

## INTRODUCTION

We come now to Walpole's first cousin and closest friend, Henry Seymour Conway, and to Conway's elder brother, Lord Hertford. We postponed the publication of these correspondences in the hope that their lacunæ might be filled, and we have been rewarded by the discovery in Colombo, Ceylon, of 194 letters to Walpole from Conway and from his wife, Lady Ailesbury (as well as one from his sister, Mrs Harris); most of them are here printed for the first time. Large gaps remain, especially in the correspondence with Lord and Lady Hertford, but we cannot delay publication longer. The summary of the 687 letters in these three volumes (of which 362 are now printed for the first time) is given *post* at p. xxi.

Walpole's devotion to Conway and Lady Ailesbury, touched upon in our volume 36 where he makes peace between them and the Duchess of Gloucester, comes out even more strongly in the present volumes. After counselling Conway on 20 July 1744 not to marry the much too frivolous Lady Caroline Fitzroy he offers him half his fortune. He then adds, 'If I ever felt much for anything, which I know may be questioned, it was certainly for my mother. I look on you as my nearest relation by her, and think I can never do enough to show my gratitude and affection to her. For these reasons, don't deny me what I have set my heart on—the making your fortune easy to you.'<sup>1</sup> Fourteen years later in the dedication of his *Fugitive Pieces in Verse and Prose*, he wrote, 'I only desire, if I should be remembered for these idlenesses, that it may be known at the same time that you did not dislike them; and [which will do me still more honour] that our FRIENDSHIP was as great as our AFFINITY.' Walpole added a note for our benefit on AFFINITY in his copy of the book (now wsl): 'they were first cousins; their mothers Catherine Lady Walpole and Charlotte Lady Conway, being own sisters.'

The letters first published in this correspondence amplify and modify the accepted public image of Conway as a fearless soldier and perceptive statesman who saw that it was impossible to sub-

1. *Post* i. 170.