

PREFACE

THERE are three good reasons for a new edition of Horace Walpole's correspondence: to give a correct text, to include for the first time the letters to him, and to annotate the whole with the fullness that the most informative record of the time deserves.

At the present time (June 1937) some six thousand letters to and from Walpole (out of an estimated seven thousand) have been located and have been secured for use in this edition by purchase of the originals, by photostating them, or by collating the Toynbee text with them. There have been discovered some three hundred unpublished letters of Walpole and several hundred more which the Toynbees did not see and which they had to print from the erratic text of earlier editors. Upwards of three thousand letters to Walpole will be given, two-thirds of them published for the first time in whole or in part.

Collation of the printed letters with the originals shows that the texts are frequently inaccurate. Many of the differences are trifling, but many are serious, involving dates, proper names and omitted passages. These far exceed the usual casualties of the press and are attributable, in part, to misplaced confidence in certain of the transcripts which were made by friendly owners with more goodwill than knowledge of Walpole's occasionally tricky handwriting. Furthermore, the final proofs could have been seldom, if ever, collated with the originals. But the 'editing' of the earlier editors was even more blameworthy. No letter which passed through the hands of Mary Berry remained the same. She inked out paragraphs, suppressed proper names, and wrote her notes wherever there was room for them. Her object was to improve the letters by deleting what she considered to be their less brilliant passages—the passages which are today, as often as not, of the greatest interest—for the Walpolean orchestra must play *fortissimo* or not at all. Hannah More was solely concerned