



The Consummate Collector: William Beckford's Letters to His Bookseller

William Beckford

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This collection of over 350 letters written by William Beckford to his bookseller George Clarke over the years 1830 to 1834, gives a vivid picture of the insatiable connoisseur in the act of gathering the books and prints that ultimately became part of the library of the Duke of Hamilton, sold in 1882. This correspondence, with the addition of Clarke's own letters to Beckford, constitutes the most complete documentary record of Beckford's collecting habits and literary pursuits in existence. They are significant as historical documents that guide the reader into the golden age of the London book trade with its array of wealthy collectors, publishing houses, auction firms, book and print dealers. They also shed light on the negotiations with the publisher Richard Bentley for the publication of *Italy; with Sketches of Spain and Portugal* and trace the anxiety Beckford experienced in his fruitless efforts to sell the *Episodes of Vathek*. The editor's explanatory notes are comprehensive, revealing Beckford's enthusiasms and the fury of his attack against competitors in the field. *The Consummate Collector* will be warmly received by bibliophiles, historians, and readers interested in one of the most fascinating men of his time.

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