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For the library of  
The Poston School

the gift of R. W. Kuttan-Chener  
April 1950.

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This copy of The Poston Letters was  
presented by Sir John Fenn, the editor,  
to the Rev. Robert Poston (1721-1804)  
the headmaster of Seaming School, Norfolk,  
and translator of Aeschylus and other  
Greek writers. Fenn's autograph inscription  
is on the back of the half-title.









To the Reverend Robert Potter  
These Volumes, as a Tribute of Respect and Friendship,  
are presented by

The Editor

THE EDITOR

ADDENDUM

TO THE EDITOR

THE EDITOR

ADDENDUM

THE EDITOR



THE EDITOR

Original Letters,

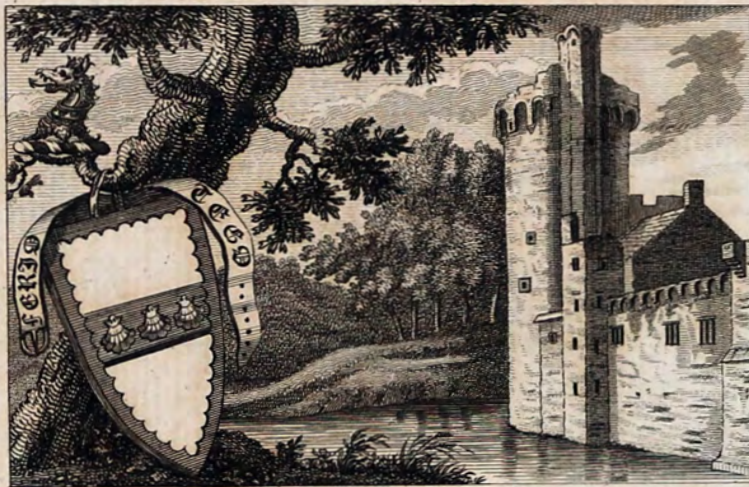
WRITTEN

DURING THE REIGNS OF

HENRY VI. EDWARD IV.

AND

RICHARD III.



CASTER TOWER.

LONDON,

Printed for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, in Water-noster-Row, 1787.







## HENRY. III.

*From an Original Drawing, taken between 1460 & 1470.  
Now in the Possession of John Jenn Esq. F.A.S.*

# ORIGINAL LETTERS,

Written during the REIGNS of

HENRY VI. EDWARD IV.

A N D

RICHARD III.

By various Persons of RANK or CONSEQUENCE;

CONTAINING

Many curious ANECDOTES, relative to that turbulent and bloody,  
but hitherto dark, PERIOD of our HISTORY;

A N D

Elucidating, not only PUBLIC MATTERS of STATE, but likewise  
the PRIVATE MANNERS of the AGE:

Digested in CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER;

WITH

NOTES, Historical and Explanatory;

A N D

Authenticated by Engravings of AUTOGRAPHS, PAPER MARKS, and SEALS.

By JOHN FENN, Esq. M.A. and F.A.S.

“Tempora mutantur.”

“Littera scripta manet.”

IN TWO VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

L O N D O N,

Printed for G. G. J. and J. ROBINSON, in Pater-noster-Row.

MDCCLXXXVII.

ORIGINAL LETTERS,

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AND

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By various Persons of Rank or Consequence;

CONTAINING

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but illustrious dark Period of our History;

AND

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the PRIVATE MANNERS of the AGE;

Digested in CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER,

WITH

NOTES, Historical and Explanatory;

AND

Authenticated by Testimony of A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

By JOHN BURN, Esq. M.A. and F.R.S.

“Tenderly managed”

“Liberally managed”

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON,

Printed for G. J. and J. Robinson, in Pall-mall.

MDCCLXXXVII.

D E D I C A T I O N

T O

# THE KING.

S I R,

**T**HE Honour of laying my Book at the foot of Majesty constitutes the smallest part of my pleasure, on receiving YOUR ROYAL PERMISSION for this Address.

I glory in the conscious satisfaction of dedicating it, to the Munificent Encourager of Knowledge in general ; to the Avowed Patron of that particular Branch of it, the Antiquities of These Kingdoms ; to a Prince, Who has no cause to blush at the Idea, that Posterity  
may

## DEDICATION.

may read, in the private Letters of the present Age, the undisguised Opinion which His Subjects entertained of His most secret Actions.

A Permission to dedicate to such a KING, is an Honour so highly flattering, that it will ever be remembered with the utmost Gratitude.

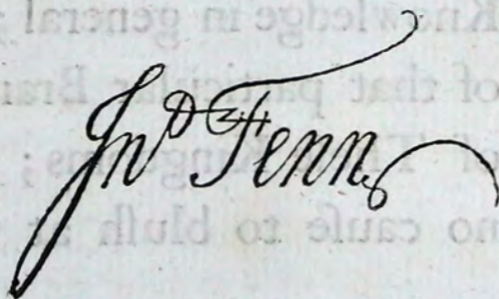
Condescend, MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN, to accept this humble Testimony of profound Respect, from

YOUR MAJESTY'S

Most loyal Subject,

And most dutiful Servant,

East Dereham.  
November 23, 1786.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. P. Fenn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

P R E F A C E.

ALL civilized Nations have ever been anxious to preserve every authentic record of their former transactions, both public and private; and with the greatest reason, since the proof of their very existence, as a nation of consequence (in the estimation of the real historian, who pays no attention to fabulous narratives) entirely depends upon such undoubted memorials.

Nations preserve Records.

Whenever, therefore, any particular period of a great nation is imperfectly known, from the want of real and authentic records; every one, who wishes to see an unbroken chain of national events, will, with the greatest eagerness, seize any information of undoubted authority, which may present itself; and from which either new matter may arise, or accounts now existing may, if true, be confirmed, and ascertained on sure grounds.

Defective Period to be supplied.

That our own kingdom has fewer authentic records of the transactions, during the reigns of Henry VI. Edward IV. and Richard III. than of any other later period of our History, is a truth known to, and lamented by, every man of historical knowledge.

Few Records of the Reigns of Hen. VI. Ed. IV. and Rich. III.

This deficiency of information in the above period arises from the following causes.

The Reasons.

I. The

I. The civil contentions between the houses of York and Lancaſter.

II. The ſlaughter of our nobility and gentry in the field, and on the ſcaffold.

III. The unfettled ſtate of property.

IV. The invention of printing *at the time*.

This, as at firſt fight it appears to favour univerſal knowledge, is certainly an aſſertion which requires a few words of explanation.

Employment  
of our early  
Printers.

At the *beginning* of the art of printing, thoſe who practiſed it, were ſolicitous to perpetuate things already committed to writing, relative to paſt times and paſt occurrences; not regarding recent tranſactions as of equal conſequence.

This art likewiſe probably prevented the writers of manuſcripts from multiplying their copies; they foreſeeing that the new invention would, in time, ſupply a ſufficient number at a much leſs price, by which means the value of their manual labour would be greatly diminished: and the early printers being buſy in preparing for the preſs old Hiſtories, Legends, Dicſts and Sayings of Philoſophers, Tranſlations, &c. &c. could not find time for printing the then modern hiſtory, which being preſerved by few, the manuſcripts containing it were eaſily loſt, or deſtroyed, and ſo never came down to us.

Reformation  
ravage not  
conſidered.

The Deſtruction which overwhelmed our manuſcripts and records at the Reformation, is not here conſidered; as that affected all the preceding ages, equally with that which is now under our conſideration.



Some historic manuscripts, however, were without doubt locked up amongst family writings, where they remained unregarded and useless for centuries; the possessors, if they knew they had such papers, considering them as of no consequence; and if ever they were *afterwards* looked at, the examiner perhaps cast them aside as illegible.

Historic  
MSS.  
preserved.

Would the ancient nobility and gentry of this kingdom, and the present owners of manors and estates, formerly belonging to religious societies, or to old and respectable families, permit their worm-eaten writings and mouldy papers to be carefully perused by those whose education and pursuits have given them knowledge and taste to do it, it might not even now be too late to discover, and bring to light, many curious and valuable manuscripts, which probably would afford us fresh information in various arts and sciences, confirm doubtful Facts, and fix on sure foundations many events in our own history, even from very early periods down to the Reformation, now unknown or uncertain.

Search for  
ancient  
writings.

These letters, which are now presented to the public, are a convincing proof, both of the preservation of such papers, and of the neglect which attends them; for though they were in the possession of different antiquaries for above a century, they have lain by totally neglected, and perhaps forgotten.

These letters  
an example.

It is a truth greatly to be lamented, that almost all general collectors are too apt to become so very atten-

Faults of  
general  
collectors.

tive to the *present* pursuit of the day, as to let that engross their whole attention; whereas, would they follow one species of collecting only; and, having acquired a sufficient fund of materials relative to that particular pursuit, then use the same industry in arranging and digesting those materials, as they before employed merely in collecting them, and when thus put into order, give them to the public, how much good would they do to society, and to themselves; instead of which, as soon as a sufficient quantity of matter is amassed for their originally intended plan, the whole is laid aside, and a new pursuit takes place: thus, wandering from one species of collecting to another, their life wears away; they become old men, and pass to their grave without having benefited their contemporaries by any useful or curious publication; too often, it is to be feared, with ruined, or at least wasted estates, their collections are then dispersed by public sale, perhaps for the same purpose as before collected—*to be looked at, laid aside, and forgotten!*

Foregoing  
remarks  
exemplified.

These observations occurred from the editor's particular acquaintance with a great collector, possessed of sound abilities, and whose judgment in points of antiquarian knowledge was extensive; who frequently made resolutions, that *next year* he would digest his various collections, and form some of them for public inspection: but he wanted perseverance; he grew old; he died in his chair, at the advanced age of seventy-four years, without ever having completed any literary  
under-

undertaking, and in circumstances from which his children felt the effects of his indiscretions.

To the honour, however, of the present age, we have several learned antiquaries and collectors, who have already published, and are still preparing for the press, works, which now place them amongst the first writers, and will convey their names to future ages with due credit to themselves, and honour to their country.

Present age  
has learned  
writers.

Would collectors in general follow such examples, and each contribute his stock to the public fund of learning, how many useful and ingenious publications would come abroad! the rage for collections, acquired with loss of fortune, would be in a great measure stopped; and those already *prudently* made, would remain in the respective families of the original collector, as marks of his taste and learning.

They should  
be examples  
to others.

What a pleasure would it be to a person fond of examining into the events of past ages, to be able to converse with those who lived in the times, and were present at the events themselves! as this cannot be, will not the next degree of pleasure arise from reading what those very persons, at the very time when the events happened, wrote to their contemporaries?

Reflections  
on past ages.

This may here be done, by a perusal of their letters; of the letters which they really wrote, and not such as are too often delivered down to us by historians, where the sentiments, the style, and the language, are generally those of the historian himself, and not of

the person ; few real and original letters of remote times, being now in existence.

Letters of  
remote ages  
afford plea-  
sure

Even the private letters of private men, who have lived in ages past, afford much pleasure to a studious and contemplative mind ; we seem to see the man, to converse with him, and in his familiar effusions to penetrate his thoughts.

But when the private letters of great men, men of eminence in the state, whose lives and actions fill the page of history, are preserved and brought to light, how enthusiastically do the antiquary and historian pore over their contents ; and examine with eager curiosity the style, the language, and even the hand-writing ; deducing, from all, inferences favourable to learning and history, in tracing the gleams of taste and genius, in elucidating events already imperfectly known, and in discovering others hitherto unknown.

to every  
reader ;

Will not every reader receive greater pleasure from the speeches of princes, warriors, and statesmen, in our great Shakspeare's Drama, when he has seen their hand-writing, when he has perused their letters, when he has *only not* conversed with the men themselves?

particularly  
to the anti-  
quary and  
historian.

Will not the antiquary and historian become, in their own minds, almost contemporaries with York and Canterbury, Salisbury and Warwick, Buckingham and Norfolk, Suffolk and Hastings ?

Dark period  
of history.

From the reign of king Stephen, there is no period so slightly illustrated by records, and authentic documents,

ments, as the turbulent and distracted years, which passed from the latter part of Henry VI's reign, to the accession of Henry VII. almost the only registers preserved were written in characters of blood : battles and executions alone mark out to the historian his path, from one scene of confusion to another ; and his most trusty guide is the genealogist, who, recording the years in which such or such of the great nobility were beheaded, ascertains the dates of the various revolutions.

Whatever, therefore, tends to throw a gleam of light on so clouded an horizon, must be a grateful present to those, who would investigate their country's story ; and when we have despaired of recovering any material monuments of those disastrous times, the slightest relics of so obscure a season may seem almost as precious as the better preserved remains of periods fully illustrated.

The blasted stock of a tree, a heap of stones, is a welcome land-mark to a traveller, who searches for a road amidst a level and dreary desert.

In a dearth of information, how grateful a treasure must we esteem a collection of private letters, written during the combustions occasioned by the quarrels between the two Roses !

Any confidential effusions between relations and friends, in those sad and dangerous moments, when conveyance was difficult, when families were divided into different factions, and disaffection to either tri-

umphant

umphant party was perilous, were little likely to be hazarded, and less likely to be preserved.

Civil wars  
from 1640  
to 1660.

At a more recent æra of similar complexion, though less sanguinary (from 1640 to the Restoration), how few private letters have appeared; and consequently how few have probably reached the present hour, when the taste of the public for historic anecdotes is awake, and would have invited publication?

Correspondence dangerous in times of civil dissensions.

In the heat of civil discord, familiar correspondence is undoubtedly circumspect; and when hostile parties ravage the country, the most intimate friends are cautious of trusting their sentiments to paper.

Charles himself, perhaps, added to the number of those who were determined on his destruction, by the discovery of some intentions of his trusted to a letter, which he sent to the Queen in, as he thought, the most guarded manner, but which fell into the hands of his enemies.

Civil wars  
between the  
two Roses.

From a remoter and far more barbarous age, we could little expect to attain notices of public occurrences, or details of domestic life; and when we know so little of the interior of that great theatre, to which curiosity and interest are most attentive, the court; when the councils and measures of Henry VI. or rather of his courageous queen and her favourites, of Edward IV. and of Richard III. have been so imperfectly unravelled; was it probable, that a large intercourse between respectable persons, not ill informed in that dark season, should have been treasured up;

up; and after so long an interval, be laid before the public!

Such a valuable deposit did actually exist, and is now presented to the reader in the following pages. Original Letters.

Every criterion of authenticity accompanies the original documents; no novel or suspicious anecdote will stagger credulity; no new hypothesis is to be established, or even proposed; no inveterate faith in received history is to be shaken; no eccentric genius is to appear, and call for admiration of talents, that exceeded his means of improving or displaying them. Authenticity of them.

The artless writers of these letters here communicate their private affairs, or relate the reports of the day; they tell their tale in the plain and uncouth phrase of the time; <sup>they</sup> aim not at shining by art or eloquence; and bespeak credit by total carelessness of correction and ornament.

The principal satisfaction of the reader will arise from two sources. He will hear the events of the moment from persons living at the time; and will see the manners and usages of that age, painted in the most familiar language, undisguised and unadorned. Sources of satisfaction to the reader.

The actors, as in Shakspeare's historic plays, will be, by turns, the victorious prince, the martial peers, the defeated and sacrificed ministers, or persons of inferior rank.

The meek and religious Henry, the restless Warwick, the loyal Beauforts, will attract attention, whether they become victorious or sink in defeat; Edward himself will

will now force battle upon his foes, now hasten to his coronation, now post to the North to resist new foes; and each letter, like a change of decoration, will present him in a different scene.

The politic Richard will take every bold measure to secure that crown, which, conscience tells him, totters on his head.

We shall not learn many new exploits, but we shall seem to see these princes and their peers, acting the details of their own times; and though the details are sometimes cursory and meager, it is a question whether, being thus brought under the eye, they will not interest us more than the barren and doubtful narrations, which we already possess of those reigns?

Henry VI.

Henry VI. will here appear the mild and ductile image of a king; this day, guided by the active and undaunted spirit of his queen; to-morrow, acting under the direction of the haughty and ambitious Warwick; weak in mind, and indolent in body, this prince might have been comfortable in the peaceful walk of private life; in the exalted rank of sovereignty he must at all times have been miserable; without a will, or even a wish, to act for himself, he lived a puppet, and he died a victim, to the ambition of others.

Edward IV.

Edward IV. as soon as prosperity and pleasure had satisfied and enervated his ambition, sunk into the arms of luxurious indolence; and his activity, as sovereign magistrate,



magistrate, awaked only to rapid starts of cruelty, as often as his repose was disturbed by contradiction.

The pursuit of his right to the crown excepted, there was as little justice as mercy in his proceedings; the axe intimated his displeasure, and his obdurate heart spared a brother no more than a Lancastrian; he married his wife because she would not be his mistress; and took another man's wife for his mistress, who was willing to be so.

Obliged to conquer his subjects before he could be their King, he discovered neither spirit nor policy in dealing with foreign enemies; and yet, perhaps, there was more sense in his conduct than in that of most other heroes: Edward acquired because he wished to enjoy; had he succeeded peaceably to the crown, and could have enjoyed without acquiring, he perhaps would never have fought to make an acquisition.

He preferred being paid for his own tranquillity by Louis XI. to sacrificing his tranquillity, his treasure, and the blood of his people, in pursuit of glory, at the risk of his repose: he did little for fame, and fame has done as little for him; the superficial memorials of his vigour contained in the following sheets, will therefore be the more acceptable.

We gain scarcely any fresh lights respecting the reign of that ambitious <sup>prince</sup> but doubtful hero Richard III. except that in his dispute with his brother, Clarence was the aggressor.

As sovereign, his own proclamation, and the letters of his favourite Norfolk shew us, he was making every warlike preparation against his enemies, and stimulating his subjects to their loyalty by an appeal to them.

Those who think best of him, must ever condemn his cruel and illegal conduct in beheading Hastryngs, Rivers, Vaughan, and Gray, however the ferocious policy of the times may palliate some of his actions.

Had his path to the throne been strait, he might have shone in history as a good prince; for he certainly understood the duty of a king better than his predecessor.

His genius was enterprising, and his temper liberal; if his conduct in the day of battle did not point him out as a consummate general, it exhibited him as a courageous soldier; for when he found all was lost, he fought his competitor, and braved death by acts of heroism.

General  
remark.

The sufferings of warriors, the distresses of private life, occasioned by so tempestuous a season, and the concise rapidity of the narratives, will present a truer picture of that turbulent period than could be exhibited by the artful pencil of a sedate historian.

Reflections  
on our own  
blessings.

May we, who live in a time of national tranquillity, under a form of government defined and limited, with a prince upon the throne, whose public and private virtues claim every mark of our loyalty and respect, be truly sensible of our own happiness!

May the present blessings, which we experience, contrasted by the dreadful calamities portrayed in the  
distracted

distracted period of history here presented to our view, make us humbly thankful to the great Disposer of all human events, and inspire us with such a becoming moderation in the enjoyment of these blessings, that we may merit a continuance of them to ourselves, and to our posterity!

It will now be necessary to satisfy the reader of the authenticity of the letters here laid before him, by presenting him with a pedigree of their descent, and a description of each, accompanied with such observations as have arisen in the mind of the editor, from an accurate examination of every one of them.

Authenticity  
of the letters.

These letters were most of them written by, or to particular persons of the family of \* Paston, in Norfolk (who lived in the reigns of Henry VI. Edward IV. and Richard III.) were carefully preserved in that family for several descents, and were finally in the possession of the earl of Yarmouth; they then became the property of that great collector and antiquary Peter † le Neve, esquire, Norroy; from him they devolved

Pedigree of  
the letters.

\* For an account of this family the reader is referred to the Pedigree.

† Peter le Neve, esquire, a great collector and antiquary, was born 21st of January, 1661, made Rouge-croix pursuivant, 17th of January, 1689, Richmond herald 5th of April, 1704, and Norroy king of arms, the 25th of May following.

He was the first president of the Antiquary Society, on its revival in the beginning of this century, which office he resigned in 1724, and died on the 24th of September, 1729, æt. 68.

to Mr. \* Martin, by his marriage with Mrs. le Neve, and were a part of his collections purchased by Mr. † Worth, from whom in 1774, they came to the editor.

Paper.

The ‡ paper on which they are written, is of different degrees of fineness; some sheets being rough, and,

He inherited a considerable estate at Whitchingham, and other towns in the county of Norfolk, which, after his decease, and a long and expensive contest at law, was decreed by the house of lords to be the estate of John Norris, esquire, whose grandfather had purchased the reversion of a Le Neve.

\* Thomas Martin, gent. of Palgrave, in Suffolk, was born at Thetford, on the 9th of March, 1696-7, was admitted a fellow of the Antiquary Society, in 1718, and died suddenly in his chair on the 7th of March, 1771, having very nearly completed his 74th year.

He may be said to have been born an antiquary, for from his very infancy a fondness for antiquities commenced, and he became a collector of books, &c. &c. almost as soon as he could read.

In matters of antiquarian research, his indefatigable and persevering industry, assisted by a strong and retentive memory, overcame all difficulties, and, without the advantage of a learned education, he acquired a fund of knowledge, which, though he did not turn it to his own pecuniary benefit, he very willingly and with great clearness communicated to any who applied to him for information in the various branches of antiquarian investigation.

His collections were large and various, and what remained of them at his decease, were sold by his administratrix to Mr. Worth, for 630l.

† Mr. John Worth, an apothecary and chemist, at Diss, in Norfolk, purchased Mr. Martin's collections, with an intention of arranging, and then selling them to the best advantage.

He was elected a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1771, and, before he had completed the sale of his collections, died suddenly, on the 8th of December, 1774.

‡ In a stanza of the Proeme to "Bartholomeus de Proprietatibus Rerum," printed by Wynken de Worde, about 1495, wherein he recalls John Caxton to our remembrance, is the following curious memorial of our first paper-maker:

*"And John Tate the yonger, Joye mote hem broke,  
"Whiche late bathe in Englonde doo make this paper thynne.  
"That now, in our Englysh, this boke is prynted inne,"*

His.

and, what we now call, very coarse, while others are perfectly smooth, and of a much finer texture; these different sorts, however, must have been all of foreign manufacture, since the art of paper-making was not introduced into England before the reign of Henry VII.

The \* paper marks are various, and are always expressed as authenticating the age of the paper; and the reason why several of the letters have no paper mark, is the following: the portion<sup>used</sup> of a sheet of paper ~~which~~<sup>what</sup> was no more than<sup>was</sup> required to contain the writing, as the paper is always cut off from the sheet at the end of the letter; short letters therefore are often without any paper mark, and others have it cut through, so that only a part of it remains on the letter.

Paper marks.

The size of the whole sheets of paper varies from ten to twelve inches in length, as the writing runs, and from about sixteen to seventeen, or eighteen inches in depth.

Size of the paper.

The various sizes of the letters themselves, are from ten to twelve inches in length, to three, six, eight, ten, or twelve inches, or more in depth, according

Size of the letters.

His paper-mill, is likewise recorded to have been in the town of Hartford, and the mark on his paper is a star of eight points, or rays within a double circle, it is engraved on plate XIII. N<sup>o</sup> 6.

\* The paper-marks are those figures formed by wires, on the sieve at the bottom of the mould in which the paper is made, and are impressed on it in its pulpy state.

From these marks the different sorts of modern paper are named, and the time and place of its manufacture ascertained.

They are often called the water-marks.

to

to the quantity of the matter written; and each letter has its size here specified at the end of it, in inches and parts of inches.

Form, and  
fastening of  
the letters.

Most of the letters have been neatly folded up in different shapes, from three to four inches in length, and from one and an half to three inches in breadth, having, either a hole cut by a knife, and a piece of paper put through it; or threads drawn through by a needle, and brought under the seal, by which they were fastened.

Seals.

Many of the seals are so far perfect as to discover the impressions of arms, crests, letters, heads, or some other devices; all of which will be mentioned in the notes to the letters on which they appear; some of them have likewise a braid of string, or straw twisted round the impression, and fixed when the wax was warm. \* Such of the seals as remain perfect, or nearly so, are engraved on a plate by themselves, of which a description is annexed at the end of the work.

Hand-  
writing.

The hand-writing in some of the letters is, though black and thick, very true and legible; in others, the decyphering of it has been attended with much trouble and difficulty.

Ink.

The ink in general stands well, but where any dampness has reached it, is become yellow, and in some places the colour is quite gone.

\* This plate would have been referred to, in the same manner as those of the autographs and paper marks, but the engraving of the seals was not determined upon till the work was nearly printed off.

The method observed, in preparing these letters for public inspection, is the following.

Method  
pursued.

The contractions, dialects, modes of spelling and pointing, used in the original letters are exactly followed in the copy; and wherever capitals appear in the one, they are continued in the other.

Contractions,  
&c. conti-  
nued.

The thought of transcribing each letter, according to the rules of modern orthography and punctuation, arose from a hint which the editor received from an antiquary, respectable for his knowledge and publications; whose opinion was, that many would be induced to read these letters, for the sake of the various matter they contain, for their style, and for their curiosity, who, not having paid attention to ancient modes of writing and abbreviations, would be deterred from attempting such a task, by their uncouth appearance in their original garb.

Transcripts  
in modern  
orthogra-  
phy, &c.

Some readers perhaps may think, that a select number only of the original letters, printed in their antique dress, would have sufficed as specimens to have gratified the taste of the antiquary. Let such however consider, that a faithful delineation of our language, during a period of almost half a century, in an age too, famous for little besides its barbarity and civil dissensions, is a matter not only of much curiosity, but of some use; and though this method of printing the letters has been attended both with additional trouble and expence, yet it is hoped that the purchaser will not think that too high a price has been set upon these

these volumes, as the editor assures him that if he be paid by the sale for his trouble and expences attending the publication, he shall be satisfied.

In the transcribed letters, except in the spelling and pointing, as little alteration is made as was possible; the turn of expression and phraseology of the original, even where the grammar is defective, being preserved. The editor is conscious, however, that even in the transcribed letters a word will sometimes be found in the old form, arising from that familiarity with the old language, which suffered it not only to escape his pen in writing, but likewise to pass unnoticed in correcting the sheets.

It ought to be observed here, that in many places the sense of the original appeared on the first reading defective, and seemed to require an insertion of words to complete it; but, on a more attentive perusal, and the proper placing of a stop, the seeming difficulty often vanished, and, allowing for the mode of expression then in use, acquitted the writer of any ambiguity.

Obsolete  
words ex-  
plained.

The obsolete words are continued, but the sense is expressed by modern words or phrases, in Italics between parentheses.

How well the editor has succeeded in this plan, he leaves to the judgment of antiquaries to determine; he can only assure his readers, that he has endeavoured to be as correct, as glossaries, dictionaries, &c. &c. would permit him.

The



The original letters are often without either stops or breaks; this confuses the sense, and renders it obscure to many, particularly to those who are not conversant in ancient writing; in the transcribed letters these defects are endeavoured to be amended.

Stops, &amp;c.

The dates are sometimes, though seldom, fully expressed in the letters, except in some of those of particular writers, as sir John Fastolf, and sir John Paston; the day of the month only, or the saint's name, to whom the day is dedicated, being generally all the date they have.

Dates defective.

The editor has taken some trouble to supply these defects, and to fix the exact dates of the letters from calendars, from some fact mentioned, or other *data* in the letters themselves, and by these means to place the different letters in chronological order. In this, his success has in a great measure answered his own expectations, and he hopes those of his readers will not be disappointed; since they may not be aware how much time and trouble the ascertaining of the date of a single letter has sometimes cost him.

Endeavours used to ascertain them.

It is proper here to observe, that the date of the year is always supposed to commence on the 25th day of March; and that the full dates are always placed at the end of the transcribed letters; where, notwithstanding all the endeavours of the editor, some still remain uncertain as to the exact year, &c.

Year commences on the 25th of March.

If any reader of this book should be able to ascertain these, or to correct any other mistakes or inaccuracies,

racies, he will confer an obligation on the editor by communicating his remarks.

Spelling  
unsettled.

There appears to have been no general rule for spelling at this time; but it seems, as if found and the humour of the writer alone directed it.

In a letter of sir John Paston to his brother, dated 29th of September, 1471, 11 E. IV. (p. 80, vol. ii.) the word *ground* is spelt three different ways in the space of two lines: "what hyght the arche is to  
" the *gronde* off the ilde and how hye the *grounde*  
" off the qwyr is hyer then the *grownde* of y<sup>e</sup> ilde."

Neither do the spelling, the style, nor the pronunciation (if we may judge of that from the spelling) differ so much from those of the present time, as might be reasonably expected; and the spelling alone of those letters, written by persons who had been educated by the religious, or in the families of the great, would have given sufficient reason for the supposition, that the ingenious poems, published a few years ago under the name of Rowley, were spurious, if at this time any doubt remained concerning them.

Anecdotes  
before  
known.

Some of these letters may be thought to contain no anecdotes worth preserving, or only such as are already known; the latter it is acknowledged will be often the case; but then we shall become acquainted with the epistolary and familiar style of an age, of which no specimens of this kind were known to exist; and from the contents often form a better judgment of the  
character

character and abilities of the writer, than from any accounts our historians have given of him.

The editor is likewise conscious, though in many of the letters there may be some one anecdote worthy of curiosity, yet that the reader may consider the remainder as of no consequence; this may sometimes be the case with that particular reader, when others from the same letter may receive such information relative to the manners, &c. of the times, as will not only please, but satisfy them.

Different readers have different sentiments.

Others of these letters, containing no particular state anecdotes, may by many be considered as not of sufficient consequence for publication; the editor however will hope, that these very letters may have their value, as containing some traces of national manners, more characteristic of this unenlightened period than pages of historical declamation.

National manners.

Some of them are inserted as differing in style, in spelling, &c. from others of the same reign; and many of them will give us a better opinion of the mode of education then practised than we have been taught to conceive, or are willing to allow.

The editor has sometimes found great difficulty in judging what letter or part of a letter to omit, when he has thought it of no consequence, either as being historical, or as delineating any feature of the times; considering, that though it might not appear to him to convey any information, yet that it might be useful to other antiquaries in their particular investigations.

Editor's difficulty.

When any letter or any part of a letter, therefore, appears trifling, he hopes this confession will entitle him to the reader's indulgence.

Specimens  
of poetry.

The editor has likewise inserted in this collection two pieces of poetry of the times here treated of; the first is a letter in verse to Sir John Paston (Letter \* LXXVII. vol. ii. p. 234); the other contains verses by a lady to an absent nobleman, who had gained her affections. (Appendix, VII. vol. ii. p. 304.) Neither of these are given as having either matter or information of much consequence, but merely as specimens of epistolary verses; they have each however some merit, and deserve a place in a work of this kind.

Historical  
information.

Whenever the accounts in these letters agree with our history, they confirm the truth of it; where they differ, they certainly give the report of the time; and if the relator be, either from his situation or connexions, likely to have authentic intelligence, deserve our credit.

How far they shall command it, every reader is left to judge for himself.

Private  
anecdotes.

They contain many private anecdotes of persons, places, and things, then perhaps beneath the dignity of history to transmit to posterity, as common occurrences of the times; but with these, the taste, which at present prevails for every information concerning the transactions of former ages, will not be displeased.

Scenes of private life, accounts of private persons, and what the customs of the age then made familiar,  
are

are now become, by the lapse of time, matters of curiosity, and claim our attention.

The letters of the nobles are generally written by their secretaries, and signed only by the peer himself, though in several the conclusion, and a sentence or two at the end, are added by the pen of the nobleman.

Noblemen's  
letters writ-  
ten by se-  
cretaries;

The spelling and style of these letters vary still less from the modern than those of others of the same period; from which we may conclude, that these secretaries were persons of education, trained up in the families of the great, or brought up by the churchmen; many of them doubtless being churchmen themselves, or belonging to some religious society.

who were  
persons of  
education.

The hand-writing likewise of these secretaries is generally fair and good.

Perhaps some of the readers of this book may object to the omission of authorities, respecting the notes which are given to the letters.

Authorities  
respecting  
the notes  
omitted,  
and why.

The editor acknowledges the omission; but as he supposes that most of those, who will read his book, will be such as are already conversant in the History of England; the constant repetition of Hollingshed, Stowe, Speed, Rapin, &c. &c. to such, would be disgusting, especially as the notes contain chiefly matters of fact, necessary to explain the text; but, when hinted, familiar to every person who has made history his study. The same reason will acquit the editor to the genealogist, respecting births, marriages, and deaths.

But

But where at any time he has had occasion to differ, either from the historian or genealogist, he has quoted his author, &c.

Notes, &c.  
short.

The editor could easily have both multiplied and lengthened his notes, if he had supposed it would have been agreeable; but, as he wished in matters of doubt to leave the solution to the judgment of his readers rather than obtrude his own opinion, he has often been cautious of advancing it; and has therefore made his observations as concise as possible, his intention constantly being, only to remind the antiquary and historian as to the fact, person, &c. and to shew those who are not so well versed in historical reading, that such transactions have happened, and that such persons have lived, &c. by which means, if they have any curiosity for farther information, they may satisfy it by recurring to our best historians.

The notes sometimes mention the same person more than once, but, as they are generally very short, this was thought better than referring the reader from page to page, and from letter to letter.

Pafton  
Pagdiree.

The pedigree of the Pafton family will exhibit such an account of the several persons, who are either the writers, or the receivers, &c. of any of the letters here inserted, that a reference to that will always shew the connexions of the particular person, of whom any information may be required. And if the reader be desirous of receiving fuller accounts than what are here given, of such persons mentioned in the following work,

Blomefield's  
Norfolk.

work, as are descended from families which have flourished in the county of Norfolk, he is referred to "Blomefield's Essay towards a Topographical History of the county of Norfolk," in five volumes folio.

The editor hopes that the care and expence employed in having all the autographs, \* paper-marks, and seals engraved, will be more than compensated by the satisfaction the reader will receive, from viewing an exact *fac simile* of the various hand-writings of the different persons, whose correspondence forms the ensuing volumes, and from seeing not only the marks which authenticate the age of the paper on which the letters are written, but likewise the seals of the writers themselves.

Autographs,  
paper-marks,  
and seals  
engraved.

The autographs and paper-marks are to be found throughout the book, by examining the plate and number referred to in the notes, &c.

References to  
find them.

A list of the plates and numbers, referring back to the several letters, whose autographs and paper-marks are engraved, is likewise added.

List.

This list is preceded by a catalogue, wherein all the letters, with their dates, autographs, and paper-marks are chronologically arranged.

Catalogue.

On Plate VI. N<sup>o</sup> 31, the editor has given a specimen of the Arabic figures then in use; and likewise at N<sup>o</sup> 32, the points or stops which he has observed, in

Arabic  
figures.

Points.

\* The engraving and describing of the paper-marks may be a means of ascertaining the dates of many old writings, by comparing the marks on the paper with those here given.

many

many of the different letters, sometimes used, though with no great precision: the first is used as a comma; the second and third for a longer pause; and the other four, by different writers, as periods.

Editor's  
apology.

The reader is desired to keep in mind the disadvantages arising to the editor from his distance, not only from the public libraries of this kingdom, but likewise from any considerable private collection of books. His researches have been confined almost entirely to such books and MSS. as his own library has furnished him with; had he resided in a place, where access to the well furnished shelves of either public societies, or private collectors had been within his reach, he could most undoubtedly have illustrated some of the following letters more to his own satisfaction, and to that of his reader. He assures the latter, however, that no acquisitions within his power have been neglected; and he is willing to hope, that though the antiquary and historian may doubt his abilities, they may still commend that industry and application which he has used, in endeavouring to make these curious letters more worthy their inspection.

Thanks  
returned.

Having now given the reader every necessary information, it only remains for the editor to return thanks, in this public manner, for the assistance, which he has received from the honourable HORACE WALPOLE, the reverend sir JOHN \* CULLUM, bart.

\* The editor sincerely laments that these thanks now remain only as a testimony of respect, to the memory of his late learned and ingenious friend, who died on Sunday the 9th day of October, 1785. Æt. 53.

and



and EDWARD KING, esq. men who are so well known in the world of literature, that their names (whenever they are permitted to be used) will stamp a value upon any work, which they may honour with their approbation.

Should therefore these volumes, *thus honoured*, Conclusion. meet with any degree of public favour, the editor will think himself most amply repaid for the care and attention, which he has cheerfully employed in preparing them for the press.