

# WALPOLE HORACE

HORACE  
WALPOLE AND  
HIS WORLD

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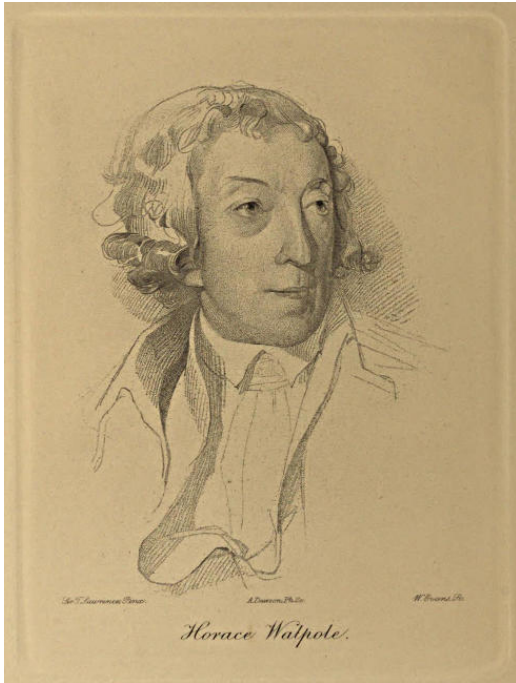
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Horace Walpole and his World / Select passages from his Letters:*

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# Horace Walpole

## Horace Walpole and his World / Select passages from his Letters



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Horace Walpole.

# CHAPTER I

Introduction.—Birth and Parentage.—Education.—Appointments.—Travels.—Parliamentary Career.—Retirement.—Fortune.—Strawberry Hill.—Collections.—Writings.—Printing Press.—Accession to Title.—Death.—Character.—Political Conduct and Opinions.—The Slave-Trade.—Strikes.—Views of Literature.—Friendships.—Charities.—Chatterton.—Letters.

We offer to the general reader some specimens of Horace Walpole's correspondence. Students of history and students of literature are familiar with this great mine of facts and fancies, but it is too extensive to be fully explored by those who have not both ample leisure and strong inclination for such employment. Yet most persons, we imagine, would be glad to have some acquaintance with the prince of English letter-writers. Many years have passed since Walter Scott pronounced Walpole's letters to be the best in our language, and since Lord Byron declared them to be incomparable. The fashion in style and composition has changed during the interval almost as often as the fashion in dress: other candidates, too, for fame in the same department have come forward; but no one, we think, has succeeded in setting aside the verdict given, in the early part of our century, by the two most famous writers of their time. Meanwhile, to the collections of letters by Walpole that were

known to Scott and Byron have been added several others, no way inferior to the first, which have been published at different periods; besides numerous detached letters, which have come to light from various quarters. In the years 1857-9, appeared a complete edition of Walpole's letters in nine large octavo volumes.<sup>1</sup> The editor of this expressed his confidence that no additions of moment would afterwards be made to the mass of correspondence which his industry had brought together. Yet he proved to be mistaken. In 1865 came out Miss Berry's Journals and Correspondence,<sup>2</sup> containing a large quantity of letters and parts of letters addressed to her and her sister by Walpole, which had not previously been given to the world, as well as several interesting letters to other persons, the manuscripts of which had passed into and remained in Miss Berry's possession. Other letters, too, have made their appearance, singly and incidentally, in more recent publications.<sup>3</sup> The total number of Walpole's published letters cannot now fall much short of three thousand; the earliest of these is dated in November, 1735,<sup>4</sup> the latest in January, 1797. Throughout the intervening sixty years, the writer, to use his own phrase, lived always in the big

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<sup>1</sup> "The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, edited by Peter Cunningham."

<sup>2</sup> A second edition was published in 1866.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.*, in Jesse's "Memoirs of George III."

<sup>4</sup> Or in 1732, if the dates of some letters published in *Notes and Queries*, 4th Series, vol. iii., p. 2, can be trusted. But as the second of these letters, the date of which is given as Sep. 18, 1732, refers to the death of Walpole's mother, and as we know, from his own statement, that Lady Walpole died Aug. 20, 1737, there seems to be an error.

busy world; and whatever there passed before him, his restless fingers, restless even when stiffened by the gout, recorded and commented on for the amusement of his correspondents and the benefit of posterity. The extant results of his diligence display a full picture of the period, distorted indeed in many places by the prejudices of the artist, but truthful on the whole, and enlivened everywhere by touches of genius. From this mass of narratives and descriptions, anecdotes and good-sayings, criticisms, reflections and raillery, we shall endeavour to make as representative a selection as our limits will permit.

It is hardly necessary to say that Horace Walpole entered life as the son of the foremost Englishman of his time. He was born on the 24th of September, 1717, O.S., and was the youngest of the six children whom Sir Robert Walpole's first wife, Catherine Shorter, brought to her illustrious husband. This family included two other sons, Robert and Edward, and two daughters, besides a fourth son, William, who died in infancy. Horace, whose birth took place eleven years after that of the fifth child, bore no resemblance, either in body or mind, to the robust and hearty Sir Robert. He was of slight figure and feeble constitution; his features lacked the comeliness of the Walpole race; and his temperament was of that fastidious, self-conscious, impressionable cast which generally causes a man or boy to be called affected. The scandalous, noting these things, and comparing the person and character of Horace Walpole with those of the Herveys, remembered that Sir Robert and his first

wife had been estranged from one another in the later years of their union, and that the lady had been supposed to be intimate with Carr Lord Hervey, elder brother of Pope's Sporus. Horace himself has mentioned that this Carr was reckoned of superior parts to the more known John Lord Hervey, but nowhere in our author's writings does it appear that the least suspicion of spurious parentage<sup>5</sup> had entered his thoughts. Everywhere he exults in being sprung from the great Prime Minister; everywhere he is devoted to the memory of his mother, to whom he raised a monument in Westminster Abbey, with an inscription from his own pen celebrating her virtue. And in the concluding words of this epigraph, he repeated a saying, which he has elsewhere recorded, of the poet Pope, that Lady Walpole was "untainted by a Court."

Walpole tells us that, in the first years of his life, being an extremely delicate child, he was much indulged both by his mother and Sir Robert; and as an instance of this, he relates the well-known story, how his longing to see the King was gratified by his mother carrying him to St. James's to kiss the hand of George I. just before his Majesty began his last journey to

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<sup>5</sup> The story that Horace was of Hervey blood was first published in some Introductory Anecdotes prefixed to the later editions of the works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. These anecdotes were contributed by Lady Louisa Stuart, daughter of Lord Bute, the Prime Minister, and grand-daughter of Lady Mary. Her statement about Walpole, though generally accepted, has perhaps received more credit than it deserves, but *se non è vero, è ben trovato*. The similarity, both in matter and composition, between the memoirs of Lord Hervey and those of Horace Walpole is certainly remarkable.

Hanover. Shortly after this, the boy was sent to Eton, from which period we hear no more of Lady Walpole, though she survived till August, 1737. In 1735, young Horace proceeded from Eton to King's College, Cambridge, where he resided, though with long intervals of absence, until after he came of age. On quitting the University, he was in possession of a handsome income arising from the patent place of Usher of the Exchequer, to which he had recently been appointed, and which was then reckoned worth £900 a year, and from two other small patent places in the Exchequer, those of Clerk of the Escheats and Controller of the Pipe, producing together about £300 a year, which had been held for him during his minority. All these offices had been procured for him by Sir Robert Walpole, and were sinecures, or capable of being executed by deputy.

Finding himself thus provided for and at leisure, the fortunate youth set out on the continental tour which was considered indispensable for a man of fashion. He travelled, as he tells us, at his own expense; and being well able to afford the luxury of a companion, he took with him Thomas Gray the poet, who had been his associate at Eton and Cambridge. The pair visited together various parts of France and Italy, making a stay of some duration at several places. After a few weeks spent in Paris, they settled at Rheims for three months to study French. They lived here with their former school-mate, Henry Seymour Conway,<sup>6</sup> Walpole's maternal cousin; and here appears to have

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<sup>6</sup> Born in July, 1719. He was second son of the first Lord Conway by his third wife,

been cemented the lifelong friendship between Conway and Walpole which forms perhaps the most honourable feature in the history of the latter. At Florence, Walpole resided for more than twelve months in the house of Horace Mann, British Envoy to the Court of Tuscany, with whom he formed an intimacy, which was maintained, from the time of his leaving Italy until the death of Mann forty-five years after, by correspondence only, without the parties ever meeting again. Gray remained with Walpole at Florence, and accompanied him in visits which he made thence to Rome, Naples, and other places; but at Reggio a dissension arose between them, and they parted to return home by different routes. Walpole subsequently took the blame of this dispute upon himself. "It arose," he says, "from Gray being too serious a companion. Gray was for antiquities, I was for perpetual balls and plays; the fault was mine." According to another account, Walpole had opened a letter addressed to Gray. Whatever was the cause of the breach, it was repaired three years later, and during the rest of the poet's life he continued on friendly terms with his early companion.

Walpole reached England in September, 1741, just before the meeting of a new Parliament, and at the commencement of the

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Charlotte Shorter, sister of Lady Walpole. He was Secretary in Ireland during the vice-royalty of William, fourth Duke of Devonshire; then Groom of the Bedchamber to George II. and to George III.; became Secretary of State in 1765; Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance in 1770; Commander-in-Chief in 1782; and was created a Field-Marshal in 1793. He married the Dowager Countess of Aylesbury, by whom he had an only child, Mrs. Damer, the sculptor, to whom Walpole left Strawberry Hill.

Session took his seat as member for Callington, in Cornwall, for which place he had been elected during his absence. Sir Robert's Government was at that time in the midst of the difficulties which soon afterwards caused its downfall. In February, 1742, the defeated Minister resigned, and was created Earl of Orford. Horace, as was to be expected, took no prominent part in the struggle. His maiden speech was delivered in March, 1742, on a motion for an inquiry into the conduct of Sir Robert Walpole during the last ten years of his administration. The young orator was received with favour by the House, and obtained a compliment from the great William Pitt; but the success of his effort, which is preserved in one of his letters to Mann, must be attributed entirely to the circumstances under which it was uttered. It does not appear that he afterwards acquired any reputation in debate. Indeed, he was generally content to be a listener. That he was a constant attendant at the House, his correspondence sufficiently proves, but he rarely took an active part in its proceedings. He has recorded a dispute he had with Speaker Onslow in his second Parliament. In 1751 he moved the address to the King at the opening of the Session, and five years later we find him speaking on a question of employing Swiss troops in the Colonies. In 1757 he exerted himself with much zeal in favour of the unfortunate Admiral Byng. This, however, was by argument and solicitation outside the House. In like manner, some years afterwards, he made strenuous, though vain, endeavours, at the conferences of his party, to persuade

them not to support the exclusion of the King's mother from the Regency which was provided for on the first serious illness of George III.

These are the chief incidents of Walpole's public career, although he remained in the House of Commons for twenty-seven years. At the General Election of 1754 he was chosen for the family borough of Castle Rising in Norfolk, but vacated this seat soon afterwards in order to be a candidate for the town of King's Lynn, which had for many years returned his father to Parliament. Horace continued to represent Lynn until the Dissolution of 1768, when he took leave of his constituents, and was no longer seen in Westminster Hall. Perhaps the final reason for his retirement was the failure of his friend Conway to retain a foremost position in politics. After serving as Secretary of State and Leader of the House of Commons under three successive Premiers, Conway, through feebleness of purpose, lost his hold upon office, and fell for some years into the background. But with disappointment for his friend, there must have mingled in Walpole's mind a feeling of dissatisfaction with himself. Few men acquire much weight in Parliament who do not at least occasionally take a share in its discussions; and Horace had more than once found that his influence in the House was by no means proportioned to his general reputation for ability. He was therefore quite ready to withdraw when Conway could no longer profit by his vote. Though at all times a keen politician, and extremely social in his habits, he was unfitted by nature for

the conflicts of the Parliamentary arena. Desultory skirmishing with the pen was more to his taste than the close fighting of debate. During more than half his life, the war of parties was largely carried on by anonymous pamphlets, and Walpole gave powerful help in this way to his side; afterwards, when letters and articles in newspapers took the place of pamphlets, he became an occasional contributor to the public journals.

But Walpole found in art and literature the chief employment of his serious hours. His reading was extensive, the most solid portion of it being in the regions of history and archæology. More engrossing than his love of books was his passion for collecting and imitating antiquities and curiosities of all kinds. His ample fortune furnished him with the means of indulging these expensive pursuits. The emoluments of the Usher of the Exchequer greatly increased during his tenure of that post: in time of war—and England was often at war in those days—they were sometimes very large. Walpole admits that in one year he received as much as £4,200 from this source; and the Commissioners of Accounts in 1782 thought that the annual value of the place might fairly be stated at that sum. There was an antique flavour about these gains which gave Walpole almost as much pleasure as the money itself. The duties of the Usher were to shut the gates of the Exchequer, and to provide the Exchequer and Treasury with the paper, parchment, pens, ink, sand, wax, tape, and other articles of a similar nature used in those departments. The latter of these duties, which was said

to be as old as the reign of Edward III. at least, formed the lucrative part of the Usher's employment, as he was allowed large profits on the goods he thus purveyed to the Crown. Obviously the income of such an office, while varying with the financial business of each year, must have steadily advanced on the whole with the progress of the nation. Besides this place, and the two other patent places before mentioned, in all of which he continued until his death, Walpole enjoyed for many years a principal share in the income of the Collectorship of the Customs. Sir Robert Walpole held the last appointment under a patent which entitled him to dispose as he pleased of the reversion during the lives of his two eldest sons, Robert and Edward. Accordingly, he appointed that, after his death, £1,000 a year of the income should be paid to his youngest son Horace during the subsistence of the patent, and that the remainder should be divided equally between Horace and Edward. By this arrangement, Horace at the age of twenty-seven—for his father died in March, 1745—stepped into another income of about £1,400 a year, which lasted until the death of his brother Sir Edward Walpole in 1784. In his writings he speaks, with becoming gratitude, of the places and emoluments bestowed on him by his father as being a noble provision for a third son. Having thus nobly provided at the public expense for a child who had not yet shown any merit or capacity, Sir Robert did not find it needful to do much for him out of his private property. By his will, he bequeathed Horace only a sum of £5,000 charged

on his Norfolk estate, and a leasehold house in Arlington Street. The greater part of the legacy remained unpaid for forty years; the house Horace occupied until the term expired in 1781, when he bought a residence in Berkeley Square. As Walpole was never married, it is not surprising that he died worth ninety-one thousand pounds in the funds, besides other property, including his town house just mentioned, and his villa at Twickenham with its collection of pictures and other works of art.

The fantastic little pile of buildings which he raised on the margin of the Thames engaged his chief attention for many years. He purchased the site of this in 1748, there being nothing then on the land but a cottage, and called it Strawberry Hill, a name which he found in one of the title-deeds. He had taken a lease the year before of the cottage, with part of the land, from Mrs. Chenevix, a fashionable toy-dealer, and thus describes his acquisition in a letter to Conway: "It is a little plaything-house that I got out of Mrs. Chenevix's shop, and is the prettiest bauble you ever saw. It is set in enamelled meadows, with filigree hedges:

‘A small Euphrates through the piece is rolled,  
And little finches wave their wings in gold.’

Two delightful roads, that you would call dusty, supply me continually with coaches and chaises: barges as solemn as Barons of the Exchequer move under my window; Richmond Hill and Ham walks bound my prospect; but thank God! the Thames

is between me and the Duchess of Queensberry. Dowagers as plenty as flounders inhabit all around, and Pope's ghost is just now skimming under my window by a most poetical moonlight. I have about land enough to keep such a farm as Noah's, when he set up in the Ark with a pair of each kind; but my cottage is rather cleaner than I believe his was after they had been cooped up together forty days. The Chenevixes had tricked it out for themselves: up two pair of stairs is what they call Mr. Chenevix's library, furnished with three maps, one shelf, a bust of Sir Isaac Newton, and a lame telescope without any glasses. Lord John Sackville *predeceased* me here, and instituted certain games called *cricketalia*, which have been celebrated this very evening in honour of him in a neighbouring meadow."

Having completed his purchase, Walpole proceeded to make improvements. His antiquarian studies had inspired him with a fondness for Gothic architecture. But his zeal was not according to much knowledge, nor guided by a very pure taste. Gradually the little cottage became merged in a strange nondescript edifice, half castle, half cloister, with all kinds of grotesque decorations. "The Castle," so Walpole called it, "was," he tells us, "not entirely built from the ground, but formed at different times, by alterations of, and additions to, the old small house. The Library and Refectory, or Great Parlour, was entirely new-built in 1753; the Gallery, Round Tower, Great Cloister, and Cabinet, in 1760 and 1761; the Great North Bed-chamber in 1770; and the Beauclerk Tower with the Hexagon Closet in

1776." In a small cloister, outside the house, stood the blue and white china bowl, commemorated by Gray, in which Walpole's cat was drowned. On the staircase was the famous armour of Francis I. In the Gallery, among many other treasures, were placed the Roman eagle and the bust of Vespasian, so often mentioned in their owner's correspondence. The buildings were no more substantial in structure than they were correct in style. Much cheap ridicule has been poured upon "the Castle," as "a most trumpery piece of ginger-bread Gothic," with "pie-crust battlements," and "pinnacles of lath and plaster." Many of its faults and absurdities must in justice be referred to the novelty of the attempt to apply a disused style to the requirements of a modern domestic residence. Walpole himself was by no means blind to the flimsiness and incongruities of his creation. He was rather indignant, indeed, when a French visitor censured it as "non digne de la solidité Anglaise;" but in his own description of it he calls it "a paper fabric," and speaks of the house and its decorations as "a mixture which may be denominated, in some words of Pope:

‘A Gothic Vatican of Greece and Rome.’”

With the help of Mr. Essex, who assisted him in designing the later portions, he gradually learned the depth of the architectural ignorance in which he and the "Committee," who were his first advisers, had been involved at the commencement of his work.

In short, Strawberry Hill, child's baby-house as it was, proved the first step in the renascence of Gothic art.

As chamber after chamber was added to the Castle, it became Walpole's next care to fill them with fresh antiques in furniture, pictures, bronzes, armour, painted glass, and other like articles. "In his villa," says Lord Macaulay, "every apartment is a museum, every piece of furniture is a curiosity; there is something strange in the form of the shovel; there is a long story belonging to the bell-rope. We wander among a profusion of rarities, of trifling intrinsic value, but so quaint in fashion, or connected with such remarkable names and events, that they may well detain our attention for a moment. A moment is enough. Some new relic, some new unique, some new carved work, some new enamel, is forthcoming in an instant. One cabinet of trinkets is no sooner closed than another is opened."

Of Walpole's writings other than his letters, we do not propose to offer any detailed account or criticism. His earliest work, "Ædes Walpoleanæ," was published as early as 1747; it was merely a description of his father's pictures at Houghton Hall, the family seat in Norfolk. Among his next efforts were some papers contributed in 1753 and following years to a periodical work of the day, called *The World*.<sup>7</sup> Most persons have read the "Castle of Otranto," so warmly applauded by the author of "Ivanhoe."

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<sup>7</sup> One of his papers in *The World* contains an account of an escape which he had, in 1749, of being shot by highwaymen in Hyde Park. His face was grazed by a ball from the pistol of one of his assailants, which went off accidentally before aim had been taken. An allusion to this adventure will be found in one of our extracts.

Most students of art, we suppose, are acquainted with Walpole's "Anecdotes of Painting," and his "Catalogue of Engravers." His "Catalogue of Noble and Royal Authors," though abounding in agreeable anecdotes, is probably now consulted by few; and his "Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard III.," acute and ingenious as it was, cannot detain anyone who is aware of the recent researches on the same subject. His "Reminiscences of the Courts of George I. and George II.," and his "Memoirs" and "Journals" relating to the reigns of George II. and George III., are, and must ever remain, among the most valuable historical documents of the eighteenth century. The Reminiscences were written for the amusement of the Misses Berry, and have been extolled with justice as being, both in manner and matter, the very perfection of anecdote writing. The rest of Walpole's works, including his tragedy of "The Mysterious Mother"—the merits of which, whatever they may be, are cancelled by the atrocity of the fable—are as nearly as possible forgotten.

Not content with writing and collecting books, Horace in 1757 established a printing press in the grounds of Strawberry Hill. The first printer employed by him was William Robinson; the last, Thomas Kirgate, whose name will often be found in the following extracts. The first work printed at this press was Gray's "Odes," with Bentley's Illustrations. Its other productions include Walpole's own Royal and Noble Authors, Anecdotes of Painting, Engravers, and Tragedy; his "Description of Strawberry Hill," and "Fugitive Pieces;" besides several works by other authors,

such as Bentley's "Lucan," Lord Herbert's *Life*, a translation of Hentzner's "Travels," and Lord Whitworth's "Account of Russia;" as well as small collections of verses by sundry friends. These "Strawberry Hill" editions are now scarce, and command high prices.

The rest of our author's career may be summed up in a few words. His eldest brother had died early, and had been succeeded by an only son, whose profligacy and occasional fits of insanity caused much trouble. In December, 1791, when seventy-four years of age, Horace became, by the death of this nephew, Earl of Orford, which made little addition to his income, the family estate being heavily incumbered. The inheritance was far from welcome. In a letter to a friend, he says he does not understand the management of such an estate, and is too old to learn. "A source of lawsuits among my near relations, endless conversations with lawyers, and packets of letters to read every day and answer—all this weight of new business is too much for the rag of life that yet hangs about me."<sup>8</sup> He never took his seat in the House of Lords. He lived for upwards of five years longer, in the full possession of all his faculties, though suffering great bodily infirmity from the effects of gout, to which he was long a martyr. He died at his house, No. 11, Berkeley Square, on the 2nd of March, 1797, in his eightieth year, and was buried at the family seat of Houghton. With him the male line of Sir Robert Walpole and the title of Orford became extinct. The estate of Houghton

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<sup>8</sup> Letter to John Pinkerton, Dec. 26, 1791.

descended to the fourth Earl of Cholmondeley, grandson of Horace Walpole's younger sister Mary, who married the third earl of that ilk. Strawberry Hill was at its founder's absolute disposal, and he left it, as already mentioned, to Mrs. Damer, Conway's daughter, but for life only, with limitations over in strict settlement.

"It is somewhat curious," says his biographer, "as a proof of the inconsistency of the human mind, that, having built his Castle with so little view to durability, Walpole entailed the perishable possession with a degree of strictness which would have been more fitting for a baronial estate. And that, too, after having written a fable entitled 'The Entail,' in consequence of some one having asked him whether he did not intend to entail Strawberry Hill, and in ridicule of such a proceeding."

Inconsistency, caprice, eccentricity, affectation, are faults which have been freely charged against the character of Horace Walpole. His strong prejudices and antipathies, his pride of rank, his propensity to satire, even his sensitive temperament, made him many enemies, who not only exaggerated his failings, but succeeded, in some instances at least, in transmitting their personal resentments to men of the present century.

As a politician, especially, Walpole has received rather hard measure from the partisan critics on both sides. A generation back, Whig Reviewers and Tory Reviewers vied with each other in defaming his memory. Macaulay and Croker, who seldom agreed in anything, were of one accord in this. To Croker, of

course, Horace was just a place-holder who furnished a telling example of Whig jobbery. To rake up all the details of his places in the Exchequer, and his “rider,” or charge, on the place in the Customs, to compute and exaggerate his gains from each of these sources, to track him in dark intrigues for extending his tenure of one appointment and bettering his position in another; all this was congenial employment for the Rigby of the nineteenth century, as it would have been for his prototype in the eighteenth. The motive of Macaulay’s deadly attack is not quite so obvious. Walpole’s politics were those of his father and of the old Whigs generally. While in theory inclined to Republicanism—though he was never, as he tells us, quite a Republican<sup>9</sup>—it was his habit, on practical questions, to consider what course the great Sir Robert would have taken under similar circumstances. There seems nothing in all this to excite the wrath of the most atrabilious Liberal. The truth appears to be that, in the Whig circles of Macaulay’s time, there existed a traditional grudge against Horace Walpole. In the “Memorials of Charles James Fox,” which were arranged by Lord Vassall-Holland, and edited by Lord John Russell, both the noble commentators speak of Horace in terms of undisguised bitterness. Nor is the cause very far to seek. In politics, Conway was under the dominion of Walpole; and Conway, on more than one critical occasion, disobliged the Rockingham faction, from which the modern

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<sup>9</sup> “I have been called a Republican; I never was quite that.”—Walpole to Lady Ossory, July 7, 1782.

Whigs deduce their origin. "Conway," says Lord John Russell, writing of the events of 1766, "had been made Secretary of State by Lord Rockingham, and ought to have resigned when Lord Rockingham left office; but Mr. Walpole did not choose that this should be so." Sixteen years later, Conway sat again in a Cabinet presided over by Lord Rockingham, and when that nobleman died, he again refused to resign. It will be remembered that, on this occasion, the Cavendishes and Fox quitted their places when the Treasury was given to Lord Shelburne, instead of their own nominee, the Duke of Portland, whose only recommendations were that he was Lord of Welbeck, and had married a daughter of the House of Devonshire.

In 1782, the Duke of Richmond, Conway's son-in-law, concurred with Conway in declining to desert the new Premier; and we know that Walpole stoutly supported, if he did not dictate, the joint resolution of his two friends. Lord Holland tells us that Fox did not like Walpole at all, and accounts for this dislike by suggesting that his uncle may have imbibed some prejudice against Walpole for unkindness shown to the first Lord Holland. But this seems going needlessly far back for an explanation. There can be no doubt that Fox looked on Walpole as having assisted to thwart his design of governing England in the name of the insignificant Duke of Portland, and detested him accordingly. Nor did subsequent events tend to soften Fox's recollection of this passage in his life, or of the persons concerned in it. Had he overcome his jealousy of Lord Shelburne, or had he succeeded

in compelling his rival to bow before the “wooden idol”—so Lord John Russell himself calls Portland—which he had set up, he would probably, in either case, have avoided the ill-famed coalition with Lord North, which was the main cause of his long-continued exclusion from power. Walpole had spoken his mind very plainly on the subject. “It is very entertaining,” he wrote, “that two or three great families should persuade themselves that they have an hereditary and exclusive right of giving us a head without a tongue.”<sup>10</sup> And he told Fox himself: “My Whiggism is not confined to the Peak of Derbyshire.”<sup>11</sup> We can imagine with what horror such utterances as these were received by the believers in the Whig doctrine of divine right. No wonder that Mr. Fox did not like Walpole. And what Mr. Fox disliked was, of course, anathema to every true Whig, and especially to an Edinburgh Reviewer of 1833.

What do the complaints of Walpole’s political tergiversation amount to? It was certainly not a wise act of Horace to hang up in his bedroom an engraving of the death warrant of Charles I. with the inscription “Major Charta.” But the Whig essayist, while reproving Walpole’s strange fancy that, without the instrument in question, the Great Charter would have become of little importance, might have recollected that he had himself professed his inability to see any essential distinction between the execution of the Royal Martyr and the deposition of his son. Again,

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<sup>10</sup> Letter to Mann, July 10, 1782.

<sup>11</sup> Letter to Lady Ossory, July 7, 1782.

there was inconsistency, no doubt, between Walpole's admiration of the Long Parliament, and his detestation of the National Assembly; yet it should be borne in mind that, in the midst of his disgust at the excesses of the French Revolution, he protested that he was very far from subscribing to the whole of Burke's "Reflections." Why then should we be told that "he was frightened into a fanatical royalist, and became one of the most extravagant alarmists of those wretched times?" We may surely ask on his behalf the question which Macaulay put when the consistency of his own master, Sir James Mackintosh, was impugned: "Why is one person to be singled out from among millions, and arraigned before posterity as a traitor to his opinions, only because events produced on him the effect which they produced on a whole generation?"

When the critic tells us that Walpole was a mischief-maker who "sometimes contrived, without showing himself, to disturb the course of Ministerial negotiations, and to spread confusion through the political circles," we cannot avoid seeing in these words a resentful reference to the part taken by Conway on the occasions above referred to.

It was not Walpole's fault that the party conflicts of his time were mainly about persons. We have seen the importance which Fox attached to these personal questions. We may safely say that this great man's disapproval of Walpole's conduct did not spring from any difference on matters of principle. If Horace was an opponent of Parliamentary Reform, this was an open

question among Fox's most intimate associates. If he objected to the enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics, most Whigs of his time did the same. In the dispute with America, as we shall see, he maintained, from the first, the right of the Colonies to liberty and independence. Nor did he retract his expressions of sympathy with the American Republic when the horrors of the French Revolution made him a supporter of Tory policy in England and on the Continent. He always lamented as one of the worst effects of the French excesses that they must necessarily retard the progress and establishment of civil liberty.<sup>12</sup>

There were questions of social politics on which he was far in advance of his times. "We have been sitting," he wrote, on the 25th of February, 1750, "this fortnight on the African Company. We, the British Senate, that temple of liberty, and bulwark of Protestant Christianity, have, this fortnight, been considering methods to make more effectual that horrid traffic of selling negroes. It has appeared to us that six-and-forty thousand of these wretches are sold every year to our plantations alone! It chills one's blood—I would not have to say I voted for it for the Continent of America! The destruction of the miserable inhabitants by the Spaniards was but a momentary misfortune that followed from the discovery of the New World, compared with the lasting havoc which it brought upon Africa. We reproach Spain, and yet do not even pretend the nonsense of butchering

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<sup>12</sup> Miss Berry.

these poor creatures for the good of their souls.”<sup>13</sup> The sentiments thus declared by Walpole nine years before Wilberforce was born, he steadily adhered to through life. On this point, at least, no one has ever charged him with any wavering or inconsistency.

We will mention, before passing on to different topics, one other matter on which Walpole shows a liberality of feeling quite unusual at any period of his life. In the summer of 1762, he writes: “I am in distress about my Gallery and Cabinet: the latter was on the point of being completed, and is really striking beyond description. Last Saturday night my workmen took their leave, made their bow, and left me up to the knees in shavings. In short, the journeymen carpenters, like the cabinet-makers, have entered into an association not to work unless their wages are raised; and how can one complain? The poor fellows, whose all the labour is, see their masters advance their prices every day, and think it reasonable to touch their share.”<sup>14</sup>

In the domain of literature, Walpole’s opinions were largely influenced by his social position and personal connexions. He rated the class of professional writers as much below as they have ever been rated above their real deserts; and this may perhaps help to explain the rancour with which he has been pursued by some critics. He could see nothing wonderful in the art of stringing sentences together. He met famous authors daily in society, and did not find that they were wiser or more

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<sup>13</sup> Letter to Sir Horace Mann.

<sup>14</sup> Letter to Sir Horace Mann, July 1, 1762.

accomplished than their neighbours. Most of them showed to little advantage in the drawing-rooms in which he felt his own life completest. Gray seldom opened his lips; Goldsmith “talked like poor poll”; Johnson was Ursa Major—a brute with whom Horace declined to be acquainted; Hume’s powers of mind did not appear in his broad unmeaning face, nor animate his awkward conversation; even Gibbon made a bad figure as often as any doubt was hinted as to the transcendent importance of his luminous or voluminous history. As for the novelists, neither Fielding nor Richardson ever ascended to the sublime heights in which Horace dwelt at ease. Stories circulated there of vulgar orgies amidst which the biographer of Tom Jones performed his police functions, and of requests made by the author of “Clarissa” to his female admirers for information as to the manners of polite life. Walpole shrank from the coarseness of the one, and smiled at the attempts of the other to describe a sphere which he had never entered. We are not to suppose, however, that Horace was as blind to the gradations of literary rank as some would have us believe. When he told Mann that *The World* was the work of “our first writers,” instancing Lord Chesterfield, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, and other well-born dilettanti whose names have now sunk into oblivion or neglect, it is clear that he was speaking with reference to the matter in hand. It did not occur to him that great historians and poets would be likely or suitable contributors to a series of light papers intended for the macaronis of the hour. What he regarded as

the chief qualification of himself and his friends who wrote for this fashionable journal was their familiarity with the tone of the best society. For himself, Walpole constantly disclaimed all pretence to learning or exact knowledge of any kind, and, due allowance made for the vanity of which undoubtedly he owned an ample share, there seems no reason to question his sincerity. We conceive, indeed, that his estimate of his own talents and acquirements was much more accurate than it has usually been considered. In all that related to literary fame, his vanity showed itself rather in depreciating the advantages which he had not, than in exalting those which he possessed. If he did not worship style, still less was he disposed to bow down before study and research. Hence the low esteem in which he held authors of all kinds. Some excuses may be made for his disparaging criticisms. The literati of his day were certainly eclipsed by the contemporary orators. What writer was left in prose or verse, on the death of Swift, who could compare with Mansfield or the first William Pitt? Which of the poets or historians of the next generation won the applause which was called forth by the speeches of Fox or Sheridan or the younger Pitt? If Fox and Sheridan could obtain their greatest triumphs in the midst of gambling and dissipation, and apparently without pains or application, there was some apology for slighting the labours of Robertson and the carefully polished verses of Goldsmith. With the exception of Lord Chatham, whom he strongly disliked, Walpole generally does justice to the great speakers of his time, on whichever side

in politics they were ranged; if he gives no credit for genius to the writers of the age, this was partly at least because their genius was of no striking or signal order. Judgment, sense, and spirit were Pope's three marks for distinguishing a great writer from an inferior one, and these continued to be the criteria applicable, even in the department of so-called works of imagination, down to the end of the century.

Walpole, as in duty bound, was a professed worshipper of Shakespeare and Milton, but we suspect that his worship was not very hearty. It is clear that Pope was the poet of his choice; and he seems to have known every line of his favourite by heart. He admired also the exquisite poetry of Gray, and this admiration was no doubt sincere; but we are disposed to think that it arose entirely from the early connexion between Horace and the author, and from the feeling that Gray, in some sort, belonged to him. Gray was Walpole's poet, as Conway was his statesman; and the sense of ownership, which converted his cousinly regard for Conway into a species of idolatry, turned to enthusiasm for Gray's "Odes" the critical estimate which would otherwise, we feel sure, have ended in a pretty strong aversion.

What Walpole said, rather uncharitably, of Sir Joshua Reynolds, may, we fear, be applied with more justice to Walpole himself. All his geese were swans, as the swans of others were geese in his eyes. Conway was a man of integrity and honour, an excellent soldier, a fluent speaker, but he was a timid and vacillating politician. That phase of their weakness which makes

the vainglorious pique themselves on having remarkable friends, is certainly not unamiable, though it is sometimes fatiguing. We all know the man who congratulates himself on his good fortune in being the associate of the versatile Dr. A., the high-souled Mr. B., the original Mr. C., and so on. Had Horace possessed a wife, he would have wearied all his acquaintance with encomiums on her beauty, wit, wisdom, and other matchless perfections. Having no wife to celebrate, he chose to sing the praises of General Conway, and sang them lustily, and with good courage. This was the more disinterested, as Conway appears to have been distinctly one of those persons who allow themselves to be loved. There is no questioning the genuineness of a devotion which undoubtedly entailed on Walpole great sacrifices. The time and labour which Horace bestowed in the service of his friend's ambition entitle him to full credit for honesty in the offer which he made to share his fortune with the latter, when, at an early stage of his career, he was dismissed from his employments for opposing the Ministry of the day.

This was not the only occasion on which Walpole showed himself capable of uncommon generosity. He made a similar offer to Madame du Deffand, when she was threatened with the loss of her pension. That clever leader of French society was not, like Conway, a connexion of long standing, but a mere recent acquaintance of Horace, who had no claim on him beyond the pleasure she had shown in his company, and the pity which her blind and helpless old age demanded. In the event, the lady

did not require his assistance, but her letters prove that she had full confidence in his intentions, notwithstanding the harshness with which he sometimes repressed her expressions of affection. The same temperament which made him fond of displaying his intimacy with Conway, caused him to dread the ridicule of being supposed to have an attachment for the poor old Marquise. Hence arose the occasional semblance of unkindness, which was contradicted by substantial proofs of regard, and which must be set down to undue sensitiveness on the gentleman's side rather than to want of consideration.

The coldness of heart with which Walpole is reproached has, we think, been exaggerated. "His affections were bestowed on few; for in early life they had never been cultivated." So much is admitted by Miss Berry, a most favourable witness. But in society generally, Horace appears to have shown himself friendly and obliging. His aristocratic pride did not prevent him from mixing freely with persons much his inferiors in station. Miss Hawkins, daughter of the historian of music, who for many years lived near him at Twickenham, testifies to his sociable and liberal temper; and Walpole's own letters show that he was at some trouble to assist Sir John Hawkins in collecting materials for his work. The correspondence between Horace and his deputies in the Exchequer proves the kindly feeling that subsisted between him and them; and also reveals the fact that he employed them from time to time in dispensing charities which he did not wish to have disclosed. And Miss Berry records that, during his later

life, although no ostentatious contributor to public charities and schemes of improvement, the friends in whose opinion he could confide had always more difficulty to repress than to excite his liberality.

His temper, says Sir Walter Scott, was precarious. Walpole, we believe, would readily have pleaded guilty to this charge. That he felt his infirmity in this respect his Letters sufficiently show; he assigns it as the chief reason why he preferred to live alone. Gray was not the only one of his early friends with whom he quarrelled. He became estranged at different times from Ashton, another college companion; from Bentley, whose taste and talent he had employed in decorating his Castle; from George Montagu,<sup>15</sup> who, next to Conway, was long his most intimate friend; and from Mason the poet; not to mention other names. Whatever blame may attach to Walpole for these ruptures, it seems to be now pretty well agreed that in the matter of Chatterton he was guiltless. On this subject, we need only quote a few sentences from Scott. "His memory," says Sir Walter, "has suffered most on account of his conduct towards Chatterton, in which we have always thought he was perfectly defensible. That unhappy son of genius endeavoured to impose upon Walpole a few stanzas of very inferior merit, as ancient; and sent him an equally gross and palpable imposture under the shape of a

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<sup>15</sup> Son of Brigadier-General Edward Montagu, and nephew to the second Earl of Halifax. He was member of Parliament for Northampton, usher of the Black Rod in Ireland during the lieutenancy of the Earl of Halifax, ranger of Salsey Forest, and private secretary to Lord North when Chancellor of the Exchequer.

pretended 'List of Painters.' Walpole's sole crime lies in not patronizing at once a young man who only appeared before him in the character of a very inartificial impostor, though he afterwards proved himself a gigantic one. The fate of Chatterton lies, not at the door of Walpole, but of the public at large, who two years, we believe, afterwards were possessed of the splendid proofs of his natural powers, and any one of whom was as much called upon as Walpole to prevent the most unhappy catastrophe."<sup>16</sup>

We turn from Walpole's life and character to his Letters. We have already mentioned the friends to whom the earlier portion of these were chiefly addressed. Other friends to whom he occasionally wrote were Lord Hertford, Conway's elder brother, Lord Strafford, Cole, the antiquary of Cambridge, and John Chute, with whom he had been intimate at Florence. The names of some later correspondents will appear as we proceed, of whom such an account as may seem necessary will be given as they come before us. Of the pains and skill with which the matter of each letter is adapted to the person for whom it was intended, our readers will be able to judge for themselves. That the author had studied letter-writing as an art, is a remark almost too trivial to be repeated. It is hardly too much to say that he made it his chief

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<sup>16</sup> Had Chatterton appealed simply to Walpole's charity, he would not have been rejected. This was the opinion of those who knew Horace best. But, apart from the imposture sought to be palmed on him, Walpole did not profess to be a patron of literature or the arts. An artist has pencils, he would say, and an author has pens, and the public must reward them as it sees fit.

literary business. "Mine," he said, "is a life of letter-writing." That he counted on being remembered by his letters far more than by any other of his writings, we hold to be as certain as any statement of the kind can be. He had, we believe, gauged his powers far more correctly than is commonly supposed, and was satisfied that in this kind of composition, more than in any other, he had produced something of permanent value. He had studied closely the letters of Gray and Madame de Sévigné, and formed his own style from them. The letters of the latter were his especial delight. He read them over until they became part of his own mind. Nothing interested him so much as a rumour that some fresh letters of "Notre Dame des Rochers" had been discovered. It may be too much to say, as Miss Berry has said, that Walpole has shown our language to be capable of all the graces and all the charms of the French of the great writer whom he imitated. But, due allowance made for the superiority of French idiom and French finesse in a department where they appear to most advantage, it may safely be affirmed that, if variety and interest of topics be regarded as well as style, Walpole's letters are unrivalled. It was only by degrees that Horace attained to the perfection of easy engaging writing. His earlier letters betray signs of considerable labour. It is said that a summary prepared beforehand of one of his letters to Montagu was found in looking over some of his correspondence. In later days he wrote with the greatest facility, even carrying on a conversation the while. But he continued to the last the habit of putting down on the backs

of letters or slips of paper, a note of facts, of news, of witticisms, or of anything he wished not to forget for the amusement of his correspondents.

## CHAPTER II

Country Life.—Ranelagh Gardens.—The Rebel Lords.—The Earthquake.—A Frolic at Vauxhall.—Capture of a Housebreaker.—Strawberry Hill.—The Beautiful Gunnings.—Sterne.

We pass over such of Walpole's letters as were written before his return from his travels. They are interesting chiefly as parts of a correspondence carried on by four young men of talent—Gray, West, Ashton, and Horace himself—who, having been schoolfellows, had formed what they called a quadruple alliance; and it must be owned that Walpole in this correspondence shines less than Gray, who appears to have been the mentor of the group, and less, too, perhaps than West, whose early death disappointed great hopes. We omit, besides, all reference to the letters in which Horace described the great Walpolean battle, and traced the fortunes of the Broad Bottom Administration. And, with few exceptions, his accounts of later political events have also been excluded. The additions which his gossiping chronicles have made to our knowledge of these matters have been incorporated in most recent histories of the period; the extracts given in the present volume are designed, as a rule, to illustrate the history of manners rather than of politics.

From the moment of his return from the Continent until he

lost his father, Horace lived in the old statesman's house, dividing his time, for the most part, between the House of Commons and the amusements of fashionable society. In the latter sphere, the Honourable Mr. Walpole soon achieved success. Several years afterwards, he defined himself as a dancing senator. His first season witnessed the opening of Ranelagh Gardens, which at once became the resort of the great world. Grave ministers and privy councillors were to be seen there in the crowd of beauties and macaronis. Horace relates that he carried Sir Robert thither just before attending him on his retreat to Houghton. Constrained by filial duty, the young man revisited the family seat in each of the two following years, but he went sorely against his will. With his father's coarse habits and boisterous manners he had nothing in common; his feeble constitution was unequal to the sports of the field, and the drinking that then accompanied them; nor could the scenery of Norfolk, which he disliked, make him forget the excitements of Westminster and Chelsea. Yet to these visits to Houghton his readers owe some entertaining sketches of English country life in the middle of the eighteenth century. Take, for instance, the following lively letter addressed to John Chute, whose acquaintance he had made at Florence:

*"Houghton, August 20, 1743.*

“Indeed, my dear Sir, you certainly did not use to be stupid, and till you give me more substantial proof that you are so, I shall not believe it. As for your temperate diet and milk bringing about such a metamorphosis, I hold it

impossible. I have such lamentable proofs every day before my eyes of the stupifying qualities of beef, ale, and wine, that I have contracted a most religious veneration for your spiritual nouriture. Only imagine that I here every day see men, who are mountains of roast beef, and only seem just roughly hewn out into the outlines of human form, like the giant-rock at Pratolino! I shudder when I see them brandish their knives in act to carve, and look on them as savages that devour one another. I should not stare at all more than I do, if yonder Alderman at the lower end of the table was to stick his fork into his neighbour's jolly cheek, and cut a brave slice of brown and fat. Why, I'll swear I see no difference between a country gentleman and a sirloin; whenever the first laughs, or the latter is cut, there run out just the same streams of gravy! Indeed, the sirloin does not ask quite so many questions. I have an Aunt here, a family piece of goods, an old remnant of inquisitive hospitality and economy, who, to all intents and purposes, is as beefy as her neighbours. She wore me so down yesterday with interrogatories, that I dreamt all night she was at my ear with 'who's' and 'why's,' and 'when's' and 'where's,' till at last in my very sleep I cried out, 'For heaven's sake, Madam, ask me no more questions!'

"Oh! my dear Sir, don't you find that nine parts in ten of the world are of no use but to make you wish yourself with that tenth part? I am so far from growing used to mankind by living amongst them, that my natural ferocity and wildness does but every day grow worse. They tire me, they fatigue me; I don't know what to do with them; I don't

know what to say to them; I fling open the windows, and fancy I want air; and when I get by myself, I undress myself, and seem to have had people in my pockets, in my plaits, and on my shoulders! I indeed find this fatigue worse in the country than in town, because one can avoid it there and has more resources; but it is there too. I fear 'tis growing old; but I literally seem to have murdered a man whose name was Ennui, for his ghost is ever before me. They say there is no English word for *ennui*; I think you may translate it most literally by what is called 'entertaining people,' and 'doing the honours:' that is, you sit an hour with somebody you don't know and don't care for, talk about the wind and the weather, and ask a thousand foolish questions, which all begin with, 'I think you live a good deal in the country,' or, 'I think you don't love this thing or that.' Oh! 'tis dreadful!

"I'll tell you what is delightful—the Dominichin!<sup>17</sup> My dear Sir, if ever there was a Dominichin, if there was ever an original picture, this is one. I am quite happy; for my father is as much transported with it as I am. It is hung in the gallery, where are all his most capital pictures, and he himself thinks it beats all but the two Guidos. That of the Doctors and the Octagon—I don't know if you ever saw them? What a chain of thought this leads me into! but why should I not indulge it? I will flatter myself with your some time or other passing a few days here with me. Why must I never expect to see anything but Beefs in a gallery which

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<sup>17</sup> Thus described by Walpole in his account of the pictures at Houghton: "The Virgin and Child, a most beautiful, bright, and capital picture, by Dominichino: bought out of the Zambeccari Palace at Bologna by Horace Walpole, junior."

would not yield even to the Colonna?”

Again the following to Sir Horace Mann:

“Newmarket, Oct. 3, 1743.

“I am writing to you in an inn on the road to London. What a paradise should I have thought this when I was in the Italian inns! in a wide barn with four ample windows, which had nothing more like glass than shutters and iron bars! no tester to the bed, and the saddles and portmanteaus heaped on me to keep off the cold. What a paradise did I think the inn at Dover when I came back! and what magnificence were two-penny prints, salt cellars, and boxes to hold the knives; but the *summum bonum* was small-beer and the newspaper.

“I bless’d my stars, and call’d it luxury!”

“Who was the Neapolitan ambassadress<sup>18</sup> that could not live at Paris, because there was no macaroni? Now am I relapsed into all the dissatisfied repinement of a true English grumbling voluptuary. I could find in my heart to write a Craftsman against the Government, because I am not quite so much at my ease as on my own sofa. I could persuade myself that it is my Lord Carteret’s fault that I am only sitting in a common arm-chair, when I would be lolling in a *péché-mortel*. How dismal, how solitary, how

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<sup>18</sup> The Princess of Campoflorido.

scrub does this town look; and yet it has actually a street of houses better than Parma or Modena. Nay, the houses of the people of fashion, who come hither for the races, are palaces to what houses in London itself were fifteen years ago. People do begin to live again now, and I suppose in a term we shall revert to York Houses, Clarendon Houses, etc. But from that grandeur all the nobility had contracted themselves to live in coops of a dining-room, a dark back-room, with one eye in a corner, and a closet. Think what London would be, if the chief houses were in it, as in the cities in other countries, and not dispersed like great rarity-plums in a vast pudding of country. Well, it is a tolerable place as it is! Were I a physician, I would prescribe nothing but recipe, cclxv drachm. Londin. Would you know why I like London so much? Why, if the world must consist of so many fools as it does, I choose to take them in the gross, and not made into separate pills, as they are prepared in the country. Besides, there is no being alone but in a metropolis: the worst place in the world to find solitude is the country: questions grow there, and that unpleasant Christian commodity, neighbours. Oh! they are all good Samaritans, and do so pour balms and nostrums upon one, if one has but the toothache, or a journey to take, that they break one's head. A journey to take—ay! they talk over the miles to you, and tell you, you will be late in. My Lord Lovel says, *John* always goes two hours in the dark in the morning, to avoid being one hour in the dark in the evening. I was pressed to set out to-day before seven: I did before nine; and here am I arrived at a quarter past five, for the rest of the

night.

“I am more convinced every day, that there is not only no knowledge of the world out of a great city, but no decency, no practicable society—I had almost said not a virtue. I will only instance in modesty, which all *old Englishmen* are persuaded cannot exist within the atmosphere of Middlesex. Lady Mary has a remarkable taste and knowledge of music, and can sing—I don’t say, like your sister; but I am sure she would be ready to die if obliged to sing before three people, or before one with whom she is not intimate. The other day there came to see her a Norfolk heiress; the young gentlewoman had not been three hours in the house, and that for the first time of her life, before she notified her talent for singing, and invited herself upstairs, to Lady Mary’s harpsichord; where, with a voice like thunder, and with as little harmony, she sang to nine or ten people for an hour. ‘Was ever nymph like Rossymonde?’—no, *d’honneur*. We told her she had a very strong voice. ‘Why, Sir! my master says it is nothing to what it was.’ My dear child, she brags abominably; if it had been a thousandth degree louder, you must have heard it at Florence.”

Arrived in London, he is again in his element. “You must be informed,” he writes to Conway, “that every night constantly I go to Ranelagh, which has totally beat Vauxhall. Nobody goes anywhere else—everybody goes there. My Lord Chesterfield is so fond of it, that he says he has ordered all his letters to be directed thither. If you had never seen it, I would make you a most pompous description of it, and tell you how the floor is all

of beaten princes—that you can't set your foot without treading on a Prince of Wales or Duke of Cumberland. The company is universal: there is from his Grace of Grafton down to children out of the Foundling Hospital—from my Lady Townshend to the kitten—from my Lord Sandys<sup>19</sup> to your humble cousin and sincere friend.”

From scenes like this Conway's humble cousin was removed, though not for long, by the last illness and death of Lord Orford. The Rebellion of 1745, which quickly followed, produced only a momentary stir in London. But the trials and executions of the rebel Lords, occurring in the Capital itself, excited longer interest. We give Walpole's narrative of the execution of Lords Kilmarnock and Balmerino:

“Just before they came out of the Tower, Lord Balmerino drank a bumper to King James's health. As the clock struck ten, they came forth on foot, Lord Kilmarnock all in black, his hair unpowdered in a bag, supported by Forster, the great Presbyterian, and by Mr. Home, a young clergyman, his friend. Lord Balmerino followed, alone, in a blue coat, turned up with red, (his rebellious regimentals,) a flannel waistcoat, and his shroud beneath; their hearses following. They were conducted to a house near the scaffold: the room forwards had benches for spectators, in the second Lord Kilmarnock was put, and in the third backwards Lord Balmerino: all three chambers hung with black. Here they parted! Balmerino embraced the other, and said, ‘My lord,

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<sup>19</sup> Lord Orford's successor as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I wish I could suffer for both!’ He had scarce left him, before he desired again to see him, and then asked him, ‘My Lord Kilmarnock, do you know anything of the resolution taken in our army, the day before the battle of Culloden, to put the English prisoners to death?’ He replied, ‘My lord, I was not present; but since I came hither, I have had all the reason in the world to believe that there was such order taken; and I hear the Duke has the pocket-book with the order.’ Balmerino answered, ‘It was a lie raised to excuse their barbarity to us.’—Take notice, that the Duke’s charging this on Lord Kilmarnock (certainly on misinformation) decided this unhappy man’s fate! The most now pretended is, that it would have come to Lord Kilmarnock’s turn to have given the word for the slaughter, as lieutenant-general, with the patent for which he was immediately drawn into the rebellion, after having been staggered by his wife, her mother, his own poverty, and the defeat of Cope. He remained an hour and a half in the house, and shed tears. At last he came to the scaffold, certainly much terrified, but with a resolution that prevented his behaving in the least meanly or unlike a gentleman.<sup>20</sup> He took no notice of the crowd, only to desire that the baize

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<sup>20</sup> When he [Kilmarnock] beheld the fatal scaffold covered with black cloth; the executioner, with his axe and his assistants; the saw-dust, which was soon to be drenched with his blood; the coffin, prepared to receive the limbs which were yet warm with life; above all, the immense display of human countenances which surrounded the scaffold like a sea, all eyes being bent on the sad object of the preparation,—his natural feelings broke forth in a whisper to the friend on whose arm he leaned, “Home, this is terrible!” No sign of indecent timidity, however, affected his behaviour.—*Sir Walter Scott’s Tales of my Grandfather.*

might be lifted up from the rails, that the mob might see the spectacle. He stood and prayed some time with Forster, who wept over him, exhorted and encouraged him. He delivered a long speech to the Sheriff, and with a noble manliness stuck to the recantation he had made at his trial; declaring he wished that all who embarked in the same cause might meet the same fate. He then took off his bag, coat and waistcoat, with great composure, and after some trouble put on a napkin-cap, and then several times tried the block; the executioner, who was in white, with a white apron, out of tenderness concealing the axe behind himself. At last the Earl knelt down, with a visible unwillingness to depart, and after five minutes dropped his handkerchief, the signal, and his head was cut off at once, only hanging by a bit of skin, and was received in a scarlet cloth by four of the undertaker's men kneeling, who wrapped it up and put it into the coffin with the body; orders having been given not to expose the heads, as used to be the custom.

“The scaffold was immediately new-strewed with sawdust, the block new-covered, the executioner new-dressed, and a new axe brought. Then came old Balmerino, treading with the air of a general. As soon as he mounted the scaffold, he read the inscription on his coffin, as he did again afterwards: he then surveyed the spectators, who were in amazing numbers, even upon masts of ships in the river; and pulling out his spectacles, read a reasonable speech, which he delivered to the Sheriff, and said, the young Pretender was so sweet a Prince, that flesh and blood could not resist following him; and lying down to try the block, he said, ‘If I

had a thousand lives, I would lay them all down here in the same cause.' He said, if he had not taken the sacrament the day before, he would have knocked down Williamson, the lieutenant of the Tower, for his ill-usage of him. He took the axe and felt it, and asked the headsman how many blows he had given Lord Kilmarnock; and gave him three guineas. Two clergymen, who attended him, coming up, he said, 'No, gentlemen, I believe you have already done me all the service you can.' Then he went to the corner of the scaffold, and called very loud for the warder, to give him his periwig, which he took off, and put on a night-cap of Scotch plaid, and then pulled off his coat and waistcoat and lay down; but being told he was on the wrong side, vaulted round, and immediately gave the sign by tossing up his arm, as if he were giving the signal for battle. He received three blows, but the first certainly took away all sensation. He was not a quarter of an hour on the scaffold; Lord Kilmarnock above half a one. Balmerino certainly died with the intrepidity of a hero, but with the insensibility of one too. As he walked from his prison to execution, seeing every window and top of house filled with spectators, he cried out, 'Look, look, how they are all piled up like rotten oranges!'"

Horace was now in the full tide of fashion, not to say dissipation. For a good many years the opera, plays, balls, routs, and other diversions public and private occupy as much space in his letters as the war or the peace, the debates in Parliament, and the intrigues of party leaders. Mingled with topics of both kinds, we have journeys to visit great houses in the country, schemes

for their improvement, designs for the Gothic villa at Strawberry Hill, abundance of scandal, and playful satire on the follies of the day. Here is an amusing account of the sensation produced by the earthquake which alarmed London in 1750. It will be seen that the more serious feelings which the event awakened were as ridiculous in Walpole's eyes as any part of the panic:

“Portents and prodigies are grown so frequent,  
That they have lost their name.’

“My text is not literally true; but as far as earthquakes go towards lowering the price of wonderful commodities, to be sure we are overstocked. We have had a second, much more violent than the first; and you must not be surprised if by next post you hear of a burning mountain sprung up in Smithfield. In the night between Wednesday and Thursday last, (exactly a month since the first shock,) the earth had a shivering fit between one and two; but so slight that, if no more had followed, I don't believe it would have been noticed. I had been awake, and had scarce dozed again—on a sudden I felt my bolster lift up my head; I thought somebody was getting from under my bed, but soon found it was a strong earthquake, that lasted near half a minute, with a violent vibration and great roaring. I rang my bell; my servant came in, frightened out of his senses: in an instant we heard all the windows in the neighbourhood flung up. I got up and found people running into the streets, but saw no mischief done: there has been some; two old houses

flung down, several chimneys, and much china-ware. The bells rang in several houses. Admiral Knowles, who has lived long in Jamaica, and felt seven there, says this was more violent than any of them: Francesco prefers it to the dreadful one at Leghorn. The wise say, that if we have not rain soon, we shall certainly have more. Several people are going out of town, for it has nowhere reached above ten miles from London: they say, they are not frightened, but that it is such fine weather, ‘Why, one can’t help going into the country!’ The only visible effect it has had, was on the ridotto, at which, being the following night, there were but four hundred people. A parson, who came into White’s the morning of earthquake the first, and heard bets laid on whether it was an earthquake or the blowing up of powder-mills, went away exceedingly scandalised, and said, ‘I protest, they are such an impious set of people, that I believe if the last trumpet was to sound, they would bet puppet-show against Judgment.’ If we get any nearer still to the torrid zone, I shall pique myself on sending you a present of cedrati and orange-flower water: I am already planning a *terreno* for Strawberry Hill....

“You will not wonder so much at our earthquakes as at the effects they have had. All the women in town have taken them up upon the foot of *Judgments*; and the clergy, who have had no windfalls of a long season, have driven horse and foot into this opinion. There has been a shower of sermons and exhortations: Secker,<sup>21</sup> the jesuitical Bishop

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<sup>21</sup> Afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. Walpole had a strong and unreasonable prejudice against him.

of Oxford, began the mode. He heard the women were all going out of town to avoid the next shock; and so, for fear of losing his Easter offerings, he set himself to advise them to await God's good pleasure in fear and trembling. But what is more astonishing, Sherlock,<sup>22</sup> who has much better sense, and much less of the Popish confessor, has been running a race with him for the old ladies, and has written a pastoral letter, of which ten thousand were sold in two days; and fifty thousand have been subscribed for, since the two first editions.

“I told you the women talked of going out of town: several families are literally gone, and many more going to-day and to-morrow; for what adds to the absurdity is, that the second shock having happened exactly a month after the former, it prevails that there will be a third on Thursday next, another month, which is to swallow up London. I am almost ready to burn my letter now I have begun it, lest you should think I am laughing at you: but it is so true, that Arthur of White's told me last night, that he should put off the last ridotto, which was to be on Thursday, because he hears nobody would come to it. I have advised several who are going to keep their next earthquake in the country, to take the bark for it, as it is so periodic. Dick Leveson and Mr. Rigby, who had supped and stayed late at Bedford House the other night, knocked at several doors, and in a watchman's voice cried, 'Past four o'clock, and a dreadful earthquake!' But I have done with this ridiculous panic: two

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas Sherlock, Master of the Temple; first, Bishop of Salisbury, and afterwards of London.—Walpole.

pages were too much to talk of it....

“I had not time to finish my letter on Monday. I return to the earthquake, which I had mistaken; it is to be to-day. This frantic terror prevails so much, that within these three days seven hundred and thirty coaches have been counted passing Hyde Park Corner, with whole parties removing into the country. Here is a good advertisement which I cut out of the papers to-day:

“On Monday next will be published (price 6*d.*) A true and exact List of all the Nobility and Gentry who have left, or shall leave, this place through fear of another Earthquake.’

“Several women have made earthquake gowns; that is, warm gowns to sit out of doors all to-night. These are of the more courageous. One woman, still more heroic, is come to town on purpose; she says, all her friends are in London, and she will not survive them. But what will you think of Lady Catherine Pelham, Lady Frances Arundel, and Lord and Lady Galway, who go this evening to an inn ten miles out of town, where they are to play at brag till five in the morning, and then come back—I suppose, to look for the bones of their husbands and families under the rubbish? The prophet of all this (next to the Bishop of London) is a trooper of Lord Delawar’s, who was yesterday sent to Bedlam. His *colonel* sent to the man’s wife, and asked her if her husband had ever been disordered before. She cried, ‘Oh dear! my lord, he is not mad now; if your *lordship* would but get any *sensible* man to examine him, you would find he is quite in his right mind.’...

“I did not doubt but you would be diverted with the detail of absurdities that were committed after the earthquake: I could have filled more paper with such relations, if I had not feared tiring you. We have swarmed with sermons, essays, relations, poems, and exhortations on that subject. One Stukely, a parson, has accounted for it, and I think prettily, by electricity—but that is the fashionable cause, and everything is resolved into electrical appearances, as formerly everything was accounted for by Descartes’s vortices, and Sir Isaac’s gravitation. But they all take care, after accounting for the earthquake systematically, to assure you that still it was nothing less than a judgment. Dr. Barton, the Rector of St. Andrew’s, was the only sensible, or at least honest divine, upon the occasion. When some women would have had him pray to them in his parish church against the intended shock, he excused himself on having a great cold. ‘And besides,’ said he, ‘you may go to St. James’s Church; the Bishop of Oxford is to preach there all night about earthquakes.’ Turner, a great china-man, at the corner of next street, had a jar cracked by the shock: he originally asked ten guineas for the pair: he now asks twenty, ‘because it is the only jar in Europe that has been cracked by an earthquake.’”

Not long after the earthquake, we find Walpole engaged in a frolic at Vauxhall, though in the best company, Lady Caroline Petersham, his hostess on the occasion, being the dashing wife<sup>23</sup> of Lord Petersham, eldest son of the Earl of Harrington, who

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<sup>23</sup> She was daughter of the Duke of Grafton.

had been Secretary of State. We insert Walpole's history of the affair for the reason which he gives for telling it. It is part of a letter to George Montagu. After a jest about the habits of Buxton, where his friend's sister was then drinking the waters, the writer proceeds:

“As jolly and as abominable a life as she may have been leading, I defy all her enormities to equal a party of pleasure that I had t'other night. I shall relate it to you to show you the manners of the age, which are always as entertaining to a person fifty miles off as to one born an hundred and fifty years after the time. I had a card from Lady Caroline Petersham to go with her to Vauxhall. I went accordingly to her house, and found her and the little Ashe, or the Pollard Ashe, as they call her; they had just finished their last layer of red, and looked as handsome as crimson could make them.... We issued into the Mall to assemble our company, which was all the town, if we could get it; for just so many had been summoned, except Harry Vane, whom we met by chance. We mustered the Duke of Kingston, whom Lady Caroline says she has been trying for these seven years; but alas! his beauty is at the fall of the leaf; Lord March, Mr. Whitehed, a pretty Miss Beauclerc, and a very foolish Miss Sparre. These two damsels were trusted by their mothers for the first time of their lives to the matronly care of Lady Caroline. As we sailed up the Mall with all our colours flying, Lord Petersham,<sup>24</sup> with his hose and legs twisted to every point of crossness, strode

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<sup>24</sup> His gait was so singular, that he was called Peter Shamble.

by us on the outside, and repassed again on the return. At the end of the Mall she called to him; he would not answer: she gave a familiar spring, and, between laugh and confusion, ran up to him, 'My lord, my lord! why, you don't see us!' We advanced at a little distance, not a little awkward in expectation how all this would end, for my lord never stirred his hat, or took the least notice of anybody: she said, 'Do you go with us, or are *you going anywhere else?*'—'I don't go with you, I am going *somewhere else*;' and away he stalked, as sulky as a ghost that nobody will speak to first. We got into the best order we could, and marched to our barge, with a boat of French horns attending, and little Ashe singing. We paraded some time up the river, and at last debarked at Vauxhall: there, if we had so pleased, we might have had the vivacity of our party increased by a quarrel; for a Mrs. Lloyd,<sup>25</sup> who is supposed to be married to Lord Haddington, seeing the two girls following Lady Petersham and Miss Ashe, said aloud, 'Poor girls, I am sorry to see them in such bad company!' Miss Sparre, who desired nothing so much as the fun of seeing a duel—a thing which, though she is fifteen, she has never been so lucky as to see,—took due pains to make Lord March resent this; but he, who is very lively and agreeable, laughed her out of this charming frolic with a great deal of humour. Here we picked up Lord Granby.... If all the adventures don't conclude as you expect in the beginning of a paragraph, you must not wonder, for I am not making a history, but

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<sup>25</sup> Mrs. Lloyd of Spring Gardens, to whom the Earl of Haddington was married this year.

relating one strictly as it happened, and I think with full entertainment enough to content you. At last, we assembled in our booth, Lady Caroline in the front, with the vizor of her hat erect, and looking gloriously jolly and handsome. She had fetched my brother Orford from the next box, where he was enjoying himself with his *petite partie*, to help us to mince chickens. We minced seven chickens into a china dish, which Lady Caroline stewed over a lamp with three pats of butter and a flagon of water, stirring, and rattling, and laughing, and we every minute expecting to have the dish fly about our ears. She had brought Betty, the fruit-girl, with hampers of strawberries and cherries from Rogers's, and made her wait upon us, and then made her sup by us at a little table. The conversation was no less lively than the whole transaction. There was a Mr. O'Brien arrived from Ireland, who would get the Duchess of Manchester from Mr. Hussey,<sup>26</sup> if she were still at liberty. I took up the biggest hautboy in the dish, and said to Lady Caroline, 'Madam, Miss Ashe desires you would eat this O'Brien strawberry;' she replied immediately, 'I won't, you hussey.' You may imagine the laugh this reply occasioned. After the tempest was a little calmed, the Pollard said, 'Now, how anybody would spoil this story that was to repeat it, and say, I won't, you jade!' In short, the whole air of our party was sufficient, as you will easily imagine, to take up the whole attention of the garden; so much so, that from eleven o'clock

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<sup>26</sup> An Irish adventurer, whose fine person had induced the Dowager Duchess of Manchester to marry him. He was afterwards created Earl of Beaulieu. O'Brien, it seems, was even taller than Hussey.

till half an hour after one we had the whole concourse round our booth: at last, they came into the little gardens of each booth on the sides of ours, till Harry Vane took up a bumper, and drank their healths, and was proceeding to treat them with still greater freedom. It was three o'clock before we got home."

Our next extract displays even better than the last our author's skill in telling a story. It also contains some pleasant references to his life at Strawberry Hill:

"I have just been in London for two or three days, to fetch an adventure, and am returned to my hill and my castle. I can't say I lost my labour, as you shall hear. Last Sunday night, being as wet a night as you shall see in a summer's day, about half an hour after twelve, I was just come home from White's, and undressing to step into bed, when I heard Harry, who you know lies forwards, roar out, 'Stop thief!' and run down stairs. I ran after him. Don't be frightened; I have not lost one enamel, nor bronze, nor have been shot through the head again. A gentlewoman, who lives at Governor Pitt's, next door but one to me, and where Mr. Bentley used to live, was going to bed too, and heard people breaking into Mr. Freeman's house, who, like some acquaintance of mine in Albemarle Street, goes out of town, locks up his doors, and leaves the community to watch his furniture. N.B. It was broken open but two years ago, and I and all the chairmen vow they shall steal his house away another time, before we will trouble our heads about it. Well, madam

called out 'Watch!' two men, who were sentinels, ran away, and Harry's voice after them. Down came I, and with a posse of chairmen and watchmen found the third fellow in the area of Mr. Freeman's house. Mayhap you have seen all this in the papers, little thinking who commanded the detachment. Harry fetched a blunderbuss to invite the thief up. One of the chairmen, who was drunk, cried, 'Give me the blunderbuss, I'll shoot him!' But as the general's head was a little cooler, he prevented military execution, and took the prisoner, without bloodshed, intending to make his triumphal entry into the metropolis of Twickenham with his captive tied to the wheels of his post-chaise. I find my style rises so much with the recollection of my victory, that I don't know how to descend to tell you that the enemy was a carpenter, and had a leather apron on. The next step was to share my glory with my friends. I despatched a courier to White's for George Selwyn, who, you know, loves nothing upon earth so well as a criminal, except the execution of him. It happened very luckily that the drawer, who received my message, has very lately been robbed himself, and had the wound fresh in his memory. He stalked up into the club-room, stopped short, and with a hollow trembling voice said, 'Mr. Selwyn! Mr. Walpole's compliments to you, and he has got a housebreaker for you!' A squadron immediately came to reinforce me, and having summoned Moreland with the keys of the fortress, we marched into the house to search for more of the gang. Col. Seabright with his sword drawn went first, and then I, exactly the figure of Robinson Crusoe, with a candle and lanthorn in my hand, a carbine upon my

shoulder, my hair wet and about my ears, and in a linen night-gown and slippers. We found the kitchen shutters forced, but not finished; and in the area a tremendous bag of tools, a hammer large enough for the hand of a Jael, and six chisels! All which *opima spolia*, as there was no temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in the neighbourhood, I was reduced to offer on the altar of Sir Thomas Clarges.

“I am now, as I told you, returned to my plough with as much humility and pride as any of my great predecessors. We lead quite a rural life, have had a sheep-shearing, a hay-making, a syllabub under the cow, and a fishing of three gold-fish out of Poyang,<sup>27</sup> for a present to Madam Clive. They breed with me excessively, and are grown to the size of small perch. Everything grows, if tempests would let it; but I have had two of my largest trees broke to-day with the wind, and another last week. I am much obliged to you for the flower you offer me, but by the description it is an Austrian rose, and I have several now in bloom. Mr. Bentley is with me, finishing the drawings for Gray’s Odes; there are some mandarin-cats fishing for gold-fish, which will delight you....

“You will be pleased with a story of Lord Bury, that is come from Scotland: he is quartered at Inverness; the magistrates invited him to an entertainment with fireworks, which they intended to give on the morrow for the Duke’s birth-day. He thanked them, assured them he would represent their zeal to his Royal Highness; but he did not doubt it would be more agreeable to him, if they postponed

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<sup>27</sup> Walpole had given this Chinese name to a pond of gold-fish at Strawberry Hill.

it to the day following, the anniversary of the battle of Culloden. They stared, said they could not promise on their own authority, but would go and consult their body. They returned, told him it was unprecedented, and could not be complied with. Lord Bury replied, he was sorry they had not given a negative at once, for he had mentioned it to his soldiers, who would not bear a disappointment, and was afraid it would provoke them to some outrage upon the town. This did;—they celebrated Culloden....”

A few years later Strawberry Hill had attained its greatest celebrity. In June, 1759, Walpole writes:

“Strawberry Hill is grown a perfect Paphos; it is the land of beauties. On Wednesday the Duchesses of Hamilton and Richmond, and Lady Ailesbury dined there; the two latter stayed all night. There never was so pretty a sight as to see them all three sitting in the shell; a thousand years hence, when I begin to grow old, if that can ever be, I shall talk of that event, and tell young people how much handsomer the women of my time were than they will be then: I shall say, ‘Women alter now; I remember Lady Ailesbury looking handsomer than her daughter, the pretty Duchess of Richmond, as they were sitting in the shell on my terrace with the Duchess of Hamilton, one of the famous Gunnings.’ Yesterday t’other more famous Gunning [Lady Coventry] dined there. She has made a friendship with my charming niece, to disguise her jealousy of the new Countess’s beauty: there were they two, their lords, Lord Buckingham, and Charlotte. You will think that I did not

choose men for my parties so well as women. I don't include Lord Waldegrave in this bad election."

The famous Gunnings referred to in the last passage figure often in Walpole's letters. These two ladies were the daughters of Irish parents, and though of noble blood on the mother's side, are said to have been originally so poor that they had thought of being actresses; and when they were first presented at Dublin Castle, they were supplied with clothes for the occasion by Mrs. Woffington, the actress. On their arrival in England, their beauty created such an impression, that they were followed by crowds in the Park and at Vauxhall. We even read that Maria, the elder, some years after her marriage, having been mobbed in the Park, was attended by a guard of soldiers. Maria married the Earl of Coventry, and died many years before her husband. Her younger sister, Elizabeth, who was reckoned the less beautiful of the two, married, first, the Duke of Hamilton, and, secondly, Colonel John Campbell, afterwards Duke of Argyll, for whom she had refused the Duke of Bridgewater. The penniless Irish girl, Elizabeth Gunning, was the mother of two Dukes of Hamilton and two Dukes of Argyll. Walpole's niece, of whom he suggests Lady Coventry was jealous, was a natural daughter of his brother, Sir Edward Walpole, and was then the bride of the Earl of Waldegrave, after whose death she became Duchess of Gloucester, by a clandestine marriage with George III.'s younger brother. By her first husband she had three daughters, the Ladies Waldegrave, whose portraits, by Reynolds,

are included in this volume.

Before we leave that portion of Horace Walpole's correspondence which belongs to the reign of George II., we will give one letter of a character different from those we have previously selected. It is addressed to Sir David Dalrymple, afterwards Lord Hailes, and deals entirely with literary subjects. The "Irish poems" referred to in it are, of course, the first fragments of "Ossian," then recently published by Macpherson:

*"Strawberry Hill, April 4, 1760.*

"As I have very little at present to trouble you with myself, I should have deferred writing till a better opportunity, if it were not to satisfy the curiosity of a friend; a friend whom you, Sir, will be glad to have made curious, as you originally pointed him out as a likely person to be charmed with the old Irish poetry you sent me. It is Mr. Gray, who is an enthusiast about those poems, and begs me to put the following queries to you; which I will do in his own words, and I may say truly, *Poeta loquitur*.

"I am so charmed with the two specimens of Erse poetry, that I cannot help giving you the trouble to inquire a little farther about them, and should wish to see a few lines of the original, that I may form some slight idea of the language, the measures, and the rhythm.

"Is there anything known of the author or authors, and of what antiquity are they supposed to be?

"Is there any more to be had of equal beauty, or at all approaching to it?

“I have been often told, that the poem called *Hardykanute*<sup>28</sup> (which I always admired and still admire) was the work of somebody that lived a few years ago. This I do not at all believe, though it has evidently been retouched in places by some modern hand; but, however, I am authorised by this report to ask, whether the two poems in question are certainly antique and genuine. I make this inquiry in quality of an antiquary, and am not otherwise concerned about it; for if I were sure that anyone now living in Scotland had written them, to divert himself and laugh at the credulity of the world, I would undertake a journey into the Highlands only for the pleasure of seeing him.’

“You see, Sir, how easily you may make our greatest southern bard travel northward to visit a brother. The young translator has nothing to do but to own a forgery, and Mr. Gray is ready to pack up his lyre, saddle Pegasus, and set out directly. But seriously, he, Mr. Mason, my Lord Lyttelton, and one or two more, whose taste the world allows, are in love with your Erse elegies: I cannot say in general they are so much admired—but Mr. Gray alone is worth satisfying.

“The ‘*Siege of Aquileia*,’ of which you ask, pleased less than Mr. Home’s other plays.<sup>29</sup> In my own opinion, ‘*Douglas*’ far exceeds both the others. Mr. Home seems to have a beautiful talent for painting genuine nature and

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<sup>28</sup> It was written by Mrs. Halket of Wardlaw. Mr. Lockhart states, that on the blank leaf of his copy of Allan Ramsay’s “*Evergreen*,” Sir Walter Scott has written, “*Hardyknute* was the first poem that I ever learnt, the last that I shall forget.”

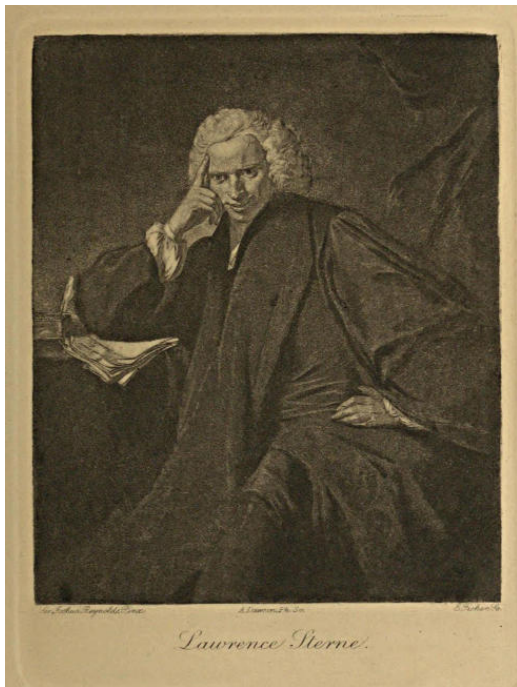
<sup>29</sup> The “*Siege of Aquileia*,” a tragedy, by John Home, produced at Drury Lane, 21st February, 1760.

the manners of his country. There was so little of nature in the manners of both Greeks and Romans, that I do not wonder at his success being less brilliant when he tried those subjects; and, to say the truth, one is a little weary of them. At present, nothing is talked of, nothing admired, but what I cannot help calling a very insipid and tedious performance: it is a kind of novel, called ‘The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy;’ the great humour of which consists in the whole narration always going backwards. I can conceive a man saying that it would be droll to write a book in that manner, but have no notion of his persevering in executing it. It makes one smile two or three times at the beginning, but in recompense makes one yawn for two hours. The characters are tolerably kept up, but the humour is for ever attempted and missed. The best thing in it is a Sermon, oddly coupled with a good deal of indecency, and both the composition of a clergyman. The man’s head, indeed, was a little turned before, now topsy-turvy with his success and fame. Dodsley has given him six hundred and fifty pounds for the second edition and two more volumes (which I suppose will reach backwards to his great-great-grandfather); Lord Fauconberg, a donative<sup>30</sup> of one hundred and sixty pounds a year; and Bishop Warburton gave him a purse of gold and this compliment (which happened to be a contradiction), ‘that it was quite an original composition, and in the true Cervantic vein:’ the only copy that ever was an original, except in painting, where they all pretend to be so. Warburton, however, not content with this,

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<sup>30</sup> The living of Coxwold, in Yorkshire.

recommended the book to the bench of bishops, and told them Mr. Sterne, the author, was the English Rabelais. They had never heard of such a writer. Adieu!”



Sir Joshua Reynolds. Pinx. A. Dawson. Ph. Sc. E. Fisher. Sc.  
Lawrence Sterne.

## CHAPTER III

A new reign.—Funeral of the late King.—Houghton revisited.—Election at Lynn.—Marriage of George the Third.—His Coronation.

The accession of George III. was the beginning of a new era in English society. The character of George II. could inspire no respect. His successor, with all his faults, did as much perhaps towards reforming the manners of the higher classes as a more enlightened prince could have effected. His regular life and the strictness of his Court applied a pressure answering to that which grew daily stronger from below. The chief want of the aristocracy at this time was not so much culture as something more vitally important. Culture they did, indeed, sorely lack, but many influences among themselves were tending to promote this. What they mainly needed to have enforced upon them from without was some regard to the first principles of social order, some recognition of moral and religious obligations. Those who despise the formalism of George III.'s reign, may reflect that to impose external decorum on the society represented in Hogarth's pictures was of itself no trifling improvement. Even this was some time in coming. It was retarded by the mistaken system of government which for a long while rendered the Crown unpopular. Still the signs of a change for the better gradually

became apparent; and when the close of the American War had removed the last subject of national discontent, the great majority of the upper, as well as of the middle ranks, rallied round the throne as the mainstay of public morality, supporting the King and the sedate minister of his choice against a rival whose irregularities recalled the disorders of a former time.

We give the letter in which Walpole describes the funeral of George II. It should be stated that the writer did not long retain the favourable opinion he here expresses of the new Sovereign:

*“Arlington Street, Nov. 13, 1760.*

“Even the honeymoon of a new reign don’t produce events every day. There is nothing but the common saying of addresses and kissing hands. The chief difficulty is settled; Lord Gower yields the Mastership of the Horse to Lord Huntingdon, and removes to the Great Wardrobe, from whence Sir Thomas Robinson was to have gone into Ellis’s place, but he is saved. The City, however, have a mind to be out of humour; a paper has been fixed on the Royal Exchange, with these words, ‘No petticoat Government, no Scotch Minister, no Lord George Sackville;’ two hints totally unfounded, and the other scarce true. No petticoat ever governed less, it is left at Leicester-house; Lord George’s breeches are as little concerned; and, except Lady Susan Stuart and Sir Harry Erskine, nothing has yet been done for any Scots. For the King himself, he seems all good-nature, and wishing to satisfy everybody; all his speeches are obliging. I saw him again yesterday, and was surprised

to find the levee-room had lost so entirely the air of the lion's den. This Sovereign don't stand in one spot, with his eyes fixed royally on the ground, and dropping bits of German news; he walks about, and speaks to everybody. I saw him afterwards on the throne, where he is graceful and genteel, sits with dignity, and reads his answers to addresses well; it was the Cambridge address, carried by the Duke of Newcastle in his Doctor's gown, and looking like the *Médecin malgré lui*. He had been vehemently solicitous for attendance, for fear my Lord Westmoreland, who vouchsafes himself to bring the address from Oxford, should outnumber him. Lord Lichfield and several other Jacobites have kissed hands; George Selwyn says, 'They go to St James's, because now there are so many *Stuarts* there.'

"Do you know, I had the curiosity to go to the burying t'other night; I had never seen a royal funeral; nay, I walked as a rag of quality, which I found would be, and so it was, the easiest way of seeing it. It is absolutely a noble sight. The Prince's chamber, hung with purple, and a quantity of silver lamps, the coffin under a canopy of purple velvet, and six vast chandeliers of silver on high stands, had a very good effect. The Ambassador from Tripoli and his son were carried to see that chamber. The procession, through a line of foot-guards, every seventh man bearing a torch, the horse-guards lining the outside, their officers with drawn sabres and crape sashes on horseback, the drums muffled, the fifes, bells tolling, and minute-guns,—all this was very solemn. But the charm was the entrance of the Abbey, where we were received by the Dean and Chapter in rich

robes, the choir and almsmen bearing torches; the whole Abbey so illuminated, that one saw it to greater advantage than by day; the tombs, long aisles, and fretted roof, all appearing distinctly, and with the happiest *chiaroscuro*. There wanted nothing but incense, and little chapels here and there, with priests saying mass for the repose of the defunct; yet one could not complain of its not being catholic enough. I had been in dread of being coupled with some boy of ten years old; but the heralds were not very accurate, and I walked with George Grenville, taller and older, to keep me in countenance. When we came to the chapel of Henry the Seventh, all solemnity and decorum ceased; no order was observed, people sat or stood where they could or would; the yeomen of the guard were crying out for help, oppressed by the immense weight of the coffin; the Bishop read sadly, and blundered in the prayers; the fine chapter, *Man that is born of a woman*, was chanted, not read; and the anthem, besides being immeasurably tedious, would have served as well for a nuptial. The real serious part was the figure of the Duke of Cumberland, heightened by a thousand melancholy circumstances. He had a dark brown adonis, and a cloak of black cloth, with a train of five yards. Attending the funeral of a father could not be pleasant: his leg extremely bad, yet forced to stand upon it near two hours; his face bloated and distorted with his late paralytic stroke, which has affected, too, one of his eyes, and placed over the mouth of the vault, into which, in all probability, he must himself so soon descend; think how unpleasant a situation! He bore it all with a firm and unaffected countenance. This grave scene

was fully contrasted by the burlesque Duke of Newcastle. He fell into a fit of crying the moment he came into the chapel, and flung himself back in a stall, the Archbishop hovering over him with a smelling-bottle; but in two minutes his curiosity got the better of his hypocrisy, and he ran about the chapel with his glass to spy who was or was not there, spying with one hand, and mopping his eyes with the other. Then returned the fear of catching cold; and the Duke of Cumberland, who was sinking with heat, felt himself weighed down, and turning round, found it was the Duke of Newcastle standing upon his train, to avoid the chill of the marble. It was very theatric to look down into the vault where the coffin lay, attended by mourners with lights. Clavering, the groom of the bedchamber, refused to sit up with the body, and was dismissed by the King's order."

The demise of the Crown, of course, dissolved Parliament. Horace Walpole went down to Houghton to be re-elected for Lynn:

*"Houghton, March 25, 1761.*

"Here I am at Houghton! and alone! in this spot, where (except two hours last month) I have not been in sixteen years! Think, what a crowd of reflections! No; Gray, and forty churchyards, could not furnish so many; nay, I know one must feel them with greater indifference than I possess, to have patience to put them into verse. Here I am, probably for the last time of my life, though not for the last time: every clock that strikes tells me I am an hour nearer to yonder

church—that church, into which I have not yet had courage to enter, where lies that mother on whom I doated, and who doated on me! There are the two rival mistresses of Houghton, neither of whom ever wished to enjoy it! There too lies he who founded its greatness, to contribute to whose fall Europe was embroiled; there he sleeps in quiet and dignity, while his friend and his foe, rather his false ally and real enemy, Newcastle and Bath, are exhausting the dregs of their pitiful lives in squabbles and pamphlets.<sup>31</sup>

“The surprise the pictures gave me is again renewed; accustomed for many years to see nothing but wretched daubs and varnished copies at auctions, I look at these as enchantment. My own description of them seems poor; but shall I tell you truly, the majesty of Italian ideas almost sinks before the warm nature of Flemish colouring. Alas! don’t I grow old? My young imagination was fired with Guido’s ideas: must they be plump as Abishag to warm me now? Does great youth feel with poetic limbs, as well as see with poetic eyes? In one respect I am very young, I cannot satiate myself with looking: an incident contributed to make me feel this more strongly. A party arrived, just as I did, to see the house, a man and three women in riding-dresses, and they rode post through the apartments. I could not hurry before them fast enough; they were not so long in seeing for the first time, as I could have been in one room, to examine what I knew by heart. I remember formerly

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<sup>31</sup> “My flatterers here are all mutes. The oaks, the beeches, the chestnuts, seem to contend which best shall please the Lord of the Manor. They cannot deceive, they will not lie.”—*Sir Robert Walpole to General Churchill*, Houghton, June 24th, 1743.

being often diverted with this kind of *seers*; they come, ask what such a room is called, in which Sir Robert lay, write it down, admire a lobster or a cabbage in a market-piece, dispute whether the last room was green or purple, and then hurry to the inn for fear the fish should be overdressed. How different my sensations! not a picture here but recalls a history; not one, but I remember in Downing-street or Chelsea, where queens and crowds admired them, though seeing them as little as these travellers!

“When I had drunk tea, I strolled into the garden; they told me it was now called the *pleasure-ground*. What a dissonant idea of pleasure! those groves, those *allées*, where I have passed so many charming moments, are now stripped up or overgrown—many fond paths I could not unravel, though with a very exact clew in my memory: I met two gamekeepers, and a thousand hares! In the days when all my soul was tuned to pleasure and vivacity (and you will think, perhaps, it is far from being out of tune yet), I hated Houghton and its solitude; yet I loved this garden, as now, with many regrets, I love Houghton; Houghton, I know not what to call it, a monument of grandeur or ruin! How I have wished this evening for Lord Bute! how I could preach to him! For myself, I do not want to be preached to; I have long considered, how every Balbec must wait for the chance of a Mr. Wood. The servants wanted to lay me in the great apartment—what, to make me pass my night as I have done my evening! It were like proposing to Margaret Roper to be a duchess in the court that cut off her father’s head, and imagining it would please her. I have chosen to sit in my

father's little dressing-room, and am now by his scrutoire, where, in the height of his fortune, he used to receive the accounts of his farmers, and deceive himself, or us, with the thoughts of his economy. How wise a man at once, and how weak! For what has he built Houghton? for his grandson to annihilate, or for his son to mourn over. If Lord Burleigh could rise and view his representative driving the Hatfield stage, he would feel as I feel now. Poor little Strawberry! at least, it will not be stripped to pieces by a descendant! You will find all these fine meditations dictated by pride, not by philosophy. Pray consider through how many mediums philosophy must pass, before it is purified—

“— how often must it weep, how often burn!”

“My mind was extremely prepared for all this gloom by parting with Mr. Conway yesterday morning; moral reflections or commonplaces are the livery one likes to wear, when one has just had a real misfortune. He is going to Germany: I was glad to dress myself up in transitory Houghton, in lieu of very sensible concern. To-morrow I shall be distracted with thoughts, at least images of very different complexion. I go to Lynn, and am to be elected on Friday. I shall return hither on Saturday, again alone, to expect Burleighides on Sunday, whom I left at Newmarket. I must once in my life see him on his grandfather's throne.

“*Epping, Monday night, thirty-first.*—No, I have not seen him; he loitered on the road, and I was kept at Lynn till

yesterday morning. It is plain I never knew for how many trades I was formed, when at this time of day I can begin electioneering, and succeed in my new vocation. Think of me, the subject of a mob, who was scarce ever before in a mob, addressing them in the town-hall, riding at the head of two thousand people through such a town as Lynn, dining with above two hundred of them, amid bumpers, huzzas, songs, and tobacco, and finishing with country dancing at a ball and sixpenny whist! I have borne it all cheerfully; nay, have sat hours in *conversation*, the thing upon earth that I hate; have been to hear misses play on the harpsichord, and to see an alderman's copies of Rubens and Carlo Marat. Yet to do the folks justice, they are sensible, and reasonable, and civilised; their very language is polished since I lived among them. I attribute this to their more frequent intercourse with the world and the capital, by the help of good roads and postchaises, which, if they have abridged the King's dominions, have at least tamed his subjects. Well, how comfortable it will be to-morrow, to see my parroquet, to play at loo, and not be obliged to talk seriously! The Heraclitus of the beginning of this letter will be overjoyed on finishing it to sign himself your old friend,  
*Democritus.*

“P.S. I forgot to tell you that my ancient aunt Hammond came over to Lynn to see me; not from any affection, but curiosity. The first thing she said to me, though we have not met these sixteen years, was, ‘Child, you have done a thing to-day, that your father never did in all his life; you

sat as they carried you,—he always stood the whole time.’ ‘Madam,’ said I, ‘when I am placed in a chair, I conclude I am to sit in it; besides, as I cannot imitate my father in great things, I am not at all ambitious of mimicking him in little ones.’ I am sure she proposes to tell her remarks to my uncle Horace’s ghost, the instant they meet.”

The King’s marriage followed a few months later:

*“Arlington Street, Sept. 10, 1761.*

“When we least expected the Queen, she came, after being ten days at sea, but without sickness for above half-an-hour. She was gay the whole voyage, sung to her harpsichord, and left the door of her cabin open. They made the coast of Suffolk last Saturday, and on Monday morning she landed at Harwich; so prosperously has Lord Anson executed his commission. She lay that night at your old friend Lord Abercorn’s, at Witham in Essex; and, if she judged by her host, must have thought she was coming to reign in the realm of taciturnity. She arrived at St. James’s a quarter after three on Tuesday the 8th. When she first saw the Palace she turned pale: the Duchess of Hamilton smiled. ‘My dear Duchess,’ said the Princess, ‘*you* may laugh; you have been married twice; but it is no joke to me.’ Is this a bad proof of her sense? On the journey they wanted her to curl her toupet. ‘No, indeed,’ said she, ‘I think it looks as well as those of the ladies who have been sent for me: if the King would have me wear a periwig, I will; otherwise I shall let myself alone.’ The Duke of York gave her his hand at the garden-gate: her lips trembled, but she jumped

out with spirit. In the garden the King met her; she would have fallen at his feet; he prevented and embraced her, and led her into the apartments, where she was received by the Princess of Wales and Lady Augusta: these three princesses only dined with the King. At ten the procession went to chapel, preceded by unmarried daughters of peers, and peeresses in plenty. The new Princess was led by the Duke of York and Prince William; the Archbishop married them; the King talked to her the whole time with great good humour, and the Duke of Cumberland gave her away. She is not tall, nor a beauty; pale, and very thin; but looks sensible, and is genteel. Her hair is darkish and fine; her forehead low, her nose very well, except the nostrils spreading too wide; her mouth has the same fault, but her teeth are good.<sup>32</sup> She talks a good deal, and French tolerably; possesses herself, is frank, but with great respect to the King. After the ceremony, the whole company came into the drawing-room for about ten minutes, but nobody was presented that night. The Queen was in white and silver; an endless mantle of violet-coloured velvet, lined with ermine, and attempted to be fastened on her shoulder by a bunch of large pearls, dragged itself and almost the rest of her clothes halfway down her waist. On her head was a beautiful little tiara of diamonds; a

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<sup>32</sup> “Queen Charlotte had always been if not ugly, at least ordinary, but in her later years her want of personal charms became of course less observable, and it used to be said that she was grown better looking. I one day said something to this effect to Colonel Disbrowe, her Chamberlain. ‘Yes,’ replied he, ‘I do think that the *bloom* of her ugliness is going off.’”—Croker.

diamond necklace, and a stomacher of diamonds, worth three score thousand pounds, which she is to wear at the Coronation too. Her train was borne by the ten bridesmaids, Lady Sarah Lenox, Lady Caroline Russell, Lady Caroline Montagu, Lady Harriot Bentinck, Lady Anne Hamilton, Lady Essex Kerr (daughters of Dukes of Richmond, Bedford, Manchester, Portland, Hamilton, and Roxburgh); and four daughters of the Earls of Albemarle, Brook, Harcourt, and Ilchester,—Lady Elizabeth Keppel, Louisa Greville, Elizabeth Harcourt, and Susan Fox Strangways: their heads crowned with diamonds, and in robes of white and silver. Lady Caroline Russell is extremely handsome; Lady Elizabeth Keppel very pretty; but with neither features nor air, nothing ever looked so charming as Lady Sarah Lenox; she has all the glow of beauty peculiar to her family. As supper was not ready, the Queen sat down, sung, and played on the harpsichord to the Royal Family, who all supped with her in private. They talked of the different German dialects; the King asked if the Hanoverian was not pure—‘Oh, no, sir,’ said the Queen; ‘it is the worst of all.’—She will not be unpopular.

“The Duke of Cumberland told the King that himself and Lady Augusta were sleepy. The Queen was very averse to leave the company, and at last articulated that nobody should accompany her but the Princess of Wales and her own two German women, and that nobody should be admitted afterwards but the King—they did not retire till between two and three.

“The next morning the King had a Levee. After the

Levee there was a Drawing-Room; the Queen stood under the throne: the women were presented to her by the Duchess of Hamilton, and then the men by the Duke of Manchester; but as she knew nobody, she was not to speak. At night there was a ball, drawing-rooms yesterday and to-day, and then a cessation of ceremony till the Coronation, except next Monday, when she is to receive the address of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, sitting on the throne attended by the bridesmaids. A ridiculous circumstance happened yesterday; Lord Westmoreland, not very young nor clear-sighted, mistook Lady Sarah Lenox for the Queen, kneeled to her, and would have kissed her hand if she had not prevented him. People think that a Chancellor of Oxford was naturally attracted by the blood of Stuart. It is as comical to see Kitty Dashwood, the famous old beauty of the Oxfordshire Jacobites, living in the palace as Duenna to the Queen. She and Mrs. Broughton, Lord Lyttelton's ancient Delia, are revived again in a young court that never heard of them. There, I think you could not have had a more circumstantial account of a royal wedding from the Heralds' Office. Adieu!

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