

HORACE WALPOLE'S CORRESPONDENCE

ADVERTISEMENT.¹

The following collection of letters, written very carelessly by a young man, had been preserved by the person to whom they were addressed. The author, some years² after the date of the first, borrowed them, on account of some anecdotes interspersed. On the perusal, among many trifling relations and stories which were only of consequence or amusing to the two persons concerned in the correspondence, he found some facts, characters and news, which, though below the dignity of history, might prove entertaining to many other people: and knowing how much pleasure, not only himself, but many other persons have often found in a series of private and familiar letters,³ he thought it worth his while to preserve these, as they contain something of the customs, fashions, politics, diversions and private history of several years; which, if worthy of any existence, can be properly transmitted to posterity, only in this manner.

The reader will find a few pieces of intelligence which did not prove true, but which are retained here as the author heard and related them, lest correction should spoil the simple air of the narrative.⁴ When the letters were written, they were never intended for public inspection; and now they are far from being thought correct, or more authentic than the general turn of epistolary correspondence admits. The author would sooner have burnt them, than have taken the trouble to correct such errant trifles, which are here presented to the reader, with scarce any variation or omissions,⁵ but what private friendships and private history,

1. To HW's transcripts of his letters to Mann, starting with his letter of 11 Sept. 1741 OS. See Introduction, 'Bibliography and Method.'

2. In 1748, HW first asked Mann to return his letters, but HW seems to have deleted his requests when he copied the letters which included them. From Mann's replies of 25 Oct. 1748 NS, 3 Jan. 1749 NS, 31 Jan. 1749 NS, and 23 May 1749 NS, it is evident that the first packet of letters was requested by HW in his letter of 18 Sept. 1748 OS, and was sent in Jan. 1749 by Schutz.

3. HW's favourite letters were those of Mme de Sévigné, of which he collected printed copies and some MSS; his enthusiasm was shared by Mann, Selwyn, Montagu, and other friends. He also had a MS copy (now wsl) of Mme de Maintenon's correspondence with the Princesse

des Ursins. He discovered the letters of the Conway family at Ragley. He read with great interest the published letters of Swift, Bolingbroke, Montesquieu, Chesterfield, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and many other figures of his time.

4. They are marked in the notes (HW).

5. In a few cases, HW's transcripts of his letters reveal gaps where parts of letters are missing (for instance, the beginnings of the letters of ca 5 Oct. 1741 OS, 13 Oct. 1741 OS, and 19 Oct. 1741 OS). HW in copying other letters, crossed out certain passages (as in the letters of 23 Nov. 1741 OS and 11 March 1748 OS). He also made intentional omissions: Mann's letter of 2 Jan. 1750 NS, mentions HW's disparaging comments on the Barretts, although those comments are no longer in HW's letters as they were copied. HW, who later became friendly with the Bar-