

**THE CASTLE OF
OTRANTO; WITH A
MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR**

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The Castle of Otranto; With a Memoir of the Author by Horace Walpole

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HORACE WALPOLE

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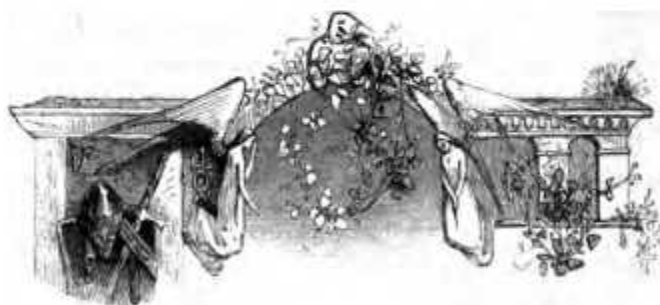
ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Publisher of this Edition of the Castle of Otranto, in presenting his volume to the public, deems it incumbent on him to state, that in reprinting the work in a more elegant form than any in which it has hitherto appeared, his efforts have not been confined to the attainment of mere mechanical superiority of execution.

The common editions of this first pure Romance in classical English, besides being inferior as regards typography and embellishment to most of those works which form the standard literature of the day, are replete with serious errors: and as successive versions have been usually copied from the cheapest and latest reprints, without reference to authentic sources, these errors have not only been perpetuated, but others from time to time have been superadded:—This manifest injustice to a sterling work demanded a remedy.

The present Edition has been printed from that of 1765 (the second) and compared with the quarto of 1798. A sketch is prefixed of the Author's Literary Life, of which, notwithstanding the abundance of materials scattered through his own works and those of numerous contemporaries, no connected account, with the exception of some brief outlines contained in current Biographical Dictionaries, appears to have been published. The illustrations of the work are from original designs by Mr. STANDFAST—a young artist, whom the Publisher feels glad of an opportunity to introduce to the favourable notice of the public.

LONDON,
August, 1840.



MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

THE Author of the 'Castle of Otranto' was the third son of Sir Robert Walpole, first Earl of Orford, by his first wife, Catherine Shorter. He was born in the year 1718, and at a proper age sent to Eton, where he made the acquaintance of the poet Gray, and of Mr. West, two gentlemen whose conversation and taste had in all probability great influence in forming their young friend's character and directing his studies. The boyhood and youth of Horace appear to have been undistinguished. The means of indulgence placed within his reach by the wealth of his father, and the certainty of an ample provision on attaining his majority, are supposed to have rendered him careless of Academic distinction, if not to have engendered habits incompatible with severe study, and to have made him, from the time that he began to take pleasure in literature for its

own sake, a mere desultory reader. These habits of mingled indolence and industry, of busy ease and erudite trifling, clung to him through life.

From Eton, Walpole went to King's College, Cambridge, which, however, according to the usual custom of young men of fortune in the early part of the last century, he left without having taken a degree. His first literary production was written while at the University, and is called 'Verses in Memory of King Henry VI., the Founder of the College.' In the 4th edition of his works, prepared for the press, and partly printed by himself at Strawberry Hill, this short piece bears the date of February 2, 1738, the author being then in his 21st year. In the same year, through the influence of his father, he received the appointment of Inspector General of Exports and Imports, which he soon afterwards exchanged for that of Usher of the Exchequer. Subsequently the sinecure offices of Comptroller of the Pipe and Clerk of the Estreats were granted to him; and he continued till his death to enjoy the emoluments of the three places.

Sir Robert, who was not slow to perceive his son's talents, now wished him to accept a seat in Parliament, and to give his support to the Ministry. At the entreaty of Horace, however, the latter was permitted first to make the usual journey through France and Italy. On his tour, young Walpole was accompanied by Gray, with whom he departed from England on the 29th of March, 1739, taking the route through Paris, by the Piedmontese Alps to Florence, where they stayed for some time to examine the numerous works of art, and to study some portion of the literature of the south. In July, 1741, the travelling friends separated at Reggio, in consequence of a quarrel, the precise nature of which has never been explained; but in which Walpole subsequently acknowledged to Mason, Gray's biographer, that he had been in error; since "somewhat

more of deference, attention, and complaisance to a man of warm friendship, and superior judgment and prudence, might have prevented a rupture which gave much uneasiness to both, and proved a source of lasting concern to the survivor." There is no reason to suppose, from Walpole's general character, that this was merely a generous admission on his part; but, on the contrary, from the resolute rejection by Gray of the proffered intimacy of his school-friend at a later period, it may be fairly conjectured that the cause of disagreement must have lain deeper,—in some assumption of patronising airs, some arrogance, or meanness, which the young aristocrat was unwilling that the world should know. A sort of reconciliation was afterwards effected through the intervention of a lady who had an esteem for both parties; but no cordiality ever again existed between them: and although in compliment to his taste Mr. Walpole was the first person to whom Gray showed his 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard,' the poet omitted our author's name among the friends enumerated in his will. Walpole's love for Gray, notwithstanding, appears to have been sincere. He always spoke of him with kindness; and in 1738 employed Mr. Bentley to illustrate an edition of his Poems, which was printed at the Strawberry Hill press.

After parting from Gray, Walpole returned to England, and took his seat, as member for Callington, in Parliament, where on the 23rd of March, 1741-2, he availed himself of an opportunity to exhibit his spirit, talent, and filial love, by opposing eloquently and zealously a motion made for instituting inquiry into the administration and conduct of Sir Robert, his father, for the ten preceding years. But Horace was never a frequent speaker, and, indeed, was not at all remarkable for attention to his parliamentary duties: politics, except in so far as they furnished subjects for satire, being of too dry a nature for his digestion. He continued to sit in the house for four successive parliaments of seven

years' duration each; first, as has been said, for Callington; afterwards for Castle Rising; and, finally, for King's Lynn.

His life during this period was varied only by society, by literary pursuits, and a somewhat extensive correspondence; by which he is, perhaps, more generally known at present, than by any of his more elaborate works, except only his popular romance of 'The Castle of Otranto;' a book, which it is not too much to say, has been as widely diffused as any similar work in the language. In 1749 a little extraordinary excitement was created by the attempt of a highwayman upon his life,—an incident which he has humorously related in 'The World,' a periodical publication, to which he contributed Nos. 6, 8, 10, 14, 28, 103, 160, 195, and the concluding number, called 'The World Extraordinary,' published after the feigned death of the author, and containing a very flattering character of Henry Fox, then Secretary at War, and afterwards created Lord Holland.

In 1752, appeared his first separate publication, which was intitled '*Ædes Walpoliana*,' and was a descriptive account of his father's magnificent palace of Houghton, in Norfolk, and of the collection of pictures it contained, which, in consequence of pecuniary embarrassment, George, the second Earl of Orford, in 1779, sold to Catherine, Empress of Russia, for the sum of £40,555. Walpole seems at one time to have considered the value of this collection over-rated; but that he did not always hold it lightly is certain, from the following passage of a letter dated November 2, 1792, and addressed to the Rev. William Beloe:—"I have seen a noble seat built by a very wise man, who thought he had reason to expect it would remain to his posterity as long as human foundations do in the ordinary course of things. Alas! I have lived to be the last of that posterity, and to see the glorious collection of pictures, that were the principal ornaments of the house,