

Choice 1

The Manuscript of "Short Notes of the Life of Horatio Walpole"

The full title Walpole gave this 7000-word manuscript is, "Short Notes of the Life of Horatio Walpole youngest son of Sir Robert Walpole Earl of Orford and of Catherine Shorter, his first wife." He probably began writing it about 1746 and continued, off and on, until 1779. It begins: "I was born in Arlington Street near St James's London Sept. 24, 1717, O.S. My godfathers were Charles Fitzroy Duke of Grafton, and my Uncle Horatio Walpole; my godmother, my Aunt, Dorothy Lady Viscountess Townshend. I was inoculated for the smallpox in 1724," an event reported in the *London Journal* of 10 October 1724, because it meant that the Prime Minister was endorsing the new practice.

"Short Notes" was among the Walpole manuscripts sold by the sixth Earl Waldegrave's executor in 1843 to the publisher, Richard Bentley (1794-1871). Most of it was printed rather apologetically for the first time in Bentley's edition of Walpole's letters to Horace Mann, 1844. The unknown editor deleted passages that give Walpole's income, when he began and ended each year of his memoirs, a row with his Uncle Horace over money, how he got Lord Waldegrave to marry his niece Maria Walpole, and how he took care of his nephew Lord Orford during his fits of insanity. The full text was printed first in the Yale Walpole with 361 footnotes, some of them quite long. "Short Notes" is the most important Walpole manuscript I know of.

The story of how I got it begins with the start of the Yale Walpole in July 1933, when my wife and I went to Paris to learn from Seymour de Ricci how to find all the letters to and from Walpole in existence. De Ricci was the King of Provenance with 30,000 sale catalogues in his flat and a fabulous memory for owners, dealers, and auctions. My first question was, Where are William Cole's letters to Walpole? because we had started with Walpole's letters to him. De Ricci answered promptly that

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St James's London Sept. 24. 1717. O.S. My
godfathers were Charles Fitzroy Duke of
Grafton, & my Uncle Horatio Walpole;
my godmother, my Aunt Dorothy Lady
Townshend.

In 1725 I went to Brexley in Kent with
my Cousins the four younger sons of
Lord Townshend & with a Tutor, Edward
Weston, one of the sons of Stephen Bishop
of Exeter, & continued there some months.
The next ^{summer} year I had the same education
at Twickenham, Middlesex; & the
intervening winters I went every day
to study under Mr Weston at St Townshend's.
April 26. 1727. I went to Eton School,
where Mr Henry Bland, (since Prebendary
of Durham) & best son of Dr Henry Bland,
Master of the School, & since Provost of Eton
& Dean of Durham, was my Tutor.

Livingston
v. next page.

I left Eton school Sept. 23. 1734: and
March 11. 1735 went to King's College
Cambridge. My public Tutor was Mr John
Smith; my private Mr Anstey. afterwards
Mr John Whaley was my Tutor. I went to
lectures in civil law to Dr Dickins of
Trinity hall. to mathematical lectures to
blind Professor Saunderson, for a short time:
afterwards Mr Bravign read lectures to me
in mathematics & philosophy. I heard Dr
Balthus anatomical lectures. I had learned
French at Eton; I learned Italian at Cambridge
of Signor Piazza. at home I learned to dance
& fence; & to draw of Bernard Lens, Master
to the Duke & Princesses.

The first page of Walpole's "Short Notes." From the original manuscript.

they had been bought at the Strawberry Hill Sale in 1842 by the publisher Henry Colburn and that I should get in touch with the grandson of his partner Richard Bentley of the same name who lived at The Mere, Upton, Slough, Bucks.

Fortunately, I followed his advice; fortunately, too, I kept Mr Bentley's letters to me, and fortunately, for the third time, I was able to recover five of my letters to him when they were sold at Sotheby's in 1975. They have refreshed and corrected my memory of one of the most helpful and delightful people I have ever met in Walpoleshire and show the importance of having both sides of a correspondence.

My first letter to Mr Bentley, written 20 August 1933, on Brown's Hotel letter-paper, begins:

Dear Sir:

I am a Research Associate of Yale University engaged upon a new (and I hope definitive) edition of the correspondence of Horace Walpole which will eventually be published by the Clarendon Press. I am, of course, trying to get as many originals of the letters or photostats of them as possible, both to and from Walpole.

"At the Strawberry Hill sale in 1842 a number of letters to Walpole were bought by Henry Colburn. They were lots 135, 136, and 138, of the Sixth Day's sale. Lot 135 I am particularly anxious to trace because it contained upwards of 160 letters to Horace Walpole from Wm. Cole. Mr W. Roberts of Clapham Hill (lately of *The Times*) yesterday suggested to me that these might now be in your possession or that you might know where they are. If you can give me any help in this matter I shall be very grateful. . . .

I shall be here until Sept. 19 or 20 and will gladly motor out any time that it is convenient for you to see me.

Yours sincerely,
W. S. Lewis.

Mr Bentley replied August 28 that he did not have Cole's letters, which proved to be in the Victoria and Albert Museum, but he invited me down to lunch any day the following week; furthermore, he called twice at Brown's without warning. I wrote to say how very disappointed I was to have missed his calls. "It was all the more disappointing in that I could perfectly well have been here had I known you were coming. Now comes your kind letter and I feel that I have put you to a great deal of trouble." I ended, "You are very kind to ask me down for lunch between the 1st and 6th, but, as luck would have it, my wife and I start off on a course of visits this week-end to owners of letters. Everyone has been so

very kind and helpful to me in this business that I think it must succeed." And there the matter might have rested and I have missed one of the two richest collections of Walpole's letters and manuscripts then in existence had I not nearly a year later read a footnote in a book I rarely opened and learned that the originals of Horace Mann's letters to Walpole (887 in number), were in the possession of Mr Richard Bentley of Upton, Slough. I hadn't mentioned them and he hadn't volunteered that he owned them, waiting quite properly, as my wife pointed out to me, to see what sort of person this young man from Yale was. My letter that reopened our correspondence is unfortunately missing, but Mr Bentley's reply to it on 30 July 1934, is before me. In my missing letter I apparently assumed he did not want to part with the originals, but hoped he would let me reproduce them at my expense.

"Dear Mr Lewis,

"Though we were unsuccessful in meeting face to face it is very pleasant to be again in touch with you. We have a common interest

WALPOLE (in red)

and you are doing a great work—and one would gladly—however slightly—help you in it." It would be very expensive, he pointed out, "as much as £300 or £400 to reproduce photographically? Perhaps you might wish to consider afresh if it is desired to embark upon so expensive a form of collation?" My letter in which I repeated that I really must edit Walpole's letters from the originals or have photostats of them if possible is also missing and so is the postcard of a palm tree that I sent Mr Bentley from California in the summer of 1934, knowing that any Englishman of Mr Bentley's generation was stirred by the sight of a palm tree. He replied in an eight-page letter that he had been pleased to hear from me "on the shores of the Pacific—and to know that you were having a needed rest (for I gather you are a very strenuous worker) and the pleasant companionship of a brother ordinarily somewhat out of reach. Coming back eastwards you must by this time be immersed in the great occupation of annotating Walpole. The number of years covered—and the variety of topics and incidents—makes one admire your courage and assiduity in confronting a work of such magnitude. The reward however is great—almost every page bristles with interest—and tracking the veiled allusions, or minor events of the day, now forgotten, tests the skill like a chess problem. Then Mann's letters to Walpole: These 'lie somewhat heavily on my chest'!" He was torn between wanting to help me and wanting to keep the originals; he was concerned about the expense of photostats. He

was writing, he said, in the historic house of the Herschels and reminded me that the lenses of Sir William's telescope were ground by hand and not by machinery and signed himself with very kind regards from his wife and himself. I turned the final page and read, "Would the University feel disposed to spend £100 on Mann?" The letters reached Farmington in time to be a Christmas present from my wife, as I wrote him. Their disposition, Mr Bentley replied, "caused much pleasure . . . AND may I say so without intrusion—the very charming manner in which the documents come into your hands."

During the following months before we met at Upton in July 1935 our correspondence rose to the regularity and fullness of Mann's and Walpole's. Their letters were concerned with the rise and fall of ministries and the marching and countermarching of armies across Europe; Mr Bentley and I were concerned with the minutiae of editing. As you have noticed, his epistolary style was enlivened by block letters and red ink. He darted off the main highway of our subject into bypaths that led to the Duke of Wellington and Henry VII's Queen. Pamphlets by him began arriving, including *A brief Note upon the Battle of Sainte and Mauron, 1351 and 1352* and *Upwards of Sixty Years' Rainfall at Upton, Slough, Buckinghamshire, including hail, sleet, snow, hoar frost or mist*. Our acquaintance was well advanced when my wife and I reached London and found a letter waiting for us at Brown's to confirm our visit to Upton. "The 12:15 from Paddington on Tuesday next [in red ink]. Excellent. You should discover on the platform at Slough an octogenarian with white whiskers (and a projecting white moustache) looking out as passengers descend from the train—on the lookout for *you*."

Our visit to Slough had a double purpose. I wanted to thank Mr Bentley in person for letting me have Mann's letters and I hoped to find Walpole's correspondence with William Mason, the biographer of Gray and a poet held in higher esteem by Walpole and the eighteenth century than by us. The Bentley firm had published the Walpole-Mason correspondence in 1851, since when the original letters had disappeared. Could one or both sides of their correspondence be at Upton? The answer, Michael Sadleir told me, would be in a book there that recorded brief accounts of the Bentley publications and their manuscripts. Mr Bentley was loath to show it, Michael said, but he would if pressed, one might almost say if cornered, remove it from its hiding-place, answer the specific question asked, and put it away again, not letting it out of his hands. That is, our visit was an Aspern Papers mission and the success of it depended

on discovering what that book said about the manuscripts in the Walpole-Mason correspondence.

We had no trouble identifying Mr Bentley on the platform at Slough with his projecting white moustache. He was a short stout figure in a black and white checked suit and a square bowler hat on the lookout, as he promised to be, for us. Greetings swiftly over, we were hurried to a massive touring-car and rolled away to The Mere, a large pseudo-Elizabethan house set in ample grounds. In its hall was a grandfather clock with a notice, "True Time—False Time is one hour in advance." Mr Bentley led us to the library that had a long table on which was a life-size iron black boy dressed as a jockey. It was so lifelike that in the rather dim light we were startled. Mr Bentley was enchanted. "What do you think he once did?" he asked. We couldn't imagine. "Blew up!" said Mr Bentley, "when a parlormaid moved him too near the fire." He had been so skillfully mended that, as we could see for ourselves, there was hardly a trace of the mishap. We were not told of any repairs to the parlormaid.

At the end of the table were sherry and biscuits. We sat ceremoniously, and our host launched into the story of Queen Victoria's wedding. At the climax when the organ stalled he dropped into dialogue and acted out the consternation of Sir Somebody Something who was responsible for the failure. During this narration a lady appeared and hurried round to sit beside Mr Bentley, listening to him dutifully with lowered eyes. He paid no attention to her and it was some time before we learned that the new-comer was Mrs Bentley.

Our host was in no hurry to reach Walpole, and that being clear, impotunity was to be avoided. Nothing could have been less like the Venetian palace where the Aspern Papers were hidden than The Mere, but on that day there was the same hope of discovery on the part of the visitor and the same reticence on the part of the owner to gratify it.

An opening occurred when we went into the neighboring drawing-room, for on its walls were several copies by G. P. Harding of miniatures formerly at Strawberry Hill. Not to have noticed or commented on them would have been a mistake. The comment having been made without ill effect, I went on to observe that owners of books and manuscripts may not know they own them. "There might be," I said, "letters from or to Walpole right here in this house." Mr Bentley's steady stare suggested I had been precipitate and I did not bring up the Walpole-Mason correspondence until a second opening occurred at lunch. This time, greatly

daring, I came right out with, "The Walpole-Mason letters were published by Bentley's. Could the originals be here?"

"I have a book," said Mr Bentley, brushing aside my boldness as if it were a crumb, "that will answer that question."

We were interrupted by a message from the gardener, which Mr Bentley read aloud: "Upton, Slough, Bucks, July 16, 1935, 2:05. True Time. 79 $\frac{1}{2}$ ° F."

"You see," Mr Bentley exulted, "it's almost 80!"

In a few minutes an excited maid brought a second report from the gardener that the thermometer had just crossed 80. Pleased astonishment went round the table. 80! A *very* warm day!

Lunch was of eight courses and lasted until 3:30 False Time. With the disappearance of the strawberries I ventured to ask our host: "And now the book?"

Mr Bentley looked at me stonily. "You must see the house first."

We followed him and Mrs Bentley through several bedrooms and came to rest in an upstairs sitting-room where our host opened a cabinet from which he took a purse that he handed my wife. "Money, it is said, is the root of all evil; yet we can't do without money, and a purse is as convenient a way to carry it as any other. Now, madam, look inside that purse." My wife opened it and out flew a spring, which Mr Bentley retrieved promptly from the floor. Other speeches and surprises followed before we moved on. Mr Bentley anticipated my question. "But you haven't seen Windsor!" He pointed to stairs up which we climbed into a cupola with a view of Windsor through the trees, Mr Bentley prudently waiting below. As we came down he pointed to the wall and began rapidly. "You would say, Mr Lewis, that this is the end of the house?"

"I would."

"Let us see." He pressed a button, a door slid back revealing another wing of the house fitted up as a ship; port and starboard lights, oars, state-rooms, life preservers. A telephone to the kitchen—or galley when called from this quarter—received orders that began with "Ahoy!"

"Now," said Mr Bentley with a crafty glance, "the book!" He led us back to the dining-room, where the sizable ledger was hidden in a cupboard. Mr Bentley got it out and sat with it on the arm of a large stuffed chair.

"What year did you say the Mason letters were published?"

"1851."

He struggled with the book, which was hard to handle sitting in that position. "Here, you take it," he said.

The book was in my hands! I turned to "The Correspondence of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, and the Rev. William Mason. Now first published from the original MSS. Edited, with notes, by the Rev. J. Mitford. In Two Volumes. London: Richard Bentley, Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty, 1851." I came to the end of the page and read: "The originals of Mason's letters to Walpole are now [1900] in the possession of Mr Richard Bentley of Upton, Slough, Bucks." As I read this last aloud, Mr Bentley fell over into the chair, his short legs sticking above the arm. He was breathing heavily. "What a very pertinacious young man!" I heard him whisper.

"Have you given the letters away?" I asked.

"No."

"Have you sold them?"

"No."

"Then they must still be here!"

There was a pause. "Time for tea," said Mr Bentley firmly, struggling up out of the chair and taking the book away from me.

Letters sped back and forth from Upton to Brown's following our visit to The Mere. Mr Bentley wrote, "Six possible fields of research are open. (Four libraries in the house itself, one a hundred yards away easterly and one a hundred yards distant north westerly. Total six.) Nos 1-2. 4-5-6. do *not* contain the missing letters. No. 3 *possibly* might or should.

"So infected by your ardour I sent for a worthy carpenter to attack certain piles of parcels in Library III. The shelf-books in 'no time' revealed NIL but certain oak 'coffins' or 'double-coffins' wider and deep seemed a suitable hiding place. I sat at their side and gave a critical glance at *each* [underscored in red ink] parcel as it was extracted. It was an interesting review—mainly William IV or (very) early Victorian period—later than Mason. The excellent man in endeavouring to 'preserve *exactly* the same order' in replacement occasionally tripped—and a dossier, say of Thomas Campbell would get interposed between letters of (say) Ingoldsby or of Theodore Hook *—to the puzzlement of someone perhaps in years to come—or (had he been present) would have agonized the exact eye of Michael Sadleir! But—no find! [in red ink.]"

One of my rescued letters is an answer to a postcard with an ambiguous reference in red to Mason's letters to Walpole and a letter of July 23 in which Mr Bentley reported, "The chase goes on—at intervals—between inrushes of visitors—because I feel that you are RIGHT, i.e., if the books

* Elastic bands, when petrified or fossilized with age, are very untrustworthy. Bursting, their contents would mingle like 'Cocktails,' one author with another!"

have *not* left Upton (which I am sure is the case)—they must be here still [in red]—only 'tis a large field to explore." I answered, "My dear Mr Bentley, On getting back from Norfolk last night I found your two communications. I read the postal first and concluded from it that the letters had been found. Sad disillusionment when I opened the letter! However, Library No. 3 does not yet seem exhausted—I only hope you will not be when this is over! How very good of you to get in the worthy carpenter—miner for the moment, digging for pure gold!

"When we were nearing Liverpool Street last night," I went on, "I asked my wife, 'Do you think I shall find a letter from Mr Bentley on getting home [i.e., Brown's]?' She (who is somewhat clairvoyant) answered, 'Yes, but he won't have found them yet. But he will find them and I think he'll probably bring them up to town himself.' So you see I am still full of hope and confidence. As they were there a mere 33 years ago and as you don't remember giving them away they must be, as you say, still there. What an appetite this delay has given! No letters will be more appreciated when they do turn up."

On the 28th Mr Bentley reported that, libraries one to six having drawn blank, "I did at last what I should have done at first!" he turned to the Sage of Uckfield "with most helpful results. Mason was seen here (in MS I mean) barely a dozen years ago—so now it is certain that he must be still here, even though not at 'No. 3.' . . . Now the searchlight has to be turned at every free interval upon subsidiary or supplemental collections—and *now* with a certainty of ultimate success."

And then on the 31st arrived a "Greetings Telegram" for Professor Lewis in a gold envelope with the message printed by hand, "Eureka, Mason. Bentley." This was followed by a letter:

My dear Professor

You were right

I was right

Wayne Williams [the Sage of Uckfield] was right.

All are satisfied [in red ink]

MASON *IS* [in red ink] AT UPTON.

Good modest man—in no crimson jacket like the Florentine Ambassador—lay low in a plain drab leather jacket, and hid himself in the recesses of a Book case cupboard 'upstairs' as Williams said—and I thought . . . but *not* in Library 3 or Library 4.

In a triumphant moment I ventured to hurl a telegram at you—and even stipulated with the Post office that it should be delivered to you in a gilt envelope.

Now what happens? You will wish to have photostat copy made at once? *OR* you may wish to carry back the originals to augment your Walpole collection at Farmington. . . . Perhaps at half the Mann figure, say 50 guineas. This only if you *WANT* it.

A second letter was written on the same day in answer to my golden greetings telegram of grateful acceptance.

Dear Professor Lewis,

I had hardly despatched a letter to you this afternoon when an excited maid—her eyes fixed upon a salver—came into the room and handed me a 'golden object' with due importance.

The Duke of Marlborough pencilled the news of his great victory on the back of his washerwoman's bill (being away from his desk) and hurried the splendid news off to Queen Anne in England.

You—Sir—have eclipsed the Duke and sent a superb message of triumph on the finding of 'Mason' after 150 years or more!

and he said he would bring the letters up to Brown's on Friday. He came with the letters, all 110 of them, in their "plain, drab, leather jacket."

Just before we sailed there arrived a bon voyage message:

August 15 1935
Natal day of Napoleon I

My dear Lewis,

Yale really *MUST* [in red ink] arrange to have the great statue at the entrance to New York illuminated [in red ink] as the Europa enters that harbour.

What a *chain* of

Victory!

and he spelled out in red the names of Walpole's correspondents whose letters I had found in England during the summer, COLE, MONTAGU, MANN, MASON, OSSORY.

After we got home letters and postcards poured in with excellent advice about editing and shrewd guesses and surmises about Walpolian problems. Mr Bentley was a constant reader of *Notes and Queries*, in which dozens of our queries raised by the Cole correspondence were appearing, and he reported whatever he thought might be helpful. Then, quite suddenly in February 1936, he died.

When we got to London in 1937 Robin Flower, Deputy Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum and one of the greatest early friends of the Yale Walpole, told me of the Walpole manuscripts that he found at Upton when he went down to appraise the library for tax purposes. The

letters were not in libraries one to six, but in a remote passageway, a collection of Walpole's manuscripts that corresponds in importance to the Boswelliana found in the croquet box at Malahide Castle. There were about a hundred unpublished letters, including those to John Chute, Walpole's first history, *The War with Spain*, 1739, his Journal for 1769, the last memoirs from 1783 to 1791, Sir Robert Walpole's last words, and many notes for the earlier memoirs written on scraps of paper. There were also Walpole's *Hieroglyphic Tales* with two unprinted ones, "An abstract of the Kings and Queens of England," the draft for Walpole's "Account of my Conduct relative to My Places," "The History of Madame du Barry, Mistress of Louis Quinze," and out-topping all in importance, the "Short Notes" of his life. Did Mr Bentley know they were there and was he waiting for me to pursue the quest at Upton further? That is not, I think, impossible. In any event, Mrs Bentley's trustees let me have all the manuscripts, thanks to her friendly offices and those of John Hodgson, he who had knocked down to me in his sale room my first Walpole letters to Pinkerton; but the Upton saga was not finished. Peter Cunningham's correspondence with the first Bentley about his edition of Walpole's letters turned up and so did Miss Berry's letters to Bentley about her books and much besides, all of which Mrs Bentley gave me.

Walpole's letters to Mason are still missing; promising leads in Yorkshire and Wales came to nothing. I hope they may yet appear, but if I had to choose between them and the "Short Notes" I would choose the "Short Notes" without hesitation.

RESCUING HORACE WALPOLE

Wilmarth S. Lewis

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