

## Preface

Among the literary novelties of our times, one not the least interesting has been those secret histories of their works which some of our great authors have prefixed to their late republications. Sir Walter Scott was induced to furnish those details of his long mysterious, and unowned compositions, to establish his appropriation of those popular writings. Others have followed his example; and no one has more deeply interested us than our patriarch of literature, Mr. Godwin, whose secret history of his mode of composing his Caleb Williams is a remarkable ~~word word word word~~ instance of that intellectual narrative, which, perhaps, might be advantageously applied to every work whose character has been sanctioned by the only infallible critic — Old and hoary Time !

I cannot, myself, consign to the press, for the ninth time these "Curiosities of Literature" in their present popular form, without being reminded of the peculiarity of their fate. It is now approaching half a century since their first volume appeared; about a year or two after the second succeeded. Twenty years elapsed before a third was produced; and six years subsequently the last three volumes were at once given to the world.

Of volumes produced at such distinct intervals, ~~word~~ it may be worth notice' that they reflect three æras of the Writer's life. In the first stage of Investigation we are eager to acquire and arrange Knowledge; in the second our Curiosity becomes more critical, and more varied; and in the third, Knowledge and Curiosity opening the virgin veins of original research, and striking out new results, in the history of human nature, we combine Philosophy with Literature.

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For a long series of years these volumes have been domestic favourites. A great personage once called them his "little library" and they stand classed in the Catalogue, among the deliciae litterariae- They have received a more distinguished approbation by the honour of being constantly referred to, by the most eminent Writers, both for their information and their Opinions.

A Writer of nearly half a century standing, may be presumed to have passed beyond that state of inebriating Egotism in which Authors, it is supposed, are apt to indulge. The Writer of half a century has outlived his Critics; and, alas!-- has survived those whom he once had an ambition to please. Praise cannot any longer extend his celebrity, and Censure cannot condemn what has won the reward of public favour. Such a Writer may venture to talk of himself as one of a former generation, and may be said, to enjoy a sort of posthumous reputation.

Bradenham, House, Bucks,  
January 1834.

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1<sup>st</sup> {Feb} 1834

Dear Sir

Since you left me I have written my Preface for the new Edition. I did not know whether ^the whole^ ~~word~~, or a part, should be added to your {?Speedmen word} but I thought it best to send it to you to dispose of as you like.-rather than let it <sleep on any longer>. I can have nothing more to say.

I shall be glad to see your Artist, & get out of the painful operation of taking off my {lead}. I have summoned all my courage, and I hope it will not desert now at the critical moment of Execution.

Yours truly

D'Israeli