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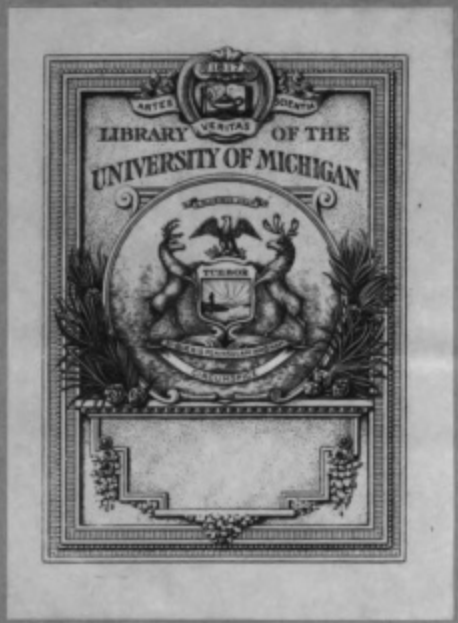

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THE

CASTLE OF OTRANTO;

A GOTHIC STORY.

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EDINBURGH:

Printed by James Ballantyne and Co.

FOR JOHN BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY, EDINBURGH; AND

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either. It would be difficult, by any process, to select a list of as many plebeian authors, containing so very few whose genius was worthy of commemoration. The "Historical Doubts" are an acute and curious example how minute antiquarian research may shake our faith in the facts most pointedly averred by general history. It is remarkable also to observe how, in defending a system which was probably at first adopted as a mere literary exercise, Mr Walpole's doubts acquired, in his eyes, the respectability of certainties, in which he could not brook controversy.

Mr Walpole's domestic occupations, as well as his studies, bore evidence of a taste for English antiquities, which was then uncommon. He loved, as a satirist has expressed it, "to gaze on Gothic toys through Gothic glass;" and the villa at Strawberry-Hill, which he chose for his abode, gradually swelled into a feudal castle, by the addition of turrets, towers, galleries, and corridores, whose

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THE

CASTLE OF OTRANTO;

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CHAP. I.

MANFRED, Prince of Otranto, had one son and one daughter; the latter, a most beautiful virgin, aged eighteen, was called Matilda. Conrad, the son, was three years younger, a homely youth, sickly, and of no promising disposition; yet he was the darling of his father, who never shewed any symptoms of affection to Matilda. Manfred had contracted a marriage for his son with the Marquis of Vicenza's daughter, Isabella; and she had already been delivered by her guardians into the hands of Manfred, that he might celebrate the wedding as soon as Conrad's infirm state of health would permit. Manfred's impatience for this ceremonial was remarked by his fa-

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title of a lawful prince; I doubt whether it even notifies its will through friars—but that is your affair, not mine. At present you know my pleasure; and it is not a saucy herald that shall save your son, if you do not return with the princess."

It was in vain for the holy man to reply. Manfred commanded him to be conducted to the postern gate, and shut out from the castle: and he ordered some of his attendants to carry Theodore to the top of the black tower, and guard him strictly; scarce permitting the father and son to exchange a hasty embrace at parting. He then withdrew to the hall, and, seating himself in princely state, ordered the herald to be admitted to his presence.

"Well! thou insolent!" said the prince, "what wouldst thou with me?" "I come," replied he, "to thee, Manfred, usurper of the principality of Otranto, from the renowned and invincible knight, the knight of the gigantic sabre: in the name of his lord, Frederic Marquis of Vicenza, he demands the lady Isabella, daughter of that prince, whom thou hast basely, and traitorously got into thy power, by bribing her false guardians during his absence; and he requires thee to resign the principality of Otranto, which thou hast usurped from the said Lord Frederic, the nearest of blood to the last rightful lord, Alfonso the good. If thou dost not instantly comply with these just

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knight made signs of ignorance, and seemed curious to have Manfred proceed. "Is it possible, sirs," continued the prince, "that my story should be a secret to you? have you heard nothing relating to me and the princess Hippolita?" They shook their heads. "No! thus then, sirs, it is. You think me ambitious: ambition, alas! is composed of more rugged materials. If I were ambitious, I should not, for so many years, have been a prey to all the hell of conscientious scruples—but I weary your patience: I will be brief. Know then, that I have long been troubled in mind on my union with the princess Hippolita. Oh! sirs, if ye were acquainted with that excellent woman! if ye knew that I adore her like a mistress, and cherish her as a friend—but man was not born for perfect happiness! she shares my scruples, and, with her consent, I have brought this matter before the church, for we are related within the forbidden degrees. I expect every hour the definitive sentence that must separate us for ever—I am sure you feel for me—I see you do—pardon these tears!" The knights gazed on each other, wondering where this would end. Manfred continued: "The death of my son betiding, while my soul was under this anxiety, I thought of nothing but resigning my dominions, and retiring for ever from the sight of mankind. My only difficulty was to fix on a successor, who would be

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