my interest perhaps to defend barbarism and irregularity. A great genius is in the right, on the contrary, to show that when correctness, nay when perfection is demanded, he can still shine, and be himself, whatever fetters are imposed on him. But I will say no more on this head; for I am neither so unpolished as to tell you to your face how much I admire you, nor, though I have taken the liberty to vindicate Shakespeare against your criticisms, am I vain enough to think myself an adversary worthy of you. I am much more proud of receiving laws from you, than of contesting them. It was bold in me to dispute with you even before I had the honour of your acquaintance; it would be ungrateful now when you have not only taken notice of me, but forgiven me. The admirable letter you have been so good as to send me, is a proof that you are one of those truly great and rare men, who know at once how to conquer and to pardon.

I have made all the enquiry I could into the story of M. de Jumonville; and though your and our accounts disagree, I own I do not think, sir, that the strongest evidence is in our favour. I am told we allow he was killed by a party of our men, going to the Ohio. Your countrymen say he was going with a flag of truce. The commanding officer of our party said M. de Jumonville was going with hostile intentions; and that very hostile orders were found after his death in his pocket. Unless that officer had proved that he had previous intelligence of those orders, I doubt he will not be justified by finding them afterwards; for I am not at all disposed to believe that he had the foreknowledge of your hermit, who pitched the old woman's nephew.



phew into the river, because *ce jeune homme auroit assassiné sa tante dans un an.*

I am grieved that such disputes should ever subsist between two nations who have every thing in themselves to create happiness, and who may find enough in each other to love and admire. It is your benevolence, sir, and your zeal for softening the manners of mankind; it is the doctrine of peace and amity which you preach, that have raised my esteem for you even more than the brightness of your genius. France may claim you in the latter light, but all nations have a right to call you their countryman du côté du cœur. It is on the strength of that connection that I beg you, sir, to accept the homage of,

Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE<sup>s</sup>.

\* Into what despicable duplicity can inordinate vanity betray even real genius!—While Voltaire was writing in this flattering manner to Mr. Walpole, was asking for his works, and was courting his correspondence, he enclosed the above letter in the following to the duchess of Choiseul, in which he takes no sort of notice of his having begun the correspondence, but seems to wish it to be understood, that both Mr. Walpole's works and his difference in opinion with Voltaire had been officiously offered to his notice by their author himself. The duchess of Choiseul showed this letter to Mr. Walpole; which gave him such a contempt for Voltaire's dissimulation, that he dropped all farther correspondence with him. E.

VOLTAIRE to the DUCHESS of CHOISEUL.

15 Juillet, 1768.

MADAME,

LA femme du protecteur est protectrice. La femme du ministre de la France pourra prendre

le parti des François contre les Anglois avec qui je suis en guerre. Daignez juger, madame, entre M. Walpole et moi. Il m'a envoyé ses ouvrages dans lesquels il justifie le tyran Richard trois, dont ni vous ni moi ne nous soucions gueres. Mais il donne la préférence à son grossier bouffon Shakespeare sur Racine et sur Corneille; et c'est de quoi je me soucie beaucoup.

Je ne fais par quelle voie Mr. Walpole m'a envoyé sa déclaration de guerre. Il faut que ce soit par monsieur le duc de Choiseul, car elle est très spirituelle et très polie. Si vous voulez, madame, être médiatrice de la paix, il ne tient qu'à vous; j'en passerai par ce que vous ordonnerez; je vous supplie d'être juge du combat. Je prends la liberté de vous envoyer ma réponse. Si vous la trouvez raisonnable, permettez que je prenne encore une autre liberté: c'est de vous supplier de lui faire parvenir ma lettre, soit par la poste, soit par M. le comte du Chatelet.

Vous me trouverez bien hardi, mais vous pardonnerez à un vieux soldat qui combat pour sa patrie,



## LETTER V.

To GEORGE MONTAGU, Esq.

Huntingdon, May 30, 1763.

AS you interest yourself about Kimbolton, I begin my journal of two days here. But I must set out with owning, that I believe I am the first man that ever went sixty miles to an auction. As I came for ebony, I have been up to my chin in ebony; there is literally nothing but ebony in the house; all the other goods, if there were any, and I trust my lady Conyers did not sleep upon ebony mattresses, are taken away. There are two tables and eighteen chairs<sup>1</sup>; all made by the Hallet of two hundred years ago. These I intend to have; for mind, the auction does not begin till Thursday. There are more plebeian chairs of the same materials, but I have left commission for only the true black blood. Thence I went to Kimbolton, and asked to see the house. A kind footman, who in his zeal to open the chaise pinched half my finger off, said he would call the housekeeper: but a groom of the chambers insisted on my visiting their graces; and as I vowed I did not know them, he said they were in the great apartment, that all the rest was in disorder and altering, and would let me see nothing.—This was the reward of my first lie. I returned to my inn or alehouse, and instantly received a message from the duke to invite me to the castle. I was quite undressed, and dirty with my journey, and unacquainted with the duchess—yet was forced to go—Thank the god of dust, his grace was dirtier than me. He was extremely civil, and detected me to the groom of the chambers—asked me if I had dined. I said yes—lie the second. He pressed me to take a bed there. I hate to be criticised at a formal supper by a circle of stranger-footmen, and protested I was to meet a gentleman at Huntingdon to-night. The duchess and lady Caroline came in from walking; and to disguise my not having dined, for it was past six, I drank tea with them. The duchess is

patric, et qui, s'il a du goût, aura combattu sous vos ordres.

Agreez, madame, la sincère estime, la reconnaissance, et le profond respect du

VIEILLARD DES ALPES.

<sup>1</sup> Those now at Strawberry-hill. They are so elaborately carved, that an upholsterer in London asked Mr. Walpole 11 guineas to execute one similar in the same materials. E.

much.



much altered, and has a bad short cough. I pity Catherine of Arragon for living at Kimbolton: I never saw an uglier spot. The fronts are not so bad as I expected, by not being so French as I expected, but have no pretensions to beauty, nor even to comely ancient ugliness. The great apartment is truly noble, and almost all the portraits good, of what I saw; for many are not hung up, and half of those that are, my lord duke does not know. The earl of Warwick is delightful; the lady Mandeville attiring herself in her wedding garb, delicious. The Prometheus is a glorious picture, the eagle as fine as my statue. Is not it by Vandyck? The duke told me that Mr. Spence found out it was by Titian—but critics in poetry I see are none in painting. This was all I was shown, for I was not even carried into the chapel. The walls round the house are levelling, and I saw nothing without doors that tempted me to taste. So I made my bow, hurried to my inn, snapped up my dinner, lest I should again be detected, and came hither, where I am writing by a great fire, and give up my friend the east wind, which I have long been partial to for the south-east's sake, and in contradiction to the west, for blowing perpetually and bending all one's plantations. To-morrow I see Hinchinbrook—and London. Memento, I promised the duke that you should come and write on all his portraits. Do, as you honour the blood of Montagu! Who is the man in the picture with sir Charles Goring, where a page is tying the latter's scarf? And who are the ladies in the double half-lengths?

Arlington-street, May 31.

WELL! I saw Hinchinbrook this morning. Considering it is in Huntingdonshire, the situation is not so ugly nor melancholy as I expected; but I do not conceive what provoked so many of your ancestors to pitch their tents in that triste country, unless the Capulets' loved fine prospects. The house of Hinchinbrook is most comfortable, and just what I like; old, spacious, irregular, yet not vast or forlorn. I believe much has been done since you saw it—it now only wants an apartment, for in no part of it are there above two chambers together. The furniture has much simplicity, not to say too much; some portraits tolerable, none I think fine. When this lord gave Blackwood the head of the admiral<sup>2</sup> that I have now, he left

<sup>1</sup> As opposing in every thing the Montagus.

<sup>2</sup> Admiral Montagu, earl of Sandwich, by sir P. Lely, now in the gallery at Strawberry-hill.  
himself



himself not one so good. The head he kept is very bad: the whole length is fine, except the face of it. There is another of the duke of Cumberland by Reynolds, the colours of which are as much changed as the original is to the proprietor. The garden is wondrous small, the park almost smaller, and no appearance of territory. The whole has a quiet decency that seems adapted to the admiral after his retirement, or to Cromwell before his exaltation. I returned time enough for the opera; observing all the way I came the proof of the duration of this east wind, for on the west side the blossoms were so covered with dust one could not distinguish them; on the eastern hand the hedges were white in all the pride of May. Good-night.

Wednesday, June 1.

My letter is a perfect diary. There has been a sad alarm in the kingdom of white satin and muslin. The duke of Richmond was seized last night with a sore throat and fever; and though he is much better to-day, the masquerade\* of to-morrow night is put off till Monday. Many a queen of Scots, from sixty to sixteen, has been ready to die of the fright. Adieu once more! I think I can have nothing more to say before the post goes out to-morrow.

Yours ever,

HOR. WALPOLE.

\* The masked ball given by the duke of Richmond at his house in Privy-garden.



## LETTER VI.

TO MONSIEUR ELIE DE BEAUMONT,

[With the Castle of Otranto.]

Strawberry-hill, March 18, 1765.

SIR,

WHEN I had the honour of seeing you here, I believe I told you that I had written a novel, in which I was flattered to find that I had touched an effusion of the heart in a manner similar to a passage in the charming letters of the marquis de Rofelle<sup>\*</sup>. I have since that time published my little story, but was so diffident of its merit, that I gave it as a translation from the Italian. Still I should not have ventured to offer it to so great a mistress of the passions as madame de Beaumont, if the approbation of London, that is, of a country to which she and you, sir, are so good as to be partial, had not encouraged me to send it to you. After I have talked of the passions, and the natural effusions of the heart, how will you be surpris'd to find a narrative of the most improbable and absurd adventures! How will you be amazed to hear that a country of whose good sense you have an opinion should have applauded so wild a tale! But you must remember, sir, that whatever good sense we have, we are not yet in any light chained down to precepts and inviolable laws. All that Aristotle or his superior commentators, your authors, have taught us, has not yet subdued us to regularity: we still prefer the extravagant beauties of Shakespeare and Milton to the cold and well-disciplined merit of Addison, and even to the sober and correct march of Pope. Nay, it was but t'other day that we were transported to hear Churchill rave in numbers less chastised than Dryden's, but still in numbers like Dryden's. You will not, I hope, think I apply these mighty names to my own case with any vanity, when it is only their enormities that I quote, and that in defence, not of myself, but of my countrymen, who have had good-humour enough to approve the visionary scenes and actors in the Castle of Otranto.

To tell you the truth, it was not so much my intention to recall the ex-

\* A French novel written by madame de Beaumont, wife of this Elie de Beaumont.

ploded



ploded marvels of ancient romance, as to blend the wonderful of old stories with the natural of modern novels. The world is apt to wear out any plan whatever; and if the marquis de Roselle had not appeared, I should have been inclined to say, that that species *had* been exhausted. Madame de Beaumont must forgive me if I add that Richardson had, to me at least, made that kind of writing insupportable. I thought the *nodus* was become *dignus vindice*, and that a god, at least a ghost, was absolutely necessary to frighten us out of too much senses. When I had so wicked a design, no wonder if the execution was answerable. If I make you laugh, for I cannot flatter myself that I shall make you cry, I shall be content; at least I shall be satisfied, till I have the pleasure of seeing you, with putting you in mind of, sir,

Your most devoted humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

P. S. The passage I alluded to in the beginning of my letter is where Matilda owns her passion to Hippolita.—I mention it, as I fear so unequal a similitude would not strike madame de Beaumont.

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L E T T E R VII.

To THOMAS BRAND, Esq. OF THE HOO IN HEREFORDSHIRE.

Paris, October 19, 1765.

DON'T think I have forgot your commissions: I mentioned them to old Mariette this evening, who says he has got one of them, but never could meet with the other, and that it will be impossible for me to find either at Paris. You know, I suppose, that he would as soon part with an eye as with any thing in his own collection.

You may, if you please, suppose me extremely diverted here. Oh! exceedingly. In the first place, I have seen nothing; in the second, I have been confined this fortnight with a return of the gout in both feet; and in

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the



the third, I have not laughed since my lady Hertford went away. I assure you, you may come hither very safely, and be in no danger from mirth. Laughing is as much out of fashion as pantins or bilboquets. Good folks, they have not time to laugh. There is God and the king to be pulled down first; and men and women, one and all, are devoutly employed in the demolition. They think me quite profane, for having any belief left. But this is not my only crime: I have told them, and am undone by it, that they have taken from us to admire the two dullest things we had, whisk and Richardson—It is very true, and they want nothing but George Grenville to make their conversations, or rather dissertations, the most tiresome upon earth. For lord L——, if he would come hither, and turn free-thinker once more, he would be reckoned the most agreeable man in France—next to Mr. Hume, who is the only thing in the world that they believe implicitly; which they must do, for I defy them to understand any language that he speaks.

If I could divest myself of my wicked and *unphilosophic* bent to laughing, I should do very well. They are very civil and obliging to me, and several of the women are very agreeable, and some of the men. The duc de Nivernois has been beyond measure kind to me, and scarce missed a day without coming to see me during my confinement. The Guerchys are, as usual, all friendship. I had given entirely into supping, as I do not love rising early, and still less meat breakfasts. The misfortune is, that in several houses they dine, and in others sup.

You will think it odd that I should want to laugh, when Wilkes, Sterne, and Foote are here; but the first does not make me laugh, the second never could, and for the third, I choose to pay five shillings when I have a mind he should divert me. Besides, I certainly did not come in search of English; and yet the man I have liked the best in Paris is an Englishman, lord Offory, who is one of the most sensible amiable young men I ever saw, with a great deal of lord Tavistock in his manner.

The joys of Fontainebleau I miss by my illness—Patienza! If the gout deprived me of nothing better than a court.

The papers say the duke of Dorset is dead: what has he done for lord  
George?



MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS. 645

George? You cannot be so unconscionable as not to answer me. I don't ask who is to have his ribband; nor how many bushels of fruit the duke of Newcastle's dessert for the hereditary prince contained, nor how often he killed him for the sake of the *dear house of Brunswic*—No, keep your politics to yourselves; I want to know none of them:—when I do, and authentically, I will write to my lady —— or Charles Townshend.

Mrs. Pitt's friend, madame de Rochefort, is one of my principal attachments, and very agreeable indeed. Madame de Mirepoix another. For my admiration, madame de Monaco—but I believe you don't doubt my lord ——'s taste in sensuality. March's passion, the marechalle d'Estrées, is affected, cross, and not at all handsome. The princes of the blood are pretty much retired, do not go to Portsmouth and Salisbury once a week, nor furnish every other paragraph to the newspapers. Their campaigns are confined to killing boars and stags, two or three hundred in a year.

Adieu! Mr. Foley is my banker; or it is still more sure if you send your letter to Mr. Conway's office.

Yours ever,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER VIII.

To DR. BERKENHOUT.

July 6, 1773.

SIR,

I AM so much engaged in private business at present, that I have not had time to thank you for the favour of your letter: nor can I now answer it to your satisfaction.

My life has been too insignificant to afford materials interesting to the

<sup>2</sup>In answer to a letter from doctor Berkenhout, announcing his being engaged in a work entitled "A Biographical History of British Literature," and begging materials for a life of Mr. Walpole. E.



public. In general, the lives of mere authors are dry and unentertaining; nor, though I have been one occasionally, are my writings of a class or merit to entitle me to any distinction. I can as little furnish you, sir, with a list of them or their dates, which would give me more trouble to make out than is worth while. If I have any merit with the public, it is for printing and preserving some valuable works of others; and if ever you write the lives of printers, I may be enrolled in the number. My own works, I suppose, are dead and buried; but as I am not impatient to be interred with them, I hope you will leave that office to the parson of the parish, and I shall be, as long as I live,

Your obliged humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

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LETTER IX.

To LADY ———.

YOUR ladyship's illustrious exploits are the constant theme of my meditations. Your expeditions are so rapid, and to such distant regions, that I cannot help thinking you are possessed of the giant's boots that stepped seven leagues at a stride, as we are assured by that accurate historian Mother Goose. You are, I know, madam, an excellent walker, yet methinks seven leagues at once are a prodigious straddle for a fair lady. But whatever is your manner of travelling, few heroines ancient or modern can be compared to you for length of journeys. Thalestris queen of the Amazons, and M. M. or N. N. queen of Sheba, went each of them the Lord knows how far to meet Alexander the great, and Solomon the wife; the one to beg the favour of having a daughter (I suppose) and heirs by him; and the other, says scandal, to grant a like favour to the Hebrew monarch. Your ladyship, who has more real Amazonian principles, never makes visits but to empresses, queens, and princesses; and your country is enriched with the maxims of wisdom and virtue which you collect in your travels. For such great ends did Herodotus, Pythagoras, and other sages, make voyages to  
Egypt



Egypt and every distant kingdom; and it is amazing how much their own countries were benefited by what those philosophers learned in their peregrinations. Were it not that your ladyship is actuated by such public spirit, I could put you in mind, madam, of an old story that might save you a great deal of fatigue and danger—and now I think of it, as I have nothing better to fill my letter with, I will relate it to you.

Pyrrhus, the martial and *magnanimous* king of Epirus (as my lord Lyttelton would call him), being, as I have heard or seen Goodman Plutarch say, intent on his preparations for invading Italy; Cineas, one of the grooms of his bed-chamber, took the liberty of asking his majesty what benefit he expected to reap if he should be successful in conquering the Romans?—Jesus! said the king peevishly; why, the question answers itself. When we have overcome the Romans, no province, no town, whether Greek or barbarian, will be able to resist us: we shall at once be masters of all Italy. Cineas, after a short pause, replied, And having subdued Italy, what shall we do next?—Do next? answered Pyrrhus; why, seize Sicily.—Very likely, quoth Cineas; but will that put an end to the war?—The gods forbid! cried his majesty: when Sicily is reduced, Libya and Carthage will be within our reach. And then, without giving Cineas time to put in a word, the heroic prince ran over Africa, Greece, Asia, Persia, and every other country he had ever heard of upon the face of God's earth; not one of which he intended should escape his victorious sword. At last, when he was at the end of his geography and a little out of breath, Cineas watched his opportunity, and said quietly, Well, sire, and when we have conquered all the world, what are we to do then?—Why, then, said his majesty, extremely satisfied with his own prowess, we will live at our ease; we will spend whole days in banqueting and carousing, and will think of nothing but our pleasures.

Now, madam, for the application. Had I had the honour a few years ago of being your confidential abigail, when you meditated a visit to princess Esterhazy, I would have ventured to ask your ladyship of what advantage her acquaintance would be to you? Probably you would have told me, that she would introduce you to several electresses and margravines, whose courts you would visit. That having conquered all their hearts, as I am persuaded you would, your next jaunt should be to Hesse; from whence it would be but a trip to Aix, where madame de Rochouart lives. Soaring from thence,  
you



you would repair to the Imperial court at Vienna, where resides the most august, most virtuous and most plump of empresses and queens—no, I mistake—I should only have said, of empresses; for her majesty of Denmark, God bless her! is reported to be full as virtuous, and three stone heavier. Shall not you call at Copenhagen, madam? If you do, you are next door to the Czarina, who is the quintessence of friendship, as the princefs Daskioff says, whom, next to the late Czar, her Muscovite majesty loves above all the world. Asia, I suppose, would not enter into your ladyship's system of conquest; for, though it contains a fight of queens and sulcanas, the poor ladies are locked up in abominable places, into which I am sure your ladyship's amity would never carry you—I think they call them seraglios.—Africa has nothing but empresses stark-naked; and of complexions directly the reverse of your alabaster. They do not reign in their own right; and what is worse, the emperors of those barbarous regions wear no more robes than the sovereigns of their hearts—And what are princes and princefles without velvet and ermine? As I am not a jot a better geographer than king Pyrrhus, I can at present recollect but one lady more who reigns alone, and that is her majesty of Otaheite, lately discovered by Mr. Bankes and Dr. Solander; and for whom your ladyship's compassionate breast must feel the tenderest emotions, she having been cruelly deprived of her faithful minister and lover Tobiu, since dead at Batavia.

Well, madam, after you should have given me the plan of your intended expeditions, and not left a queen regent on the face of the globe unvisited, I would ask what we were to do next?—Why then, dear Abigail, you would have said, we will retire to ——, we will plant shrubs all the morning; read Anderson's Royal Genealogies all the evening; and once or twice a week I will go to Gunnersbury and drink a bottle with princefs Amelia.—Alas, dear lady! and cannot you do all that without skuttling from one end of the world to the other?—This was the upshot of all Cineas's inquisitiveness: and this is the pith of this tedious letter from, madam,

Your ladyship's most faithful Aulic counsellor

And humble admirer,

HOR. WALPOLE.



## LETTER X.

TO DOCTOR GEM', AT PARIS.

Arlington-street, April 4, 1776.

IT is but fair, when one quits one's party, to give notice to those one abandons—at least, modern patriots, who often imbibe their principles of honour at Newmarket, use that civility. You and I, dear sir, have often agreed in our political notions; and you, I fear, will die without changing your opinion. For my part, I must confess I am totally altered; and, instead of being a warm partisan of liberty, now admire nothing but despotism. You will naturally ask what place I have gotten, or what bribe I have taken? Those are the criterions of political changes in England—but as my conversion is of foreign extraction, I shall not be the richer for it. In one word, it is the *relation du lit de justice*<sup>2</sup> that has operated the miracle. When two ministers<sup>3</sup> are found so humane, so virtuous, so excellent, as to study nothing but the welfare and deliverance of the people; when a king listens to such excellent men; and when a parliament, from the basest, most interested motives, interposes to intercept the blessing, must I not change my opinions, and admire arbitrary power? or can I retain my sentiments, without varying the object?

Yes, sir, I am shocked at the conduct of the parliament—one would think it was an English one! I am scandalised at the speeches of the *avocat general*<sup>4</sup>, who sets up the odious interests of the nobility and clergy against the cries and groans of the poor, and who employs his wicked eloquence to tempt the good young monarch, by personal views, to sacrifice the mass of his subjects to the privileges of the few.—But why do I call it eloquence? The fumes of interest had so clouded his rhetoric, that he falls into a downright Iricism.—He tells the king, that the intended tax on the proprietors of land will affect the property not only of the rich, but of the poor.

<sup>1</sup> An English physician long settled at Paris, no less esteemed for his professional knowledge, than for his kind attention to the poor who applied to him for medical assistance.

He is still living at Paris, in the 80th year of his age, having passed through the dangers of

the revolution without suffering any material injury. E.

<sup>2</sup> The first lit de justice held by Louis XVI.

<sup>3</sup> Messrs. de Maleherbes and Turgot.

<sup>4</sup> Monsieur de Seguier.



I should be glad to know what is the property of the poor? Have the poor landed estates? Are those who have landed estates the poor? Are the poor that will suffer by the tax, the wretched labourers who are dragged from their famishing families to work on the roads?—But *it is* wicked eloquence when it finds a reason, or gives a reason, for continuing the abuse.—The advocate tells the king, those abuses are *presque consacrés par l'ancienneté*.—Indeed he says all that can be said for nobility, it is *consacrée par l'ancienneté*—and thus the length of the pedigree of abuses renders them respectable!

His arguments are as contemptible when he tries to dazzle the king by the great names of Henry quatre and Sully, of Louis XIV. and Colbert, two couple whom nothing but a mercenary orator would have classed together. Nor, were all four equally venerable, would it prove any thing. Even good kings and good ministers, if such have been, may have erred; nay, may have done the best they could. They would not have been good, if they wished their errors should be preserved, the longer they had lasted.

In short, sir, I think this resistance of the parliament to the adorable reformation planned by Messrs. de Turgot and Maleherbes, is more phlegmatically scandalous than the wildest tyranny of despotism. I forget what the nation was that refused liberty when it was offered. This opposition to so noble a work is worse. A whole people may refuse its own happiness; but these profligate magistrates resist happiness for others, for millions, for posterity!—Nay, do they not half vindicate Maupeou, who crushed them?—And you, dear sir, will you now chide my apostacy? Have I not cleared myself to your eyes? I do not see a shadow of sound logic in all monsieur Seguier's speeches, but in his proposing that the soldiers should work on the roads, and that passengers should contribute to their fabric; though, as France is not so luxuriously mad as England, I do not believe passengers could support the expence of the roads. That argument, therefore, is like another that the avocet proposes to the king, and which, he modestly owns, he believes would be impracticable.

I beg your pardon, sir, for giving you this long trouble; but I could not help venting myself, when shocked to find such renegade conduct in a parliament that I was rejoiced had been restored. Poor human kind! is it always to breed serpents from its own bowels? In one country it chooses its representatives, and they sell it and themselves—in others it exalts despots—

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in another it resists the despot when he consults the good of his people!— Can we wonder mankind is wretched, when men are such beings? Parliaments run wild with loyalty, when America is to be enslaved or butchered. They rebel, when their country is to be set free!—I am not surpris'd at the idea of the devil being always at our elbows. They who invented him, no doubt could not conceive how men could be so atrocious to one another, without the intervention of a fiend. Don't you think, if he had never been heard of before, that he would have been invented on the late partition of Poland? Adieu, dear sir!

Yours most sincerely,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER XI.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

THE purport of doctor Robertson's visit was to enquire where he could find materials for the reigns of king William and queen Anne, which he means to write as a supplement to David Hume. I had heard of his purpose, but did not own I knew it, that my discouragement might seem the more natural. I do not care a straw what he writes about the church's wet-nurse, goody Anne; but no Scot<sup>r</sup> is worthy of being the historian of William, but doctor Watson.

When he had told me his object, I said, "Write the reign of king Wil-

<sup>r</sup> Lord Orford changed his opinion upon this subject, after reading the accurate, impartial and elegant History of Doctor Somerville, which he always declared to be the most faultless account yet given of any interesting period of our history; and added, that its perfect impartiality would ever prevent its being popular.

The History of the reign of Queen Anne by the same author, announced for publication in an advertisement last winter, is impatiently expected, and is earnestly desired by all sincere ad-

mirers of the constitution of their country as established at the Revolution of 1688; and the present times seem peculiarly to require such candid investigation of great political principles already proved by a century's experience, in opposition to the host of ephemeral pamphlets equally foreign from the investigation of truth, whether they contain the wild and inconsiderate projects of the discontented, or the base and futile attempts of the interested to veil errors and misfortunes only recoverable by boldly meeting their magnitude. E.



liam, doctor Robertson! That is a great task! I look on him as the greatest man of modern times since his ancestor William prince of Orange." I soon found the doctor had very little idea of him, or had taken upon trust the pitiful partialities of Dalrymple and Macpherson. I said, "Sir, I do not doubt but king William came over with a view to the crown. Nor was he called upon by patriotism, for he was not an Englishman, to assert our liberties. No; his patriotism was of a higher rank. He aimed not at the crown of England from ambition, but to employ its forces and wealth against Louis the XIVth, for the common cause of the liberties of Europe. The whigs did not understand the extent of his views, and the Tories betrayed him. He has been thought not to have understood us; but the truth was, he took either party as it was predominant, that he might sway the parliament to support his general plan." The doctor, suspecting that I doubted his principles being enlarged enough to do justice to so great a character, told me he himself had been born and bred a whig, though he owned he was *now* a moderate one—I believe, a very moderate one. I said Macpherson had done great injustice to another hero, the duke of Marlborough, whom he accuses of betraying the design on Breff to Louis XIV. The truth was, as I heard often in my youth from my father, my uncle, and old persons who had lived in those times, that the duke trusted the duchess with the secret, and she her sister the popish duchess of Tyrconnel, who was as poor and as bigoted as a church mouse. A corroboration of this was the wise and sententious answer of king William to the duke, whom he taxed with having betrayed the secret. "Upon my honour, sir," said the duke, "I told it to nobody but my wife." "I did not tell it to mine," said the king.

I added, that Macpherson's and Dalrymple's invidious scandals really serve but to heighten the amazing greatness of the king's genius; for, if they say true, he maintained the crown on his head, though the nobility, the church-men, the country gentlemen, the people were against him; and though almost all his own ministers betrayed him—"But," said I, "nothing is so silly as to suppose that the duke of Marlborough and lord Godolphin ever meant seriously to restore king James. Both had offended him too much to expect forgiveness, especially from so remorseless a nature. Yet a re-revolution was so probable, that it is no wonder they kept up a correspondence with him, at least to break their fall if he returned. But as they  
never



never did effectuate the least service in his favour, when they had the fullest power, nothing can be inferred but king James's folly in continuing to lean on them. To imagine they meant to sacrifice his weak daughter, whom they governed absolutely, to a man who was sure of being governed by others, one must have as little sense as James himself had.

The precise truth I take to have been this. Marlborough and Godolphin both knew the meanness and credulity of James's character. They knew that he must be ever dealing for partisans; and they might be sure, that if he could hope for support from the general and the lord treasurer, he must be less solicitous for more impotent supporters. "Is it impossible," said I to the doctor, "but they might correspond with the king even by Anne's own consent? Do not be surpris'd, sir," said I: "such things have happened. My own father often received letters from the pretender, which he always carried to George II. and had them indorsed by his majesty. I myself have seen them counter-signed by the king's own hand."

In short, I endeavour'd to impress him with proper ideas of his subject, and painted to him the difficulties, and the want of materials. But the book-sellers will out-argue me, and the doctor will forget his education—*Panem et Circenses*, if you will allow me to use the latter for those that are captivated by favour in the *circle*, will decide his writing and give the colour. I once wish'd he should write the History of King William; but his Charles V. and his America have opened my eyes, and the times have shut his. Adieu!

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LETTER XII.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

I HAVE been reading a new French translation of the elder Pliny, of whom I never read but scraps before; because, in the poetical manner in which we learn Latin at Eton, we never become acquainted with the names of the commonest things, too undignified to be admitted into verse; and therefore I never had patience to search in a dictionary for the meaning of every substantive. I find I shall not have a great deal less trouble with the translation, as I am not more familiar with their common *drogues* than



than with the Latin. However, the beginning goes off very glibly, as I am not yet arrived below the planets. But do you know that this study, of which I have never thought since I learnt astronomy at Cambridge, has furnished me with some very entertaining ideas! I have long been weary of the common jargon of poetry. You bards have exhausted all the nature we are acquainted with; you have treated us with the sun, moon, and stars, the earth and the ocean, mountains and valleys, &c. &c. under every possible aspect. In short, I have longed for some American poetry, in which I might find new appearances of nature, and consequently of art. But my present excursion into the sky has afforded me more entertaining prospects, and newer phenomena. If I was as good a poet as you are, I would immediately compose an idyl, or an elegy, the scene of which should be laid in Saturn or Jupiter; and then, instead of a niggardly soliloquy by the light of a single moon, I would describe a night illuminated by four or five moons at least, and they should be all in a perpendicular or horizontal line, according as Celia's eyes (who probably in that country has at least two pair) are disposed in longitude or latitude. You must allow that this system would diversify poetry amazingly—And then Saturn's belt! which the translator says in his notes, is not round the planet's waste, like the shingles, but is a globe of crystal that incloses the whole orb, as you may have seen an enamelled watch in a case of glass. If you do not perceive what infinitely pretty things may be said, either in poetry or romance, on a brittle heaven of crystal, and what furbelowed rainbows they must have in that country, you are neither the Ovid nor natural philosopher I take you for. Pray send me an eclogue directly upon this plan—and I give you leave to adopt my idea of Saturnian Celias' having their every thing quadrupled—which would form a much more entertaining rhapsody than Swift's thought of magnifying or diminishing the species in his Gulliver. How much more execution a fine woman would do with two pair of *piercers!* or four! and how much longer the honey-moon would last, if both the sexes have (as no doubt they have) four times the passions, and four times the means of gratifying them!—I have opened new worlds to you—You must be four times the poet you are, and then you will be above Milton, and equal to Shakespeare, the only two mortals I am acquainted with, who ventured beyond the visible diurnal sphere, and preserved their intellects. Dryden himself would have talked nonsense, and, I fear, bawdy, on my plan; but you are too good a divine, I am sure, to treat my quadruple

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ple love but platonically. In Saturn, notwithstanding their glass-case, they are supposed to be very cold; but platonic love of itself produces frigid conceits enough, and you need not augment the dose.—But I will not dictate. The subject is new; and you, who have so much imagination, will shoot far beyond me. Fontenelle would have made something of the idea even in prose; but Algarotti would dishearten any body from attempting to meddle with the system of the universe a second time in genteel dialogue. Good-night! I am going to bed.—Mercy on me! if I should dream of Celia with four times the usual attractions!

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LETTER XIII.

TO MR. PINKERTON'.

March 17, 1785.

I AM much obliged to you, sir, for the many civil and kind expressions in your letter, and for the friendly information you give me. Partiality, I fear, dictated the former; but the last I can only ascribe to the goodness of your heart.

I have published nothing of any size but the pieces you mention, and one or two small tracts, now out of print and forgotten. The rest have been prefaces to some of my Strawberry editions, and to a few other publications, and some fugitive pieces, which I reprinted several years ago in a small volume, and which shall be at your service with the Catalogue of Noble Authors.

With regard to the bookfeller who has taken the trouble to collect my writings (amongst which I do not doubt but he will generously bestow on me many that I did not write, according to the laudable practice of such compilers), and who also intends to write my life, to which, as I never did any thing worth the notice of the public, he must likewise be a volunteer contributor, it would be vain for me to endeavour to prevent such a design. Whoever has been so unadvised as to throw himself on the public,

\* Author of Letters on Literature, an Essay from the accession of the house of Stuart to that on Medals, and of the History of Scotland, of Mary. E.

must



must pay such a tax in a pamphlet or a magazine when he dies; but happily the insects that prey on carrion, are still more short-lived than the carcases were from which they draw temporary nutriment. Those momentary abortions live but a day, and are thrust aside by like embryos. Literary characters, when not illustrious, are known only to a few literary men, and, amidst the world of books, few readers can come to my share. Printing, that secures existence (in libraries) to indifferent authors of any bulk, is like those cases of Egyptian mummies which in catacombs preserve bodies of one knows not whom, and which are scribbled over with characters that nobody attempts to read, till nobody understands the language in which they were written.

I believe, therefore, it will be most wise to swim for a moment on the passing current, secure that it will soon hurry me into the ocean where all things are forgotten. To appoint a biographer is to bespeak a panegyric; and I doubt whether they who collect their works for the public, and like me are conscious of no intrinsic worth, do not beg mankind to accept of talents (whatever they were) in lieu of virtues. To anticipate spurious publications by a comprehensive and authentic one is almost as great an evil. It is giving a body to scattered atoms—and such an act in one's old age is declaring a fondness for the indiscretions of youth, or for trifles of an age, which though more mature is only the less excusable. It is most true, sir, that so far from being prejudiced in favour of my own writings, I am persuaded that, had I thought early as I think now, I should never have appeared as an author. Age, frequent illness and pain have given me many hours of reflection in the intervals of the latter, which, besides showing me the inutility of all our little views, have suggested an observation that I love to encourage in myself from the rationality of it. I have learnt and have practised the mortifying task of comparing myself with great authors, and that comparison has annihilated all the flattery that self-love could suggest. I know how trifling my own writings are, and how far below the standard that constitutes excellence—for the shades that distinguish the degrees of mediocrity, they are not worth discrimination; and he must be humble, or easily satisfied, who can be content to glimmer for a moment a little more than his brethren glow-worms. Mine therefore, you find, sir, is not humility, but pride. When young, I wished for fame; not examining whether I was capable of attaining it, nor considering in what light fame was desirable. There are two  
forts



forts of honest fame—that attendant on the truly great, and that better kind which is due to the good. I fear I did not aim at the latter, nor discovered that I could never compass the former. Having neglected the best road, and having instead of the other strolled into a narrow path that led to no goal worth seeking, I see the idleness of my journey, and hold it more graceful to abandon my wanderings to chance or oblivion, than to mark solicitude for trifles which I think so myself.

I beg your pardon for talking so much about myself; but an answer was due to the unmerited attention you have paid to my writings. I turn with more pleasure to speak on yours. Forgive me if I shall blame you, whether you either abandon your intention or are too impatient to finish it. Your preface proves that you are capable of treating the subject ably—but allow me to repeat, that it is a kind of subject that ought not to be executed impetuously. A mere recapitulation of authenticated facts would be dry. A more enlarged plan would demand acquaintance with the characters of the actors, and with the *probable* sources of measures. The age is accustomed to details and anecdotes; and the age immediately preceding his own is less known to any man than the history of any other period. You are young enough, sir, to collect information on many particulars that will occur in your progress, from living actors, at least from their cotemporaries; and great as your ardour may be, you will find yourself delayed by the want of materials and by further necessary enquiries. As you have variety of talents, why should you not exercise them on works that will admit of more rapidity, and at the same time, at leisure moments, commence, digest and enrich your plan by collecting new matter for it?

In one word, I have too much zeal for your credit not to dissuade precipitation in a work of the kind you meditate. That I speak sincerely and without flattery, you are sure, as accident, not design, made you acquainted with my admiration of your tract on medals. If I wish to delay your history, it must be that it may appear with more advantages; and I must speak disinterestedly, as my age will not allow me to hope to see it, if not finished soon. I should not forgive myself if I turned you from prosecution of your work—but as I am sure my writings can have given you no opinion of my hav-

\* Of writing a History of the reign of George the second.



ing sound and deep judgment, pray follow your own, and allow no merit but that of sincerity and zeal to the sentiments of

Your obliged and obedient humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

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L E T T E R XIV.

To Mr. PINKERTON, on his LETTERS ON LITERATURE, under the Name of HERON.

June 25, 1785.

I AM much obliged to your book, sir, on many accounts, particularly for having recalled my mind to subjects of delight to which it was grown dulled by age and indolence. In consequence of your reclaiming it, I asked myself why you feel so much disregard to certain authors whose fame is established.—You have assigned good reasons for withholding your approbation from some, from their being imitators—It was natural then to ask myself again, whence they had obtained so much celebrity?—I think I have discovered a cause which I do not remember to have seen noted; and that cause I think was, that such authors possessed grace. Do not suspect me for a disciple of lord Chesterfield—nor imagine that I mean to erect grace into a capital ingredient in writing. But I do believe that it is a perfume that will preserve from putrefaction, and is distinct even from style. It is from the charm of grace that I believe some authors not in your favour obtained part of their renown—Virgil in particular.—Though I am far from disagreeing with you on him in general—I think there is such a want of invention (and when he did invent it was so foolishly), so little good sense, so little variety, and so little power over the passions, that I have often said, from contempt for his matter, and from the charm of his harmony, I believe I should like him better if I was to hear the *Æneid* repeated and did not understand Latin.—But he has more than harmony; whatever he utters is said gracefully—A Roman farmer might not understand the *Georgic*, but a Roman courtier was made to understand farming—the farming of that age—and Virgil could captivate a lord of Augustus's bedchamber, and tempt him to listen to themes of rusticity. This I think is more than the power of style; it was ennobling



bling the subject: I confess I admire Mr. Addison's phrase, that Virgil tossed his dung about with an air of majesty. A style may be excellent without grace—for instance, Swift's. Eloquence may bestow a lasting style and one of more dignity; but eloquence may want that ease, that genteel air, that flows from or constitutes grace. Addison was master of that grace in his pieces of humour, and, perhaps from that secret, excels all men that ever lived, but Shakespeare, in humour, by never dropping into an approach to burlesque and buffoonery, even when his humour descended to characters that in any other hands would have been vulgarly low. Fielding had as much humour perhaps as Addison, but, having no idea of grace, is perpetually disgusting.

The Grecians had grace in every thing—in oratory, in poetry, in statuary, in architecture, and I dare say in painting and music.

The Romans, it is true, were their imitators, but, having grace too, imparted it to their copies, which gave them a merit that almost raises them to a level with the originals.

Horace's odes acquired their fame, no doubt, from the graces of his style—a capital merit of both Tibullus and Propertius, who certainly cannot boast of more meaning than there is in Horace's odes.

Waller, whom you prescribe, sir, owed his fame to the graces of his manner, though he frequently stumbled and even fell flat—but a few of his smaller pieces are as graceful as possible.

Milton has merit so much superior, that I will only say, that if his Raphael, his Satan and his Adam have as much dignity as the Apollo Belvidere, his Eve has all the delicacy of the Venus of Medici, and his description of Eden has the colouring of Albano. His tenderness always imprints ideas as graceful as Guido's Madonnas, and the Allegro, Penseroso and Comus might be denominated from the three Graces.

Milton's soul was full of poetry, sense, and fire, and he had improved all those qualities by studying the best models.

Thus prepared, he gave a loose to his genius, which was too impetuous and  
 4 P 2 sublime



sublime to be curbed by the mechanism of rhyme, which would often have impeded his expressing all he felt, and oftener perhaps have obliged him to add frigidities to help out the return of the sound. The language, therefore, of Milton's blank verse was not studied, but the natural application of his own tongue to deliver his own ideas. The imitators of Milton, on the contrary, study his phrase to express common ideas, their own ideas, void of his vigour. Thence the diction of Thomson, Akenfide, &c. &c. is less easy than it would have been if they had written in rhyme. Their language is not poetic, but bombast prose, or rather prose dressed in poetic rags. The *Paradise Lost* is like M. Angelo's *Moses*—The *Seasons*, and the *Pleasures of the Imagination*, like the king of hearts and diamonds, with robes made of patches of gaudy colours, that do not unite, and differ from the knaves but by the length of their trains.

Cowley, I think, would have had grace, for his mind was graceful, if he had had any ear, or if his taste had not been vitiated by the pursuit of wit; for false wit always deviates into tinsel or pertness. Pertness is mistaken affectation of grace, as pedantry is erroneous dignity—The familiarity of the one, and the clumsiness of the other, prevent or destroy grace.

Nature, that produces samples of all qualities, and in the scale of gradation exhibits all possible shades, affords us types that are more apposite than words. The eagle is sublime, the lion majestic, the swan graceful, the monkey pert, the bear ridiculously awkward. I mention these as more expressive than I could make definitions of my meaning: but I will only apply the swan, under whose wings I will shelter an apology for Racine, whose pieces give me the idea of that bird. The colouring of the swan is pure, his attitudes are graceful, he never displeases you when sailing on his proper element. His feet are ugly, his walk not natural—he can soar, but it is with difficulty. Still the impression a swan leaves is that of grace. So does Racine.

Boileau may be compared to the dog, whose sagacity is remarkable, as well as its fawning on its master, and its snarling at those he dislikes. If Boileau was too stern to admit the pliancy of grace, he compensates by good sense and propriety. He is like (for I will drop animals) an upright magistrate, whom you respect, but whose public justice and severity leave an

awe



awe that discourages familiarity. His copies of the ancients may be too fervile—but if a good translator deserves praise, Boileau deserves more—he certainly does not fall below his originals, and, considering when he wrote, has a greater merit still. By his imitations he held out to his countrymen models of taste, and banished totally the bad taste of his predecessors. For his *Lutrin*, replete with excellent poetry, wit, humour, and satire, he certainly was not obliged to the ancients. Except Horace, how little idea had either Greeks or Romans of wit and humour! Aristophanes and Lucian, compared with moderns, were, the one a blackguard, the other a buffoon. To my eyes, the *Lutrin*, the *Dispensary*, and the *Rape of the Lock*, are standards of elegance and grace not to be paralleled by antiquity, and are eternal and mortifying reproaches to Voltaire, whose indelicacy in the *Pucelle* degraded him as much, when compared with the three authors I have named, as his *Henriade* leaves Virgil and even Lucan, whom he more resembles, by far his superiors. The *Dunciad* is dishonoured by the offensive images of the games, but the poetry appears to me admirable; and though the fourth book has obscurities, I prefer it to the three others. It has descriptions not surpassed by any poet that ever existed, and which surely a writer merely ingenious will never equal. The lines on Italy, on Venice, on Convents, have all that grace for which I contend, as an ingredient distinct from the general beauties allotted to poetry—and the *Rape of the Lock* (besides the originality of the invention) is a standard of graceful writing.

In general, I believe that what I call grace is denominated elegance—but I think grace is something higher. I will explain myself by instances rather than by words. Apollo is graceful, Mercury elegant.

Petrarch, perhaps, owed his whole merit to the harmony of his numbers, and the graces of his style. They conceal his want of meaning, and want of variety: and his complaints may have added an interest, which, had his passion been successful, and had expressed itself with equal sameness, would have made the number of his sonnets insupportable. Melancholy in a poet, I am inclined to think, contributes to grace, when it is not disgraced by pitiful lamentations, like Ovid's and Cicero's in their banishment. We respect melancholy. A gay writer who should only express satisfaction without variety, would soon be nauseous.

S

Madame



Madame de Sevigné is an instance of both.—There is too much of grief for her daughter's absence—yet it is always expressed by new turns and new images. When she forgets her concern, and returns to her natural disposition, gaiety, every paragraph has novelty:—her allusions, her applications are the happiest possible. She has the art of making you acquainted with all her acquaintance; and even with the spots she inhabited. Her language is correct, though unstudied; and when her mind is full of any great event, she interests you with the warmth of a dramatic writer, not with the chilling impartiality of an historian.—Pray read her account of the death of marshal Turenne, and of the arrival of king James in France, and tell me whether you do not know their persons as if you had lived at the time. For my part, if you will allow me a word of digression, I hate the cold impartiality recommended to historians.—*Si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi.*—But that I may not wander again, nor tire you, nor contradict you any more, I will finish—only interceding for grace, as an apology for several writers to whom I think you a little too severe.

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LETTER XV.

TO THE RIGHT HON. ELIZABETH LADY CRAVEN<sup>1</sup>.

Berkeley-square, November 27, 1786.

TO my extreme surprize, madam, when I knew not in what quarter of the known or unknown world you was resident or existent, my maid in Berkeley-square sent me to Strawberry-hill a note from your ladyship, offering to call on me for a moment—for a whirlwind, I suppose, was waiting at your door to carry you to Japan; and, as balloons have not yet settled any post-offices in the air, you could not, at least did not, give me any direction where to address you—though you did kindly reproach me with my silence. I must enter into a little justification before I proceed. I heard from you from Venice, then from Poland, and then, having whisked through Tartary, from Petersburg—but still with no directions. I said to myself, “I will write to Grand Cairo, which, probably, will be her next stage.” Nor was I totally in the wrong—for there came a letter from Con-

<sup>1</sup> Now margravine of Anspach.

stantinople,



stantinople, with a design mentioned of going to the Greek islands, and orders to write to you at Vienna, but with no banker or other address specified.

For a great while I had even stronger reasons than these for silence. For several months I was disabled by the gout from holding a pen; and you must know, madam, that one can't write when one cannot write. Then, how write to *la Financée du Roi de Garbe*? You had been in the tent of the cham of Tartary, and in the haram of the captain pacha, and, during your navigation of the Ægean, were possibly fallen into the terrible power of a corsair. How could I suppose that so many despotic infidels would part with your charms? I never expected you again on christian ground. I did not doubt your having a talisman to make people in love with you; but anti-talismans are quite a new specific.

Well, while I was in this quandary, I received a delightful drawing of the castle of Otranto—but still provokingly without any address. However, my gratitude for so very agreeable and obliging a present could not rest till I found you out. I wrote to the dukes of Richmond, to beg he would ask your brother captain Berkeley for a direction to you; and he has this very day been so good as to send me one, and I do not lose a moment in making use of it.

I give your ladyship a million of thanks for the drawing, which was really a very valuable gift to me. I did not even know that there was a castle of Otranto. When the story was finished I looked into the map of the kingdom of Naples for a well-sounding name, and that of Otranto was very sonorous. Nay, but the drawing is so satisfactory, that there are two small windows, one over another, and looking into the country, that suit exactly to the small chambers from one of which Matilda heard the young peasant singing beneath her. Judge how welcome this must be to the author; and thence judge, madam, how much you must have obliged him!

When you take another flight towards the bounds of the western ocean, remember to leave a direction. One cannot always shoot flying. Lord Chesterfield directed a letter to the late lord Pembroke, who was always swimming, "To the earl of Pembroke in the Thames, over against Whitehall." That was sure of finding him within a certain number of fathom;

but



but your ladyship's longitude varies so rapidly, that one must be a good bowler indeed, to take one's ground so judiciously that by casting wide of the mark one may come in near to the jack.

I have the honour to be, with gratitude and respect,

Your ladyship's most obliged humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

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LETTER XVI.

TO LADY CRAVEN.

Berkeley-square, January 2, 1787.

YOUR ladyship tells me that you have kept a journal of your travels—you know not when your friends at Paris will give you time to put it *au net*—that is, I conclude and hope, prepare it for the press. I do not wonder that those friends, whether talismanic or others, are so assiduous, if you indulge them; but unless they are of the former description, they are unpardonable, if they know what they interrupt—and deserve much more that you should wish they had fallen into a ditch, than the poor gentlemen who sigh more to see you in sheets of holland than of paper. To me the mischief is enormous. How proud I should be to register a noble authoress of my own country, who has travelled over more regions and farther than any female in print! Your ladyship has visited those islands and shores, whence formerly issued those travelling sages and legislators who fought and imported wisdom, laws and religion into Greece; and though we are so perfect as to want none of those commodities, the fame of those philosophers is certainly diminished when a fair lady has gone as far in quest of knowledge. You have gone in an age when travels are brought to a juster standard, by narrations being limited to truth.

Formerly the performers of the longest voyages destroyed half the merit of their expeditions, by relating not what they had, but had *not* seen; a sort  
of



of communication that they might have imparted without stirring a foot from home. Such exaggerations drew discredit on travels, till people would not believe that there existed in other countries any thing very different from what they saw in their own: and because no Patagonians, or gentry seven or eight feet high, were really discovered, they would not believe that there were Laplanders or pigmies of three and four. Incredulity went so far, that at last it was doubted whether China so much as existed; and our countryman sir John Mandeville got an ill name, because, though he gave an account of it, he had not brought back its right name—at least, if I do not mistake, this was the case—But it is long since I redde any thing about the matter; and I am willing to begin my travels again under your ladyship's auspices. I am sorry to hear, madam, that by your account lady Mary Wortley was not so accurate and faithful as modern travellers. The invaluable art of inoculation, which she brought from Constantinople, so dear to all admirers of beauty, and to which we owe perhaps the preservation of yours, stamps her an universal benefactress; and as you rival her in poetic talents, I had rather you would employ them to celebrate her for her nostrum, than detect her for romancing. However, genuine accounts of the interior of seraglios would be precious; and I was in hopes would become the greater rarities, as I flattered myself that your friends the empress of Russia and the emperor were determined to level Ottoman tyranny. His Imperial majesty, who has demolished the prison bars of so many nunneries, would perform a still more christian act in setting free so many useles fultanas; and her Czarish majesty, I trust, would be as great a benefactress to our sex, by abolishing the barbarous practice that reduces us to be of none. Your ladyship's indefatigable peregrinations should have such great objects in view, when you have the ear of soverieigns.

Peter the hermit conjured up the first crusadoes against the infidels by running about from monarch to monarch. Lady Craven should be as zealous and as renowned; and every fair Circassian would acknowledge that one English lady had repaid their country for the secret which another had given to Europe from their practice.

I have the honour to be, madam,  
Your ladyship's most obedient humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.



## LETTER XVII.

TO LADY CRAVEN.

Berkeley-square, December 11, 1788.

IT is agreeable to your ladyship's usual goodness to honour me with another letter—and I may say to your equity too, after I had proved to monsieur Mercier, by the list of dates of my letters, that it was not mine but the post's fault, that you did not receive one that I had the honour of writing to you above a year ago—Not, madam, that I could wonder, if you had the prudence to drop a correspondence with an old superannuated man, who, conscious of his decay, has had the decency of not troubling with his dotages persons of not near your ladyship's youth and vivacity. I have long been of opinion that few persons know *when* to die—I am not so English as to mean when to dispatch themselves—no, but when to go out of the world. I have usually applied this opinion to those who have made a considerable figure, and consequently it was not adapted to myself. Yet even we cyphers ought not to fatigue the public scene when we are become lumber. Thus, being quite out of the question, I will explain my maxim, which is the more wholesome, the higher it is addressed. My opinion then is, that when any personage has shown as much as is possible in his or her best walk (and not to repeat both genders every minute, I will use the male as the common of the two), he should take up his Strulbrugism, and be heard of no more. Instances will be still more explanatory. Voltaire ought to have pretended to die after *Alzire*, *Mahomet* and *Semiramis*, and not have produced his wretched last pieces. Lord Chatham should have closed his political career with his immortal war—And how weak was Garrick, when he had quitted the stage, to limp after the tatters of fame by writing and reading pitiful poems, and even by *sitting* to read plays which he had acted with such fire and energy! We have another example in Mr. A ———; who, if he had a friend upon earth, would have been obliged to him for being knocked on the head the moment he had published the *first* edition of the Bath Guide; for even in the second he had exhausted his whole stock of inspiration, and has never written any thing tolerable since. When such unequal authors print their works together, one may apply in a new light the old hacked simile of Mezentius, who tied together the living and the dead.

We



We have just received the works of an author from whom I find I am to receive much less entertainment than I expected, because I shall have much less to read than I intended. His Memoirs, I am told, are almost wholly military, which, therefore, I shall not read—and his poetry, I am sure, I shall not look at, because I should understand it.—What I saw of it formerly convinced me that he would not have been a poet, even if he had written in his own language; and though I do not understand German, I am told it is a fine language; and I can easily believe that any tongue (not excepting our old barbarous Saxon, which, a bit of an antiquary as I am, I abhor) is more harmonious than French. It was curious absurdity, therefore, to pitch on the most unpoetic language in Europe, the most barren and the most clogged with difficulties. I have heard Russian and Polish sung, and both sounded musical—but to abandon one's own tongue, and not adopt Italian, that is even sweeter and softer and more copious than the Latin, was a want of taste that I should think could not be applauded even by a Frenchman born in Provence. But what a language is the French, which measures verses by feet that never are to be pronounced, which is the case wherever the mute *e* is found! What poverty of various sounds for rhyme, when, lest similar cadences should too often occur, their mechanic bards are obliged to marry masculine and feminine terminations as alternately as the black and white squares of a chess-board! Nay, will you believe me, madam? Yes, you will; for you may convince your own eyes, that a scene of Zaire begins with three of the most nasal adverbs that ever snorted together in a breath. *Enfin, donc, désormais* are the culprits in question. *Enfin donc*, need I tell your ladyship, that the author I alluded to at the beginning of this long tirade is the late king of Prussia?

I am conscious that I have taken a little liberty when I excommunicate a tongue in which your ladyship has condescended to write—but I only condemn it for verse and pieces of eloquence, of which I thought it alike incapable, till I redde Rousseau of Geneva. It is a most sociable language, and charming for narrative and epistles. Yet, write as well as you will in it, you must be liable to express yourself better in the speech natural to you; and your own country has a right to understand all your works, and is jealous of their not being as perfect as you could make them. Is it not more creditable to be translated into a foreign language than into your own? and will it not vex you to hear the translation taken for the original, and to



find vulgarisms that you could not have committed yourself? But I have done, and will release you, madam; only observing, that you flatter me with a vain hope when you tell me you shall return to England sometime or other. Where will that time be for me?—and when it arrives, shall not I be somewhere else?

I do not pretend to send your ladyship English news, nor to tell you of English literature. You must before this time have heard of the dismal state into which our chief personage is fallen! That consideration absorbs all others. The two houses are going to settle some intermediate succedaneum, and *the obvious one*, no doubt, will be fixed on.

This letter, I hope, will be more fortunate than my last. I should be very unhappy to seem again ungrateful, when I have the honour of being with the greatest respect,

Madam, your ladyship's most obliged and most humble servant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

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LETTER XVIII.

TO THOMAS BARRETT, Esq. OF LEE IN KENT.

Berkeley-square, June 5, 1788.

I WISH I could charge myself with any merit, which I always wish to have, towards you, dear sir, in letting Mr. Matthew see Strawberry; but in truth he has so much merit and modesty and taste himself, that I gave him the ticket with pleasure—which it seldom happens to me to do; for most of those who go thither, go because it is the fashion, and because *a party* is a prevailing custom too; and my tranquillity is disturbed, because nobody likes to stay at home. If Mr. Matthew was really entertained, I am glad—but Mr. Wyatt has made him too correct a Goth not to have seen all the imperfections and bad execution of my attempts; for neither Mr. Bentley nor my workmen had *studied* the science, and I was always too desultory and impatient to consider that I should please myself more by allowing time, than by hurrying my plans into execution before they were ripe. My house  
therefore



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therefore is but a sketch by beginners; yours is finished by a great master—and if Mr. Matthew liked mine, it was *en virtuose*, who loves the dawnings of an art, or the glimmerings of its restoration.

I finished Mr. Gibbon a full fortnight ago, and was extremely pleased. It is a most wonderful mass of information, not only on history, but almost on all the ingredients of history, as war, government, commerce, coin, and what not. If it has a fault, it is in embracing too much, and consequently in not detailing enough, and in striding backwards and forwards from one set of princes to another, and from one subject to another; so that, without much historic knowledge, and without much memory, and much method in one's memory, it is almost impossible not to be sometimes bewildered: nay, his own impatience to tell what he knows, makes the author, though commonly so explicit, not perfectly clear in his expressions. The last chapter of the fourth volume, I own, made me recoil, and I could scarcely push through it. So far from being catholic or heretic, I wished Mr. Gibbon had never heard of Monophysites, Nestorians, or any such fools!—But the sixth volume made ample amends; Mahomet and the popes were gentlemen and good company.—I abominate factions of theology and reformation.

Mr. Sheridan, I hear, did not quite satisfy the passionate expectation that had been raised<sup>\*</sup>—But it was impossible he could, when people had worked themselves up into an enthusiasm of offering fifty—aye, *fifty* guineas for a ticket to hear him. Well! we are sunk and deplorable in many points—yet not absolutely gone, when history and eloquence throw out such shoots! I thought I had outlived my country; I am glad not to leave it desperate! Adieu, dear sir!

Yours most sincerely,

HOR. WALPOLE.

<sup>\*</sup> Of his speech in Westminster-hall, upon bringing forward one of the charges against Mr. Hastings.

LETTER



## LETTER XIX.

To THOMAS BARRETT, Esq.

Berkeley-square, May 14, 1792.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH my poor fingers do not yet write easily, I cannot help enquiring if Mabeuse<sup>\*</sup> is arrived safely at Lee, and fits his destined stall in the library.

My amendment is far slower, *comme de raison* than ever, and my weakness much greater. Another fit, I doubt, will confine me to my chair, if it does not do more—it is not worth haggling about that.

Dr. Darwin has appeared, superior in some respects to the former part. The Triumph of Flora, beginning at the 59th line, is most beautifully and enchantingly imagined; and the twelve verses that by miracle describe and comprehend the creation of the universe out of chaos, are in my opinion the most sublime passage in any author, or in any of the few languages with which I am acquainted. There are a thousand other verses most charming, or indeed all are so, crowded with most poetic imagery, gorgeous epithets and style—and yet these four cantos do not please me equally with the Loves of the Plants.—This seems to me almost as much a rhapsody of unconnected parts; and is so deep, that I cannot read six lines together and know what they are about, till I have studied them in the long notes, and then perhaps do not comprehend them.—But all this is my fault, not Dr. Darwin's—Is he to blame, that I am no natural philosopher, no chymist, no metaphysician?

One misfortune will attend this glorious work—it will be little redde but by those who have no taste for poetry, and who will be weighing and criticizing his positions, without feeling the imagination, harmony and expression of the verification.

Is not it extraordinary, dear sir, that two of our very best poets, Garth and Darwin, should have been physicians?—I believe they have left all the lawyers wrangling at the turnpike of Parnassus. Adieu, dear sir!

Yours most cordially,

ORFORD.

\* A capital picture by that master, then lately purchased by Mr. Barrett.



## LETTER XX.

TO THE REVEREND MR. BELOE.

Strawberry-hill, December 2, 1794.

I DO beg and beseech you, good sir, to forgive me, if I cannot possibly consent to receive the dedication you are so kind and partial as to propose to me. I have in the most positive, and almost uncivil manner, refused a dedication or two lately. Compliments on virtues, which the persons addressed, like me, seldom possessed, are happily exploded and laughed out of use. Next to being ashamed of having good qualities bestowed on me to which I should have no title, it would hurt to be praised on my erudition, which is most superficial; and on my trifling writings, all of which turn on most trifling subjects. They amused me while writing them; may have amused a few persons; but have nothing solid enough to preserve them from being forgotten with other things of as light a nature. I would not have your judgment called in question hereafter, if somebody reading your Aulus Gellius should ask, "What were those writings of lord O. which Mr. Beloe so much commends? Was lord O. more than one of the *mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease*? Into that class I must sink—and I had rather do so imperceptibly, than be plunged down to it by the interposition of the hand of a friend, who could not gainsay the sentence.

For your own sake, my good sir, as well as in pity to my feelings, who am sore at your offering what I cannot accept, restrain the address to a mere inscription. You are allowed to be an excellent translator of classic authors—how unclassic would a dedication in the old-fashioned manner appear! If you had published a new edition of Herodotus or Aulus Gellius, would you have ventured to prefix a Greek or Latin dedication to some modern lord with a Gothic title?

Still less, had those addresses been in vogue at Rome, would any Roman author have inscribed his work to Marcus, the incompetent son of Cicero, and told the unfortunate offspring of so great a man, *of his high birth and declension of ambition*? which would have excited a laugh on poor Marcus.

‡ Of a translation of Aulus Gellius, by Mr. Beloe.

who,



who, whatever may have been said of him, had more sense than to leave proofs to the public of his extreme inferiority to his father.

I am, sir, &c. &c.

ORFORD.

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L E T T E R XXI.

To WILLIAM ROSCOE, Esq.

Berkeley-square, April 4, 1795.

TO judge of my satisfaction and gratitude on receiving the very acceptable present of your book<sup>a</sup>, sir, you should have known my extreme impatience for it from the instant Mr. Edwards had kindly favoured me with the first chapters. You may consequently conceive the mortification I felt at not being able to thank you immediately both for the volume and the obliging letter that accompanied it, by my right arm and hand being swelled and rendered quite immovable and useless, of which you will perceive the remains if you can read these lines which I am forcing myself to write, not without pain, the first moment I have power to hold a pen; and it will cost me some time, I believe, before I can finish my whole letter, earnest as I am, sir, to give a loose to my gratitude.

If you ever had the pleasure of reading such a delightful book as your own, imagine, sir, what a comfort it must be to receive such an anodyne in the midst of a fit of the gout that has already lasted above nine weeks, and which at first I thought might carry me to Lorenzo de Medici before he should come to me!

The complete volume has more than answered the expectations which the sample had raised. The Grecian simplicity of the style is preserved throughout; the same judicious candour reigns in every page; and without allowing yourself that liberty of indulging your own bias towards good or against criminal characters, which over-rigid critics prohibit, your artful candour compels your readers to think with you, without seeming to take a

<sup>a</sup> The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici.



part yourself. You have shown from his own virtues, abilities, and heroic spirit, why Lorenzo deserved to have Mr. Roscoe for his biographer.— And since you have been so, sir (for he was not completely known before, at least not out of Italy), I shall be extremely mistaken if he is not henceforth allowed to be, in various lights, one of the most excellent and greatest men with whom we are well acquainted, especially if we reflect on the shortness of his life and the narrow sphere in which he had to act. Perhaps I ought to blame my own ignorance, that I did not know Lorenzo as a beautiful poet: I confess I did not. Now I do, I own I admire some of his sonnets more than several—yes, even of Petrarch; for Lorenzo's are frequently more clear, less *alembiqués*, and not inharmonious as Petrarch's often are from being too crowded with words, for which room is made by numerous elisions, which prevent the softening alternacy of vowels and consonants. That thicket of words was occasioned by the embarrassing nature of the sonnet—a form of composition I do not love, and which is almost intolerable in any language but Italian, which furnishes such a profusion of rhymes. To our tongue the sonnet is mortal, and the parent of insipidity. The imitation in some degree of it was extremely noxious to a true poet, our Spenser; and he was the more injudicious by lengthening his stanza in a language so barren of rhymes as ours, and in which several words, whose terminations are of similar sounds, are so rugged, uncouth, and unmusical. The consequence was, that many lines which he forced into the service to complete the quota of his stanza are unmeaning, or silly, or tending to weaken the thought he would express.

Well, sir—but if you have led me to admire the compositions of Lorenzo, you have made me intimate with another poet of whom I had never heard, nor had the least suspicion, and who, though writing in a less harmonious language than Italian, outshines an able master of that country, as may be estimated by the fairest of all comparisons, which is when one of each nation verifies the same ideas and thoughts.

That novel poet I boldly pronounce is Mr. Roscoe. Several of his translations of Lorenzo are superior to the originals, and the verses more poetic—nor am I bribed to give this opinion by the present of your book, nor by any partiality, nor by the surprise of finding so pure a writer of



history as able a poet. Some good judges to whom I have shewn your translations entirely agree with me.

I will name one most competent judge, Mr. Hoole, so admirable a poet himself, and such a critic in Italian, as he has proved by a translation of Ariosto.

That I am not flattering you, sir, I will demonstrate; for I am not satisfied with one essential line in your version of the most beautiful, I think, of all Lorenzo's stanzas—It is his description of jealousy, in page 268, equal in my humble opinion to Dryden's delineations of the passions, and the last line of which is

Mai dorme, ed ostinata a se sol crede.

The thought to me is quite new, and your translation I own does not come up to it.—Mr. Hoole and I hammered at it, but could not content ourselves.—Perhaps by altering your last couplet you may enclose the whole sense, and make it equal to the preceding six.

I will not ask your pardon, sir, for taking so much liberty with you. You have displayed so much candour and so much modesty, and are so free from pretensions, that I am confident you will allow that truth is the sole ingredient that ought to compose deserved incense; and if ever commendation was sincere, no praise ever flowed with purer veracity than all I have said in this letter does from the heart of, sir,

Your infinitely obliged humble servant,

ORFORD.

LETTER



## LETTER XXII.

TO THE COUNTESS OF \_\_\_\_\_.

MY DEAR MADAM,

January 13, 1797.

YOU distress me infinitely by showing my idle notes, which I cannot conceive can amuse any body. My old-fashioned breeding impels me every now and then to reply to the letters you honour me with writing; but in truth very unwillingly, for I seldom can have any thing particular to say; I scarce go out of my own house, and then only to two or three very private places, where I see nobody that really knows any thing—and what I learn comes from newspapers, that collect intelligence from coffee-houses—consequently, what I neither believe nor report. At home I see only a few charitable elders, except about fourscore nephews and nieces of various ages, who are each brought to me once a year, to stare at me as the Methusalem of the family; and they can only speak of their own cotemporaries, which interest me no more than if they talked of their dolls, or bats and balls. Must not the result of all this, madam, make me a very entertaining correspondent?—and can such letters be worth showing?—or can I have any spirit when so old and reduced to dictate? Oh! my good madam, dispense with me from such a task, and think how it must add to it to apprehend such letters being shown. Pray send me no more such laurels, which I desire no more than their leaves when decked with a scrap of tinsel, and stuck on twelfth-cakes that lie on the shop-boards of pastry-cooks at Christmas. I shall be quite content with a sprig of rosemary thrown after me, when the parson of the parish commits my dust to dust. Till then, pray, madam, accept the resignation of

Your ancient servant,

ORFORD.

\*Lord Orford died in little more than six weeks after the date of this letter.

THE END.



MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS.

LETTER XXII

To THE COUNTESS OF

MY BEAR MADAM,

YOU distress me infinitely by showing my idle notes, which I cannot conceive can amuse any body. My old-fashioned breeding makes me every now and then to reply to the letters you honour me with without but in truth very unwillingly, for I seldom can have any thing particular to say; I scarce go out of my own house, and then only to two or three very private places, where I see nobody that really knows any thing—and what I learn comes from newspapers, that collect intelligence from other hands—consequently, what I neither believe nor report. At home I see only a few charitable clarks, except about four score nephews and nieces of various ages, who are each brought to me once a year, to stare at me as the Mathematicians of the family; and they can only speak of their own concerns, which interest me no more than if they talked of their dolls, or hats and balls. Must not the rest of all this madam, make me a very curious and fainting correspondent?—and can such letters be worth throwing?—or can I have any spirit when so old and reduced to distaste? O! my good madam, discontinue with me from such a task, and think how it will add to it to approach such letters being shown. They tend me no more such parcels, which I desire no more than their leaves when doctored with a tarp of tallow, and stuck on twelfth-cakes that lie on the shop-boards of pastry-cooks at Christmas. I shall be quite content with a bag of toys may throw after me, when the parson of the parish commands my bell to ring. I likewise pray madam, accept the resignation of

Your ancient servant,

ORFORD

\* And Orford died in this month six weeks after the date of this letter.

THE END.