

HORACE WALPOLE'S ENGLAND

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TO many people of our day the eighteenth century makes a particular appeal. The present age is one of disillusion; the Victorian period is blamed (rightly or wrongly) as being the age of compromise, the age of insecure foundations. Some, then, turn to the day before yesterday, the period before the French Revolution, and find a state of society that with all its faults has many attractions. Mr. Trevelyan has well expressed this idea:

In the government of the country and the Empire there was much to blame as well as to praise, but no aristocracy has ever better fulfilled the functions for the performance of which aristocracy specially exists, but in which it too often fails—the intelligent patronage of art, philosophy, and literature, and the living of a many-sided and truly civilized life by means of wealth and leisure well applied. . . . It had faults, of which drunkenness and gambling were the worst, but it lived a life more completely and finely human than any, perhaps, that has been lived by a whole class since the days of the freemen of Athens.

Among contemporary pictures of eighteenth century life in England given in memoirs and diaries, no other is drawn on so large scale or stands out with so great distinctness as that given in the Letters of Horace Walpole. Sir Leslie Stephen went so far as to say

The History of England, throughout a very large segment of the eighteenth century is simply a synonym for the works of Horace Walpole. . . . His faults as well as his virtues qualified him to be the keenest of observers. . . . When you find a specially illuminating passage in a secondary authority on the history of the period, trace it to its source and the chances are you will come upon Horace Walpole.

I

The life of Horace was not eventful. Born in 1717, the youngest son of Sir Robert Walpole, he was educated at Eton and Cambridge, after which he spent two years in France and Italy. For part of this time Gray, his friend at school and college, was his companion, but the two quarrelled, and separated at Florence. In this city Horace spent three months, during which time he formed a friendship with the English Minister, Sir Horace Mann, to whom he wrote with fair regularity from the time he returned to England

till Mann's death forty years later. This correspondence was the most important of Walpole's groups of letters, and it was the publication of the first part of it that gave rise to Macaulay's prejudiced and contemptuous review.

On Walpole's return to England in 1741, he entered parliament and lived the life of a young man of fashion. Though he always professed to be indifferent to politics, yet during the twenty-five years he sat as a member of the House he took part in not a few struggles, in some cases for personal reasons, in others because of political principles. He warmly defended the cause of his father, who was persistently attacked in the year following his resignation; he zealously espoused the cause of his cousin and dearest friend, General Conway, who was deprived of his office at Court and of his command in the army for voting against the Government; he did his best to save Admiral Byng from the death to which he was so harshly condemned; in the name of Freedom he strongly opposed the persecution of Wilkes (though he disliked the man) and stood for the liberty of the press; again and again he expressed approval of the action of the Americans in the Revolution, though at that time he was no longer a member of parliament.

In 1747, when he was in his thirtieth year, he bought a small house overlooking the Thames near Twickenham, which he called, from the old name of the ground on which it stood, "Strawberry Hill", and which it was henceforth one of the main interests of his life to transform into a mimic Gothic castle and to fill with all sorts of art treasures and antiquarian curios. Nor must we forget the Printing Press, christened the *Officina Arbuteana*, which he installed there. It served as a diversion for many years, and from it issued some notable works, in particular the first edition of "Odes by Mr. Gray."

While not rich, he had, even for a man of fashion, a comfortable income arising out of the sinecures that his father had procured for him. In addition to Strawberry Hill, he kept the town house left him by Sir Robert. An occasional trip to Paris to visit his blind friend, the Marquise du Deffand, and an occasional pilgrimage through the shires to satisfy his antiquarian curiosity, make up the outward events of his life.

As we have said, the letters to Mann in Florence were the most numerous, and give us the most detailed account of his times. Walpole aimed to keep his friend posted on public affairs at home, and wrote not only what he actually saw and took part in, but also the political hearsay and the private gossip of his set from day to day. For about two years (1763-5) he wrote regularly to his cousin and

friend, the Earl of Hertford, who at that time was British ambassador at Paris. These letters contain more detailed and lively accounts of public affairs than those to Mann for the same period, and are invaluable for letting us see things clearly, even if from the point of view of a partisan. Other correspondents to whom he wrote most often were George Montagu, with whom a friendship formed at Eton lasted for many years; Gray, with whom there was a resumption of friendship some five years after their quarrel at Florence; Rev. Wm. Cole, another Eton friend through whose influence, partly at least, Walpole's attention was turned to mediaeval studies; Rev. Wm. Mason, friend and biographer of Gray; Lady Ossery, his neighbour at Strawberry Hill, to whom during his later years he wrote more frequently than to anyone else; and the Misses Berry, charming young ladies who were his neighbours and friends in his old age.

Our purpose in this essay is to use Walpole's letters as a means of obtaining glimpses of life in London during the fifty years preceding the French Revolution. We shall not devote much space to Walpole personally, or as a figure in English literature.

II

A good illustration of the way Walpole calls up the spirit of his times is found in the letters of 1745-6, which are filled with allusions to the Jacobite rising. We commonly think of the '45 as a disturbance in Scotland; a Highland army marching as far south as Derby, and finally defeated on Culloden Moor. We rarely ask what the people of England, especially of London, thought of it and felt about it during these nine months. And yet, what they thought and felt, the alternation in their moods from security, almost from indifference, to fear or panic, is as real a part of those vanished times as the Battles of Dettingen and Fontenoy, or as the excitement about South Sea shares.

For the year beginning August, 1745, we have about fifty letters, and in almost every one of them there is a passage on the rebellion, while in some it is the theme of the whole letter. Early in August, he mentions casually a proclamation "Come out for apprehending the Pretender's son." A month later, on his return to London, he writes in a mood of genuine alarm:

The confusion I have found, and the danger we are in, prevent my talking of anything else. The young Pretender, at the head of three thousand men, has got a march on General Cope, who is not eighteen hundred strong; and when the last accounts came away, was fifty miles nearer Edinburgh than Cope.

He goes on to tell of the rising clans, and ends by saying "I look upon Scotland as gone." In addition to this, "*The French have an army and transport at Dunkirk ready for invasion.*" Things certainly looked bad. During the following weeks the outlook improved. Though Edinburgh was occupied by the Stuart army, there was no movement of Jacobite supporters in England, or landing of French troops. "Spirits seem to rise in London, and the king makes little of the whole affair." Walpole writes to George Montagu about the uncomfortable results to himself if the Stuarts succeed. He will lose his present sinecures, and be forced to wander on the continent as an exile:

We old folks that came over with the Prince of Orange in eighty-eight have had notice to remove by Christmas Day... Now comes the Pretender's boy, and promises all my comfortable apartments in the Exchequer and Custom House to some forlorn Irish peer, who chooses to remove his pride and poverty out of some large old unfurnished gallery at St. Germain's. Why really, Mr. Montagu, this is not pleasant! I shall wonderfully dislike being a loyal sufferer in a thread-bare coat, and shivering in an ante-chamber at Hanover, or reduced to teach Latin and English to the young princes at Copenhagen.

It is mostly jest, but partly earnest.

In October things looked better. The good people of England have at last awakened; the nobility are raising regiments; a wonderful spirit has arisen in all the shires. Though the Highlanders have Edinburgh, they cannot take the Castle, the Governor of which obliges the magistrates of the city to supply him constantly with fresh provisions on pain of having the town set on fire with red-hot cannon balls. It is amusing to read that when supplies were stopped and the Governor again threatened to burn the city, the magistrates sent to London to beg that an order might be sent to the Governor to spare the town.

By the middle of November the outlook is darker: "the rebels are come into England." But there is no panic: "our case is far from desperate, though disagreeable." In fact, the rebels seem to be advancing into a trap. Wade at Newcastle may cut off their retreat. If they continue to march southwest to North Wales or Bristol, our two armies may join and drive them into a corner where they must all perish.

By the end of the month the news is decidedly brighter. "The rebels are coming on fast—fast to their destruction."

Several repeated accounts make them under five thousand—none above seven; they must have diminished greatly by desertion.

The country is so far from rising for them, that the towns are left desolate on their approach, and the people hide and bury their effects, even to their pewter.

The Duke of Cumberland with the veterans of Fontenoy is moving on them from the south. Wade is advancing on their rear from the north. It looks as if they will very soon be destroyed. To his friend, the English ambassador of Florence, Walpole sums up the situation in these words:

My fears have been great, for the greatness of our stake; but I now write in the greatest confidence of our getting over this ugly business. . . . There never was so melancholy a town; no kind of public place but the playhouses, and they look as if the rebels had just driven away the company. Nobody but has some fear for themselves, for their money, or for their friends in the army.

Early in December, however, news arrived that threw the town into so great consternation as to cause the day to be named Black Friday. The Duke of Cumberland, through failure of his intelligence department, lay waiting the rebels at Stone in Staffordshire, while they were marching to Derby with nothing between their army and London. But at Derby the Highland army hesitated, and the Duke of Cumberland quickly repaired his mistake and occupied the road to London. In a few days the danger was over. "We dread them no longer. They have retreated, and it is said have left all their cannon behind them and twenty wagons of sick."

After the retreat the rebellion dragged on its course during the winter months, with now a slight success, now a slight reverse. There was still fear of a French invasion, and the Duke of Cumberland was recalled from the North to take command against the possible invaders. However, "we have a vast fleet at sea on the alert, and our coasts are well guarded." The Duke of Cumberland was the people's hope. "The great dependence is upon the Duke of Cumberland; the soldiers adore him, and with reason; he has a lion's courage, vast vigilance and activity, and, I am told great military genius."

Some features of this minor war seem curiously similar to things we remember of the years 1714-18. For example, there was talk of atrocities: "At Edinburgh and thereabouts, they (the Jacobites) commit the most horrid atrocities." Then, there were mercenary patriots. Thirteen lords offered to raise regiments, and their offers were accepted; thereupon they named their own relations and dependents for the officers. Then "these regiments were put on the regular establishment, and the king is to pay them."

Some of the Scottish families had acted quite cannily over the rebellion—putting money on both horses:

Lord Fortrose, whose father was in the last rebellion, and who has himself been restored to his fortune, is in parliament and in the army: he is with the duke—his wife and his clan with the rebels. The head of the Mackintoshes is acting just the same part. The clan of the Grants, always esteemed the most Whig tribe, have literally in all the forms signed a neutrality with the rebels. The most honest instance I have heard is in the town of Forfar, where they have chosen their annual magistrates; but at the same time entered a memorandum in their town-book, that they shall not execute their office "till it is decided which king is to reign."

All this lively picture of the attitude of London toward the danger of capture and pillage is of interest, but for vividness it cannot compare with the account of the trial of the Scottish Lords. In May Walpole wrote about their capture, and in August he sent to Mann at Florence a long letter describing how they were judged by their peers:

I am this moment come from the conclusion of the greatest and most melancholy scene I ever yet saw! You will easily guess it was the trials of the rebel Lords. As it was the most interesting sight, it was the most solemn and fine. . . . It began last Monday, three parts of Westminster Hall were inclosed with galleries and hung with scarlet; and the whole ceremony was conducted with the most awful solemnity and decency, except in the one point of leaving the prisoners at the bar, amidst the idle curiosity of some crowd. . . . One hundred and thirty-nine Lords were present, and made a noble sight on their benches. . . . I had armed myself with all the resolution I could, with the thought of their crimes and of the danger past, and was assisted by the sight of the Marquis of Lothian in weepers for his son who fell at Culloden—but the first appearance of the prisoners shocked me! their behaviour melted me! Lord Kilmarnock and Lord Cromartie are both past forty, but look younger. Lord Kilmarnock is tall and slender, with an extreme fine person: his behaviour a most just mixture between dignity and submission. . . . Lord Cromartie is an indifferent figure, appeared much dejected, and rather sullen: he dropped a few tears the first day, and swooned as soon as he got back to his cell. For Lord Balmerino, he is the most natural brave old fellow I ever saw: the highest intrepidity, even to indifference. At the bar he behaved like a soldier and a man, in the intervals of form, with carelessness and humour. . . .

When the trial began, the two earls pleaded guilty; Balmerino not guilty. . . . Then the King's counsel opened, and Serjeant Skinner pronounced the most absurd speech imaginable. . . . Then some witnesses were examined, whom afterwards the old hero shook cordially by the hand. . . . High Steward asked the peers severally, whether Lord Balmerino was guilty! All said "guilty upon honour," and then adjourned, the prisoner having begged pardon for giving them so much trouble.

While the Lords were withdrawn, the Solicitor-General Murray (brother to the Pretender's minister) officiously and insolently went up to Lord Balmerino, and asked him how he could give the Lords so much trouble, when his solicitor had informed him that his plea could be of no use to him. Balmerino asked the bystanders who this person was, and being told, he said, "Oh, Mr. Murray! I am extremely glad to see you; I have been with several of your relations; the good lady, your mother, was of great use to us at Perth". Are not you charmed with this speech? As he went away, he said, "They call me Jacobite; I am no more a Jacobite than any that tried me: but if the Great Mogul had set up this standard, I should have followed it, for I could not starve."

On Wednesday they were again brought to Westminster Hall to receive sentence; and being asked what they had to say, Lord Kilmarnock, with a fine voice, read a very fine speech, confessing the extent of his crime, but offering his principles as some alleviation, having his eldest son (his second unluckily was with him) in the duke's army, *fighting for the liberties of his country at Culloden, where his unhappy father was in arms to destroy them...* Lord Cromartie spoke much shorter, and so low that he was not heard but by those who sat very near him; but they prefer his speech to the other. He mentioned his misfortune in having drawn in his eldest son, who is prisoner with him; and concluded with saying "If no part of this bitter cup must pass from me, not mine, O God, but Thy will be done!"

Some days later, to another correspondent, Walpole wrote:

Old Balmerino keeps up his spirits to the same pitch of gaiety. In the cell at Westminster he showed Lord Kilmarnock how he must lay his head; bid him not winch, lest the stroke should cut his skull or his shoulders, and advised him to bite his lips. As they were to return, he begged they might have another bottle together, as they should never meet any more till—, and then pointed to his neck. At getting into the coach, he said to the gaoler, "Take care, or you will break my shins with this damned axe."

III

Though he rarely took part in the debates of the House of Commons, he was a close observer and a keen, if somewhat biassed, reporter of what went on. Even after he resigned, he kept in close touch with its proceedings and reported them faithfully to his friend, Mann, in Florence. As all this was before the days of *Hansard*, Walpole's accounts in the letters and elsewhere are among the most valuable authorities on the political life of the age. At least it can be said that by their vivacity they breathe the breath of life into the dry bones of state papers. To outline the parliamentary struggles of Walpole's day would be beyond the scope of

the present essay. Rather we shall try by a few extracts from the letters to give glimpses of actual scenes.

Early in 1764 the papers of Wilkes had been seized. The House enquired into the matter. First there was an examination of the officers who seized the papers, then a resolution declaring the warrant illegal, and later a motion condemning warrants which do not specify names. The battle continued from Monday to Friday, and must have been one of the most bitterly contested in the history of the House of Commons. It was never officially reported, and from Walpole's animated sketches to Mann and to the Earl of Hertford we obtain our chief knowledge of its details. We quote a few extracts from letters to Lord Hertford, his cousin, now British ambassador at Paris:

You ought to be witness to the fatigue I am suffering, before you can estimate the merit I have in being writing to you at this moment. Cast up eleven hours in the House of Commons on Monday, and above seventeen hours yesterday—ay, seventeen at length—and then you may guess if I am tired! Nay, you must add seventeen hours that I may possibly be there on Friday and then calculate if I am weary. In short, yesterday was the longest day ever known in the House of Commons.

After keeping his correspondent in suspense, he says playfully:

I shall take my own time, and shall give myself what airs I please both to you, my Lord Ambassador, and to you, my Lord Secretary of State, who will, I suppose, open this letter—if you have courage enough left.

(It was a common thing in those days, both in London and in Paris, to have private letters opened by high officials).

He now comes to the opening of the battle:

We sat all Monday hearing evidence against *Mr. Wood*, that dirty wretch *Webb*, and the messengers, for their illegal proceedings against Mr. Wilkes. At midnight, Mr. Grenville offered us to adjourn or proceed. Mr. Pitt humbly begged not to eat or sleep till so great a point should be decided. On a division, in which though many said *ay* to adjourning, nobody would go out for fear of losing their seats, it was carried by 379 to 31 for proceeding—and then—half the House went away.

Yesterday we fell to again. It was one in the morning before the evidence was closed.

At one, Sir W. Meredith moved a resolution of the illegality of the warrant, and opened it well. . . Mr. Wood, who had shone the preceding day by great modesty, decency, and ingenuity, forfeited these merits a good deal by starting up and very arrogantly, and repeatedly in the night, demanding justice and a previous acquittal, and telling the House he scorned to accept being merely

excused; to which Mr. Pitt replied, that if he disdained to be *excused*, he would deserve to be *censured*. . . Grenville and the ministry would have agreed to adjourn the debate on the great question itself, but declared they would push this acquittal. . . Pitt made a short speech, excellently argumentative, and not bombast, nor tedious, nor deviating from the question. . . At a quarter after four we divided. *Our* cry was so loud that both we and the ministers thought we had carried it. It is not to be painted, the dismay of the latter—in good truth not without reason, for *we* were 197, they but 207. Your experience can tell you that a majority of but ten is a defeat.

Crestfallen, the ministers then proposed simply to discharge the complaint; but the plumes which they had dropped, Pitt soon placed in his own beaver. He broke out on liberty, and, indeed, on whatever he pleased, uninterrupted. Rigby sat feeling the vice-treasureship slipping from under him.

Then, after some striking incidents,

Lord North, who will not lose his *bellow*, though he may lose his place, endeavoured to roar up the courage of his comrades, but it would not do—the House grew tired, and we again divided at seven for adjournment; some of our people were gone, and we remained but 184, they 208; however, you will allow our affairs are mended, when we say, *but* 184. We then came away, and left the ministers to satisfy Wood, Webb, and themselves, as well as they could.

Two days later the main question was debated, and Walpole describes the final division:

You would have almost laughed to see the spectres produced on both sides; one would have thought that they had sent a search-warrant for members of parliament into every hospital. Votes were brought down in flannels and blankets, till the floor of the House looked like the pool of Bethesda.

The ministry was sustained by a majority of fourteen.

If space permitted, we might examine the letters for contemporary news of the revolt of the American colonies, and of the French Revolution, as well as for further doings of the House of Commons. As it is, we shall merely quote one ironical remark on Finding the Truth by Counting that may comfort members on the losing side in a division:

The House of Commons, who would be wisdom itself, if they could but all agree on which side of a question wisdom lies, and who are sometimes forced to divide in order to find this out, did divide twice on this affair. The first time, one hundred and eleven, of which I had the misfortune to be one, had more curiosity to hear Mr. Wilkes's story than King George's; but three hundred being of the contrary opinion, it was plain they were in the right,

especially as they had no *private* motives to guide them. Again, the individual one hundred and eleven could not see that the *North Briton* tended to foment treasonable insurrections, though we had it argumentatively demonstrated to us for seven hours together: but the moment we heard two hundred and seventy-five gentlemen counted, it grew as plain to us as a pike-staff, for a syllogism carries less conviction than a superior number, though that number does not use the least force upon earth, but only walk peaceably out of the House and into it again.

It was in this debate, when the Government proposed to put Mr. Wilkes in the pillory and even to cut off his ears, that "Poor Sir William Stanhope, who endeavoured all day by the help of a trumpet to listen to these wise debates and found it to no purpose, said: 'If they want a pair of ears they may take mine, for I am sure they are of no use to me'."

IV

But it is not chiefly on great events or on wordy battles in the House of Commons that Walpole's letters lift the curtain. Many details of daily life and custom that change from age to age,—amusements, social affairs, ways of travelling, the vogue in literature and art, the theatre, the opera—are referred to in the letters. Let us take some examples. Writing to the Earl of Hertford in 1763, he says that the main current of life in London among the upper classes follows the same course year after year:

We know as well when an event as when Easter will happen. Do but recollect these last ten years. The beginning of October, one is certain that everybody will be at Newmarket, and the Duke of Cumberland will lose, and Shaf to win, two or three thousand pounds. After that, while people are preparing to come to town for the winter, the ministry is suddenly changed, and all the world comes to learn how it happened a fortnight sooner than they intended; and fully persuaded that the new arrangement cannot last a month. The parliament opens; everybody is bribed; and the new establishment is perceived to be composed of adamant. November passes, with two or three self-murders, and a new play. Christmas arrives; everybody goes out of town; and a riot happens in one of the theatres. The parliament meets again; taxes are warmly opposed; and some citizen makes his fortune by a subscription.¹ The opposition languishes; balls and assemblies begin; some master and miss begin to get together, are talked of, and give occasion to forty more matches being invented; an unexpected debate starts up at the end of the session, that makes more noise than anything that was designed to make a noise, and subsides again in a new peerage or two. Ranelagh opens, and Vauxhall; one produces scandal, and t'other a drunken quarrel.

1. Forming a company to shares in which the public subscribe.

People separate, some to Tunbridge, and some to all the horse races in England; and so the year comes again to October.

Gambling was much in fashion, and men played for high stakes. Walpole notes that "Lord Pigot lost £400 the other night at Prince Amelia's." At his cousin's (Lady Hertford's), he sat down to play and "lost 56 Guineas before I could say an Ave Marie." And again he writes: "Gaming for the last month has exceeded its outdoings: one is tired of asking every day who has won and lost, and even the portentous sums they lose cease to make impression." He tells an amazing story, how one young blood bet £1,500 that a man could live twelve hours under water; "hired a desperate fellow, sunk him in a ship, by way of experiment, and both ship and man have not appeared since." Even when people were out hunting, we are told, sometimes a dice and box were carried, as is shown by this piece of news about Lord Sandwich:

He goes once or twice a week to hunt with the duke (Cumberland); and as the latter has taken a turn of gaming, Sandwich, to make his court—and fortune—carries a box and dice in his pocket; and so they throw a main, whenever the hounds are at fault, "upon every green hill, and under every green tree."

It was not uncommon to hear of great fortunes lost at play followed sometimes by suicide, and sometimes (as in the case of Charles Fox) by the father paying up:

The great event is the catastrophe of Sir John Bland, who has *flirted* away his whole fortune at hazard. He t'other night exceeded what was lost by the late Duke of Bedford, having at one period of the night (though he recovered the greatest part of it) lost two-and-thirty thousand pounds.

What games did they play? Dice of course, and certain card games. In 1742 whist, then called whisk, seems to have taken hold of the town:

De reste, the town is wondrous dull; operas unfrequented, plays not in fashion, amours as old as marriages—in short, nothing but whisk! I have not yet learned to play, but I find that I wait in vain for its being left off . . .

and a little later:

Whisk has spread an universal opium over the whole nation; it makes courtiers and patriots sit down to the same pack of cards.

Some years after, loo was the game in fashion. In June, 1759, he writes:

Loo is mounted to its zenith; the parties last till one and two in the morning. We played at Lady Hertford's last week. . . . till deep into Sunday morning, after she and her lord were retired.

Eighteen months later he finds the game losing its popularity:

If you are acquainted with my Lady Barrimore, pray tell her that in less than two hours t'other night the Duke of Cumberland lost 450 pounds at loo; Miss Pelham won three hundred, and I the rest. However, in general, loo is extremely gone to decay.

What was a big ball like in London two hundred years ago? Did it differ in much except dress from the ball of to-day? The son of Sir Robert Walpole had the entrée everywhere; in his young manhood he went about a good deal, and occasionally in his letters he gives us glimpses of the gay crowds:

You shall not hear a word but of balls and public places: this one week has seen Sir T. Robinson's ball, my Lord Mayor's, the birthday, and the Opéra. There were an hundred and ninety-seven persons at Sir Thomas's, and yet was it so well conducted that nobody felt a crowd. He had taken off all his doors, and so separated the old and the young that neither were inconvenienced with the other. The ball began at eight; each man danced one minuet with his partner, and then began country dances. There were four-and-twenty couple, divided into twelve and twelve; each set danced two dances, and then retired into another room, while the other set took their two; and so alternately. Except Lady Ancram, no married woman danced; so, you see, in England, we do not foot it till five-and-fifty. . . . The supper was served at twelve; a large table of hot for the lady dancers; their partners at other tables stood round. We danced till four, then had tea and coffee, and came home.

Probably eccentricities were more pronounced then than now. For example:

The Duchess of Queensberry gave a ball, opened it herself with a minuet, and danced two country dances: as she *had enjoined everybody to be with her by six, to sup at twelve, and go away directly*. . . . Lady Rockingham and Lady Sondes, who, having had colds, deferred sending answers, received notice that their places were filled up, and that they must not come; but were pardoned on submission. The gallery where they danced was very cold. Lord Lorne, George Selwyn, and I retired into a little room, and sat comfortably by the fire. The duchess looked in, said nothing, and sent a smith to take the hinges of the door off. We understood the hint, and left the room, and so did the smith with the door.

A favourite type of ball, then as now on occasion given, was a masquerade, and several times Horace writes to his friend Mann at Florence about ones he attended:

There were five hundred persons, in the greatest variety of handsome and rich dresses I ever saw, and all the jewels of London—and London has some! There were dozens of ugly Queens of Scots, of which I will only name to you the eldest Miss Shadwell! . . . There were quantities of pretty Vandykes, and all kinds of old pictures walked out of their frames. It was an assemblage of all ages and nations, and would have looked like the Day of Judgment, if tradition did not persuade us that we are all to meet naked, and if something else did not tell us that we shall not meet then with quite so much indifference, nor thinking quite so much of *the becoming*.

Another kind of entertainment for high society was spending an evening at Ranelagh or Vauxhall Gardens. These were fashionable places of resort, brilliantly lighted, with music for promenaders, and many booths for refreshments,—a sort of “glorified concert hall and restaurant,” as someone has called them. Horace gives an account of a jolly evening at Vauxhall. Lady Charlotte Peshal had invited a large party, and when Horace called, the hostess and her friend had “just finished their last layer of red, and looked as handsome as crimson could make them.” They went down to the river (which was still the principal thoroughfare in London) and embarked on a barge. For some time they paraded up and down the river with a small orchestra (boat of French horns) in attendance. At last they landed, entered the gardens, assembled in a booth, and Lady Caroline took charge of the preparations for supper:

We minced seven chickens into a china dish, which Lady Caroline stewed over a lamp with three pats of butter and a flagon of water, stirring, and rattling, and laughing, and we every minute expecting to have the dish fly about our ears. She had brought Betty, the fruit-girl, with hampers of strawberries and cherries from Roger's, and made her wait upon us, and then made her sup by us at a little table. The conversation was no less lively than the whole transaction. . . . In short, the whole air of our party was sufficient, as you will easily imagine, to take up the whole attention of the garden; so much so, that from eleven o'clock till half an hour after one we had the whole course round our booth. . . . It was three o'clock before we got home.

After his return from his European travels, Horace when in town frequented the opera and the theatre, and in his letters, especially those to Mann at Florence, tells what he saw and heard as well as repeats the gossip of the town about singers, plays and actors. He certainly was no judge of music, and his opinions of actors and plays are to be taken only with several grains of salt. Nevertheless, he gives us the general opinion of his circle on the

music and drama of those days, though sometimes his own view was perversely individual. For example, in his bias against Garrick's acting he certainly was not taking the popular side.

In the middle eighteenth century English music had declined from the high estate of the Elizabethan madrigal writers, the noble work of Purcell was dropping into temporary obscurity, and the fame of Handel had not yet been established. The Italian opera with imported singers was the chief form of music in London. Horace often refers to the opera, but rarely to the music. "The opera is to be on the French system of dancers, scenes, and dresses." And again:

We have a new opera by Pescetti, but a very bad one; however, all the town runs after it, for it ends with a charming dance. They have flung open the stage to a great length, and made a perfect view of Venice, with the Rialto, and number of gondolas that row about full of masks, who land and dance. You would like it.

Sometimes the public objected to the whole affair:

They talk of a mob to silence the operas, as they did the French players; but it will be more difficult, for here half the young noblemen in town are engaged, and they will not be so easily persuaded to humour the taste of the *mobility*: in short, they have already retained several eminent lawyers (bruisers) from the Bear Garden to plead their defence.

Something of the same spirit of opposition to foreign artists is shown in a remark on another occasion. A charming French singer had been engaged, and "The Opera begins to fill surprisingly; for all those who don't love music love noise and party, and will any night give half a guinea for the liberty of hissing—such is English harmony!" Handel's *Messiah* he did not appreciate, at least he treats it flippantly when writing to Mann:

Handel has set up an Oratorio against the operas, and succeeds. He has hired all the goddesses from farces and the singers of *Roast Beef* from between the acts at both theatres, with a man with one note in his voice, and a girl without ever an one; and so they sing, and make brave hallelujahs.

Though Walpole had no ear for music, in fact could hardly distinguish one tune from another, he had a high regard for the art. In a letter to Lady Ossory he gives his opinion:

Had I children, my utmost endeavours should be to breed them musicians. Considering I have no ear, nor ever thought of music, the preference seems odd; and yet it is embraced on frequent reflection. In short, Madam, as my aim would be to make them

happy, I think it the most probable method. It is a resource will last their lives, unless they grow deaf: it depends on themselves, not on others; always amuses and soothes, if not consoles; and of all fashionable pleasures is the cheapest. It is capable of fame without the danger of criticism; is susceptible of enthusiasm, without being priest-ridden; and, unlike other mortal passions, is sure of being gratified even in heaven.

"Fame without the danger of criticism" seems to us one of the strangest ideas of these rather formal sentences.

Medical science of the eighteenth century seems terribly antiquated. Bleeding was the most common remedy, and of course often aided the disease by weakening the patient. Quacks abounded, and apparently plied their trade in open competition with regular physicians, though from the point of view of science today it might be hard to say which was more helpful—or harmful. Thomas Winnington was a gifted man, Paymaster of the Forces, not quite fifty, temperate and regular in habit, and apparently strong in constitution. He had an attack of inflammatory rheumatism, and by the advice of his sister called in one "Thompson, a quack." His treatment consisted in purging, bleeding, starving and checking all perspiration. This soon brought the patient to death's door, and another physician was called. It proved too late. Walpole, much moved at the loss of his friend, declares "Madly or wickedly they have murdered a man."

Gout was one of the most common and most fashionable of diseases, and Horace was not exempt from it. As he was a temperate and abstemious man, it is possible that the sins of his free-living, hard-drinking father were visited on the son. In accordance with an idea of his times, he looked upon gout as a sort of safety valve that perhaps prevented more serious disorders. Writing to George Montague, he says:

As to your gout, so far from pitying you, 'tis the best thing that can happen to you. All the claret and port are very kind to you, when they prefer the shape of lameness to that of apoplexies, or dropsies, or fevers, or pleurisies.

Smallpox at times was rampant. In 1746 he writes: "The smallpox has been making great havoc in London. Lord Rockingham is dead of it, and the title extinct. My Lady Conway has had it, but escaped." In "Short Notes of My Life" Horace remarks "I was inoculated for smallpox in 1724" (age 5); and his entry standing by itself indicates that he regarded the item as important.

Colds and influenza were common then as now, but the treatment was often heroic. Two years after George III came to the throne he fell ill, and Walpole writes of the case:

The king had one of the last of these strange and universally epidemic colds, which, however, have seldom been fatal: he had a violent cough, and oppression on his breast, just as I had; but my life was of no consequence, and having no physicians-in-ordinary, I was cured in four nights by James's powders, without bleeding. The king was blooded seven times, and had three blisters. Thank God he is safe.

In letters of the summer of 1759 Walpole refers to what sounds like diphtheria. "Take care of yourself; there are wicked sore throats in vogue." The cause he gives is curious:

The heat of the weather has produced a contagious sore-throat in London. Mr. Yorke, the Solicitor-General, has lost his wife, his daughter, and a servant. The young Lady Essex died of it in two days. Two servants are dead in Newcastle House, and the duke has left it; anybody else would be pitied, but his terrors are sure of being a joke.

Walpole rarely loses an opportunity to ridicule the Duke of Newcastle.

Although the practice of duelling gradually declined after George III came to the throne, accounts of affairs of honour appear from time to time in the letters. A famous encounter that made a rare bit of news (1779) was that of Fox with an obscure Scottish member, who, angered at a newspaper report of Fox's sarcastic reply to one of his foolish speeches, demanded that he print a letter of retraction. Fox refused, and the Scot sent a challenge. They met with pistols, and each fired twice. Fox was slightly wounded in the side. Walpole, who was much incensed about the affair, speaks of Fox's firmness and temper, and calls his opponent a bloodhound. Not a few statesmen of that and the following age fought duels: Pitt, Castlereagh, Canning, and even the Duke of Wellington as late as 1829. Here is an odd account which illustrates the coolness displayed at times in these encounters:

Braddock once had a duel with Colonel Gumley, Lady Bath's brother, who had been his great friend: as they were going to engage, Gumley, who had good-humour and wit (Braddock had the latter), said "Braddock, you are a poor dog! Here, take my purse; if you kill me you will be forced to run away, and then you will not have a shilling to support you." Braddock refused the purse, insisted on the duel, was disarmed, and would not even ask his life.

Similar coolness was shown by "Old Horace," the writer's uncle, and the story is told with considerable amusement and perhaps a little pride in the old man. Will Chetwynd and "Old Horace", standing behind the Speaker's chair, got into an altercation about

the question then being debated. Perhaps "Old Horace" seized his opponent by the nose; at least, Chetwynd took him by the arm and led him out:

In the lobby Horace said, "We shall be observed, we had better put it off till to-morrow." "No, no, now! now!" When they came to the bottom of the stairs, Horace said, "I am out of breath; let us draw here." They drew; Chetwynd hit him on the breast, but was not near enough to pierce his coat. Horace made a pass, which the other put by with his hand, but it glanced along his side—a clerk, who had observed them go out together so arm-in-armly, could not believe it amicable, but followed them, and came up just in time enough to beat down their swords, as Horace had driven him against a post, and would probably have run him through at the next thrust. Chetwynd went away to a surgeon's, and kept his bed the next day; he has not reappeared yet, but is in no danger. My uncle returned to the House, and was so little moved as to speak immediately upon the Cambric Bill.

About the middle of the century there was a great deal of highway robbery. In January, 1850, Walpole writes: "You will hear little news from England but of robberies; numbers of disbanded soldiers and sailors have all taken to the road, or rather to the street: people are almost afraid of stirring after it is dark." Only two months before, Horace himself had a very narrow escape, of which he tells in "Short Notes of My Life":

One night in the beginning of November, 1749, as I was returning from Holland House by moonlight, about ten at night, I was attacked by two highwaymen in Hyde Park, and the pistol of one of them going off accidentally razed the skin under my eye, left some marks of shot on my face, and stunned me. The ball went through the top of the chariot, and if I had sat an inch nearer to the left side, must have gone through my head.

A few months later the leader, McLean, was caught and hanged. Many years after this, Walpole tells how he was robbed again in a quite genteel fashion:

Lady Browne and I were, as usual, going to the Duchess of Montrose at seven o'clock. The evening was very dark. In the close lane under her park-pale, and within twenty yards of the gate, a black figure on horseback pushed up between the chaise and the hedge on my side. I suspected it was a highwayman, and so I found did Lady Browne, for she was speaking and stopped. To divert her fears, I was just going to say, "Is not that the apothecary going to the duchess?" when I heard a voice cry, "Stop!" and the figure came back to the chaise. I had the presence of mind, before I let down the glass, to take out my watch and stuff it within my waistcoat under my arm. He said, "Your purses and watches!" I replied, "I have no watch." "Then your

purse!" I gave it to him; it had nine guineas. It was so dark that I could not see his hand, but felt him take it. He then asked for Lady Browne's purse, and said, "Don't be frightened; I will not hurt you." I said, "No; you won't frighten the lady?" He replied, "No; I give you my word I will do you no hurt." Lady Browne gave him her purse, and was going to add her watch, but he said, "I am much obliged to you! I wish you good night", pulled off his hat, and rode away.

V

"But," you may ask, "what about the culture, the interest in art and literature that according to Mr. Trevelyan characterized the higher classes of the eighteenth century?" It is, indeed, time to come to that. In Walpole's letters we find expression of an interest in Nature and in Art that was more or less shared by his friends and the class in which he moved. The pleasure of looking on a fine landscape, the fascination of gardens, the charm of paintings, the interest in architecture, the constant influence of literature with its background of the classics (at least the Latin classics) are all reflected in the letters of Walpole, and do, in fact, reveal not merely the personal tastes of one man, but a culture more or less common to English aristocracy in the eighteenth century.

His lively interest in links with the past, such as statues, pictures, and manuscripts, and his love of landscape and architecture led Walpole to make several sightseeing tours in rural England, of which he gives a lively account in letters to his friend, Richard Bentley. One extract will show both the real pleasure he took in a beautiful scene, and also some artificial features of the landscape gardening of those days. He was travelling in Worcestershire, and paid a short visit to his friend, Sir George Lyttelton. The house he found "immeasurably bad and old", but he was delighted with the grounds:

You might draw, but I can't describe, the enchanting scenes of the park: it is a hill of three miles, but broke into all manner of beauty; such lawns, such wood, rills, cascades, and a thickness of verdure quite to the summit of the hill, and commanding such a vale of towns, and meadows, and woods extending quite to the Black Mountain in Wales, that I quite forgot my favourite Thames! . . . There is extreme taste in the park: the seats are not the best, but there is not one absurdity. There is a ruined castle, built by Miller, that would get him his freedom even of Strawberry: it has the true rust of the Barons' Wars. Then there is a scene of a small lake, with cascades falling down such a Parnassus! with a circular temple on the distant eminence; and there is such

a fairy dale, with more cascades gushing out of rocks! and there is a hermitage, so exactly like those in Sadeler's prints, on the brow of a shady mountain, stealing peeps into the glorious world below! and there is such a pretty well under a wood, like the Samaritan woman's in a picture of Nicolo Poussin! and there is such a wood without the park, enjoying such a prospect, and there is such a mountain on t'other side of the park commanding all prospects, that I wore out my eyes with gazing, my feet with climbing, and my tongue and my vocabulary with commending.

The regular formal gardens of the times of Charles II and William and Mary had given way to something rather formless and irregular, under the plea of being more in accord with nature and more romantic. This led to some absurdities, as in the case of the garden which he saw in Paris in 1771. "There are two mountains each twelve feet high in the shape of a tansy pudding. Between these runs a river four feet wide in a stone channel, and a little further on is a well and pump which furnishes the river,—there is a slip of grass, a slip of corn, one of oats, and one of weeds, very rural,—there is a little Mountain Olympus with a miniature temple on it. And they call this amiable little absurdity an English garden."

Architecture suggests at once Walpole's own house, Strawberry Hill, with its toy-box arches and towers, its imitative Gothic. He was always altering or adding to it, for building was one of his hobbies, as it was of many another gentleman of these times. His love of Gothic above every other kind of architecture probably was connected with his fondness for things mediaeval; and in this connection it may be noted that the influence exerted by the precept and practice of Horace Walpole was one of the causes of the widespread revival of Gothic in Early Victorian times. While his judgment in building might not be approved to-day, at least he was keenly interested in the subject, and had some principles about it. His opinion was valued and his advice sought. Writing to Bentley about a friend's house, he says:

The house is a pompous front screening an old house... and is not ugly: the one pair of stairs is entirely engrossed by a gallery of 180 feet... the hall is pretty but low; the drawing-room handsome; there wants a good eating room and staircase: but I have formed a design for both, and I believe they will be executed... I shall bring you a ground plot for a Gothic building, which I proposed that you should draw for a little wood, but in the manner of an ancient market-cross.

Many critical remarks on large buildings do show that Walpole was keenly alive to some sort of propriety and beauty in the stately homes of England, and in this he represented a spirit that was stirring through the land.

From his boyhood Horace was interested in painting, and his sojourn in Italy added much to his knowledge and taught him discrimination. At his father's home, Houghton Hall in Norfolk, there was a fairly large and valuable collection of paintings¹, of which shortly after he returned from Italy Horace wrote a description, with critical notes and an introduction on the Art of Painting. If we think that some of the judgments are eccentric, are we certain that our own judgments of modern art will be more highly regarded two hundred years hence? That this love of art was not merely a youthful passion is shown by his publication years later of four volumes of *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, which have proved "a veritable mine of picturesque and useful information."

It would be very misleading to say that Horace, who was a good judge of pictures, was merely typical of his age; both in knowledge and in independence of judgment he was far in advance of the great mass of his associates. One would not find in many letters of the time remarks like this about the portrait painters of his day:

Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Ramsay can scarce be rivals; their manners are so different. The former is bold, and has a kind of tempestuous colouring, yet with dignity and grace; the latter is all delicacy. Mr. Reynolds seldom succeeds in women; Mr. Ramsay is formed to paint them.

But it is true that it was an age when art was appreciated and fairly well rewarded. It was the age when valuable collections were built up in the homes of the nobility and of the wealthy commoners. Indeed, Horace finds fault with "our glaring extravagance" in the constant high price given for pictures. "There never was such a season", he says in 1758. "I want to paint my coat and sell it off my back." One more example of his connection with art may be given. Writing to Mann in 1775, he says:

I dined to-day at the Exhibition of Pictures, with the Royal Academicians. We do not beat Titian or Guido yet. Zoffani has sent over a wretched Holy Family, . . . He is the Hogarth of Dutch painting, but, no more than Hogarth, can shine out of his own way. He might have drawn the Holy Family well if he had seen them *in statu quo*. Sir Joshua Reynolds is a great painter, but, unfortunately, his colours seldom stand longer than crayons. We have a Swede, one Louthembourg, who would paint landscape and cattle excellently if he did not in every picture indulge some one colour inordinately. Horse, dogs, and animals we paint admirably, and a few landscapes well. The prices of all are outrageous, and the number of professors still greater.

1. It was sold by the third Lord Orford to Catherine II of Russia for over £40,000.

Like many men of his time and station, Walpole was interested in literature; and not only interested, but he had (and has) some reputation as a critic and as an author. Of his writings apart from his letters—his *Castle of Otranto*, his *Memoirs of the Reigns of George II and George III*—we shall not speak, but instead shall consider briefly his opinions of his contemporaries. They illustrate how uncertain contemporary estimates of literature often are.

As to the background,—gentlemen had read at school and college some of the Latin and Greek classics. Voltaire was by all odds the greatest literary figure in Europe. In England Pope was the great recent name in poetry, Addison in prose, Congreve in comedy. The outstanding names of 1750-1775 were Gray, Collins, Johnson, Goldsmith, and Gibbon.

New books, then as now, were a common topic in conversation and letters, but there was not then the flood of reviews, judicial, prejudiced, or colourless, that now form public opinion. Yet there was in the eighteenth century a source of opinion, as Sir Leslie Stephen has pointed out,—the coffee houses. The judgment on new works passed by the wits at the coffee houses made or marred their reputation for all but a few. And Horace Walpole was one of the few. He had prejudices, and he made mistakes, but he formed his opinions for himself.

Gray's poetry Walpole always admired, yet with discrimination. The first three stanzas of *The Bard* he thinks "equal to anything in any language I understand". But he finds obscurities—and "the last stanza has no beauties for me." However, the opinion he gave when he learned that Gray had left little work behind him is one that stands to-day. "What he published during his life will establish his fame as long as our language lasts, and there is a man of genius left."

Goldsmith he failed to appreciate. Perhaps it was because he knew the man, for no doubt Goldsmith's conversation did not indicate his genius. "Wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll" said Garrick. "Goldsmith is a fool", Horace said, "the more wearing for having some sense", and again "The poor soul had sometimes parts, but never common sense." He appears to have missed the *Vicar of Wakefield*, the *Traveller*, and the *Deserted Village*. And he gave a very curious verdict on *She Stoops to Conquer*:

What play makes you laugh very much, and yet is a very wretched comedy? Dr. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. Stoops indeed!—so she does, that is the Muse; she is dragged up to the knees. The whole view of the piece is low humour, and no humour is in it. All the merit is in the situations, which are comic; the heroine has no more modesty than Lady Bridget.

But it is really amusing to find Walpole complaining to Rev. Wm Mason that "The drift of *She Stoops to Conquer* tends to no moral, no edification of any kind."

The first volume of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* delighted him hugely. "A truly classic work," he calls it. He knows Mr. Gibbon a little, but intends to know him a great deal more. He was, however, somewhat wide of the mark when he called him "perfectly modest". But when the second volume came out, and Walpole speaking to Gibbon mingled criticism with praise—rather foolish criticism I fear—the friendship came to an end. "I well knew his vanity," Horace now said.

To Dr. Johnson he was naturally antipathetic. Walpole the polished, fastidious, aristocratic Whig; Dr. Johnson, the crude, forthright, sometimes brutally frank, common-sense Tory, hater of cant and shams, not for five minutes could they have got along together. Of the *Tour to the Western Isles*, Walpole says: "What a heap of words to express very little; and though it is the least cumbrous of any style he ever used, how far from easy and natural!" Of the *Rambler* essays he says they deal in "triple tautology", or the fault of repeating the same thing in three different phrases. Accordingly, he thinks it would be possible to make one of the essays into three that should all have exactly the same purport and meaning, but in different phrases. Now there is considerable truth in these opinions, and the pity is that while he recognized the faults he failed to see the virtues of the old Doctor.

Of Burke his opinion was very much that of the best judges of to-day. This is what he says of the *Reflections on the French Revolution*:

His pamphlet came out this day sennight, and is far superior to what was expected, even by his warmest admirers. I have read it twice; and though of three hundred and fifty pages, I wish I could repeat every page by heart. It is sublime, profound and gay. The wit and satire are equally brilliant; and the whole is wise, though in some points he goes too far.

Another remark on this book is worth quoting for its own interest. Every reader is familiar with Burke's beautiful passage beginning "It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles." Apropos of it, Horace writes:

I know the tirade on the Queen of France is condemned, and yet I must avow I admire it much. It paints her exactly as she appeared to me the first time I saw her when dauphiness. She was going after the late king to chapel, and shot through

the room like an aerial being, all brightness and grace, and without seeming to touch earth—*vera incessu patuit dea!*

Such in outline is the picture Horace Walpole presents of upper class England in the mid-eighteenth century; for the fascinating details one has to go again and again to the nineteen volumes of the Toynbee edition of the letters. At the same time, it must be remembered that a period is like a landscape; it alters with every change of point of view. Eighteenth century England looked much the same to Gray as to Walpole, but quite different to Fielding or to Hogarth, and different again to that quiet parson in Norfolk whose diaries have lately been given to the world—Rev. James Woodforde.

Before closing, we may say a word about Walpole the man, and about his skill in the epistolary art. Imagine you are just introduced. You see a tall, slim, rather frail-looking man with a high forehead, dark brilliant eyes, and unusually pale complexion. The expression as he speaks is alert, amused, with a cynical but not unkindly humour. If you fell into conversation with him, he would tell you innumerable anecdotes of high society, in both England and France. His hobbies would soon be apparent; his delight in his miniature Gothic house, Strawberry Hill, his interest in painting and statuary, his keenness and success in collecting, his pride in his private printing-press and its publications. An avowed dilettante, he refused to take the world seriously. As his own epigram often quoted goes, "Life is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel," and he preferred the comedy. Sometimes he was stung to indignation, as when the name of his father was assailed, or when London in a panic was killing all stray dogs. "Murder of the innocents," Horace calls it: "The dear good-natured, honest, sensible creatures! How can anybody hurt them?"

While he loved his mother, and revered his father, he did not get on well with his brothers, and was very hard on his old Uncle Horace. Yet when his nephew, the Earl of Orford, was ill and not capable of managing his affairs, Walpole exerted himself to a remarkable degree to salvage what he could from the wreck of the foolish young man's fortunes. He did indeed quarrel with many of his friends, but with others his friendship was remarkably constant. When his cousin, Hugh Conway, was dismissed from his regiment as well as from his offices at Court because he had voted against the Government, Walpole in a letter, the sincerity of which no unbiassed reader can mistake, offered to share his fortune with him:

In the meantime, let me beg you, in the most earnest and most sincere of all professions, to suffer me to make your loss as light as it is in my power to make it: I have six thousand pounds in the funds; accept all, or what part you want. Do not imagine I will be put off with a refusal. The retrenchment of my expenses, which I shall from this hour commence, will convince you that I mean to replace your fortune as far as I can. You have ever been the dearest person to me in the world. You have shown that you deserve to be so. Can I hesitate a moment to show that there is at least one man who knows how to value you?

Then again, we find him writing to his deputy sending money for charity—some for the inmates of Fleet Prison, but adding "Don't mention me."

Many curious statements have been made about Walpole's personality, of which perhaps the most curious is Macaulay's. It is impossible, he says, to get at the true man, he is so wrapped about with mask upon mask. You take off the outer mask of affectation, and are still as far as ever from the reality. Now this is notoriously unfair, and is simply not true. It displays not only a lack of judgment, but a lack of knowledge. Walpole, it is true, did not wear his heart on his sleeve, but it is by no means difficult to understand him if one will take the trouble. It is not surprising that the serious downright Macaulay, brought up in an atmosphere of moral reform, should have felt an antipathy to the elegant trifler who often, though not always, preferred to hide his real convictions and feelings, and looked with an air of tolerant cynicism on the profligacy of the society with which he mingled. Both were Whigs, but perhaps Macaulay, who was in the Holland House set, could not forgive Walpole for following Burke instead of Fox in his attitude toward the French Revolution.

As to Walpole's place among letter writers, everyone capable of forming an opinion concedes it to be high. Tastes differ, but I for one, having in mind Cowper, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Jane Carlyle, Fitzgerald of Omar Khayyám fame, and Stevenson, should say that the leading letter writer in English, one not far below Madame de Sévigné, is Horace Walpole.