PREFACE.

THAT lively and pleasant writer, the late Honourable Horace Walpole, * to whom the public is obliged for a most entertaining and useful work, the Anecdotes of Painting, did not publish his last volume until the year 1780, though, as he acknowledges, it was written ten years before; consequently there was a lapse of twenty years between the accession of his present Majesty to the throne, and the period when that honourable biographer terminated his work.

From

* Horace Walpole was third and youngest son to Sir Robert Walpole, K. G. many years prime minister to George the First and Second. His mother, who was Sir Robert's first lady, was daughter to John Shorter, Esq; of Bybrook in Kent: she died 1737.

Horace, or Horatio, for his name is sometimes written in the former, and sometimes in the latter manner, received his education at Eton; from thence was removed to Cambridge; and afterwards visited Italy, in company with Mr. Gray the poet.

He sat in several parliaments, as representative for Castle Rising, and lastly, for King's Lynn, Norfolk. But the buxom of political concerns was little suited to his temper and habits, for which reason he formally resigned, by public advertisement, all further connexion with his constituents, and withdrew to retirement about the year 1766.

He had previously purchased a small but pleasant mansion at the western extremity of Twickenham, distinguished in the old parish books by the title of Strawberry Hill.
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From that time to the present, no regular or systematic memorials of the arts or artists have appeared, though some notices have been occasionally inserted in the obituary lists of the different Magazines.

This circumstance is the more extraordinary, as in that space of time the arts have made more rapid advances towards perfection in Great Britain, than ever was known in any other country during so short a space of time.

This assertion will not appear strained, when we consider the low state to which they were reduced at the accession of George the first, when, as the honourable author observes, "the arts were sunk to the lowest state in Britain."

This place he greatly embellished, and, before his death, formed it into a beautiful and romantic villa, if a Gothic edifice can claim that title.

Here he built a printing office, and constantly retained a printer in his service; the last was Mr. Thomas Kirgate, who lived with him near thirty years, and was with him at his death. At this press most of the honourable author's works were printed, as also several productions from the pens of his friends, all of which obtained the titles of the Strawberry Hill editions, by which they are well known to the curious collectors of literature.

From his youth he was greatly afflicted with the gout, yet he survived to great age. He was born in 1716, and died March 2d, 1797.

As he outlived both his elder brothers, and also his nephew, all of whom died without heirs, the title of Earl of Orford descended to him as the last male heir of his father, who was created Earl of Orford, by George the Second, Feb. 9, 1742, and which he inherited by the death of his nephew George, the third Earl, who died in 1791. But Mr. Walpole was too far advanced in life, and too infirm in his health, to allow him to engage in those concerns which were consequent to his rank; therefore he never took his seat in the House of Peers; and as he died unmarried, the title became extinct; though it has lately been revived in his first cousin, Lord Walpole, of Wolterton in Norfolk, who in the early part of the year 1806 took his seat in the House of Peers as Earl of Orford.

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From this degraded state they began to revive about the middle of the succeeding reign; and before the close acquired a degree of vigour and strength which has been greatly cultivated and nearly matured under the auspicious encouragement of his present Majesty.

One of the first persons who contributed to elevate the arts from their depressed situation was Mr. George Vertue, whose affection for engraving was accompanied by an almost equal attachment to the study of antiquities; in consequence of which, he collected all the anecdotes he could obtain relative to the arts, and their professors who were or had been any ways connected with this country, from the earliest period to his own time.

But while he was collecting, he had no opportunity of arranging the anecdotes of which he was possessed, and they were left in a very imperfect and indigested state at his death, which happened in 1756.

These papers were purchased of Mr. Vertue's widow by the Honourable Mr. Walpole, who was certainly the fittest person to possess them, being the best qualified to arrange and polish the rough materials which Mr. Vertue had collected: At the same time he was by no means adapted in his own person to have acquired the original information, owing to a certain degree of fastidiousness in his manners, united with something of the consequence of rank, which disqualified him from making those familiar inquiries that would have been necessary for the attainment of the requisite knowledge.

Though
Though it cannot be doubted that the honourable editor improved the original sketches of Mr. Vertue, yet it may be safely affirmed that the former did not add to the list of artists which the latter had collected; and those artists which were inserted in the fourth volume of the octavo edition of his Anecdotes are but very slightly noticed. But this deficiency may be very easily accounted for, by observing that the honourable author’s age and infirmities did not then allow him to pursue those inquiries which were necessary to the farther improvement of the work. It may therefore be safely asserted, that those anecdotes were closed in the year 1760, for all the artists, who are noticed after that period, flourished long before, which was particularly the case with Hogarth, as also with some others who are mentioned after him, but with little more distinction, than by the dates of their deaths. As a continuation of that work, the following sheets are offered; and the Author begs to observe, that the information he has attempted to communicate is collected from the most unquestionable authorities, and in very many instances is acquired through the personal acquaintance and friendship he has enjoyed with several of the principal persons, whose abilities as artists, and whose characters as men, he has endeavoured to appreciate, in a manner, he trusts, which is equally free from partial praise or malevolent censure.

In addition to the anecdotes of the lives of the artists themselves, it has been thought necessary to subjoin, by way of introduction, some account of the encouragement and assistance which the arts received, by the establishment of several institutions which
which were formed before the accession of his present Majesty to the throne.

These events, so intimately connected with the history of the polite arts in this country, could not be passed over in silence, especially as several of the artists, who are mentioned in the following pages, were so much engaged with those institutions, that many occurrences, noticed in their memoirs, would be unintelligible to future readers, without some preparatory information upon those subjects.

In the arrangement of the following anecdotes, the chronological order is preserved agreeably to the dates of the deaths of the artists whose names are introduced, except in two or three instances, in which the parties retired from their profession so long before the close of their lives, that they certainly may be placed as they now stand with great propriety.

It is also necessary to observe, that in this volume, which is intended as the first, the Author has confined himself to the list of Painters only; leaving the other artists, such as Architects, Sculptors, &c. to be included in a second volume.

It is needless to describe all the divisions of the work. It will be sufficient to remark, that by their introduction, the Author has endeavoured to render his volume as useful as he could to those classes of readers for whom it is chiefly intended; namely, the artist, the connoisseur, and the gentleman.

This preface, however, cannot be closed without offering some apology for what may be thought a deficiency in the work; namely, the want of portraits of the artists whose memoirs are given; especially
especially as Mr. Walpole has bestowed a considerable number throughout his Anecdotes. But such decorations would have subjected the Author to an expence beyond his finances, and would also have rendered the volume too costly for the generality of those to whom the work might be useful.