

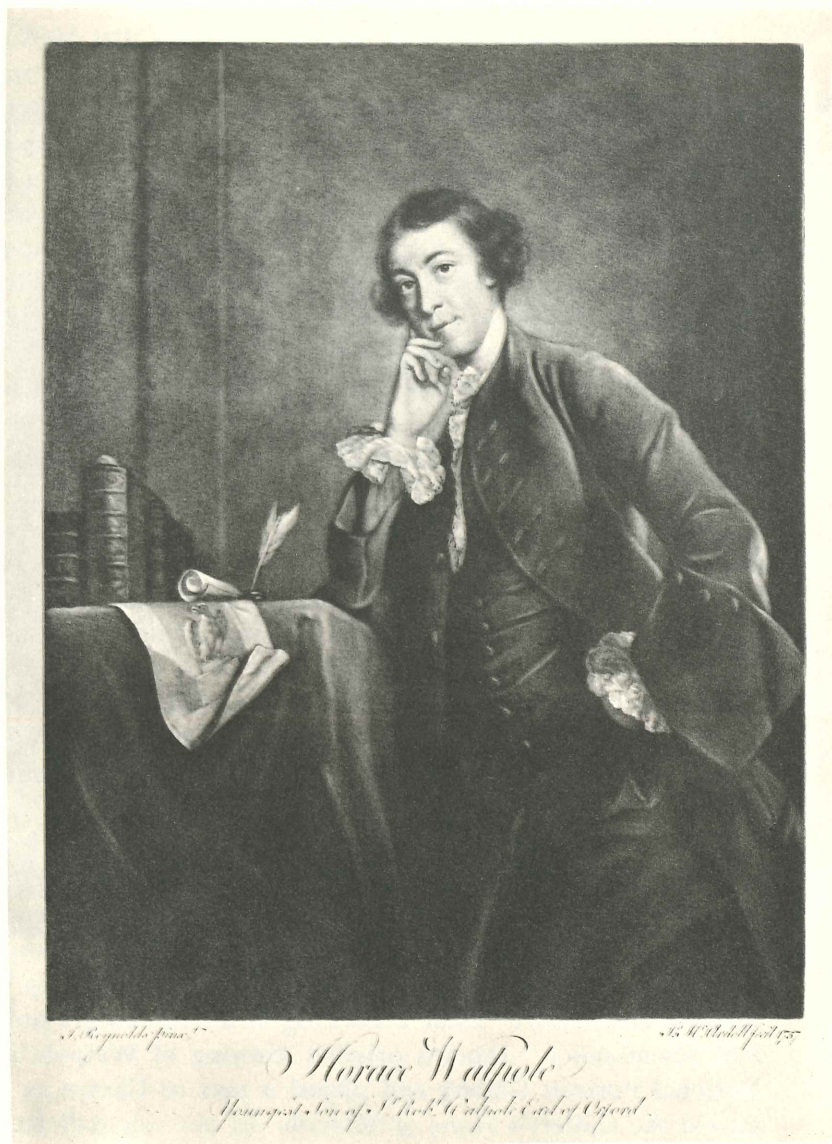
## Choice 26

### Walpole's Annotated Print of His Portrait by Reynolds, 1757

We come now to the final Choice, the copy of McArdell's print of Walpole engraved after Reynolds in 1757, which Walpole hung in his bedroom at Strawberry Hill. The Strawberry Hill sale catalogue records that "A Latin inscription, in the handwriting of Horace Walpole, is at the back of this engraving, rendering it particularly interesting." It was bought in 1842 by the Rev. Hon. Horace Cholmondeley, Walpole's cousin, and thanks to the friendly offices of Owen Morshead came to me in 1962 from General Sir Henry Jackson of Dorset, Horace Cholmondeley's grandson. The Latin inscription on the back in Walpole's most elegant hand is from *Historia sui temporis* by Jacques Auguste de Thou (1553-1617), historian and statesman. The Warden of All Souls, Mr John Sparrow, kindly translated it for me:

In far distant times, one will look with wonder on the green turf that covers the grave where my ashes are buried, and will say: "It was his lot to be born in a bed of down, blessed with ample means, with favor and resources surpassing those which nowadays all wonder at from their earliest years: the glories of his time, his natural ambition, and the fresh fame of his illustrious father, all gave grounds to hope that he would excel the example of his ancestors which he strove to imitate; yet, despite all this, he preferred to seek the obscure, easeful retreats of the Muses, to shun the rocks and storms of Court and to despise the insubstantial vanities that men contend for: he chose the ivy and the laurel that grow wild rather than the spoils of battle or triumphs that batten on a hungry peace."

One feels Walpole's pleasure as he copied out that passage with its remarkable parallels to himself. Like de Thou he would be talked about "in far distant times," not for the insubstantial vanities that men strive for, but for the enduring awards of the Muses; he would be remembered for his letters and memoirs as well as for his contributions to the arts,



Horace Walpole by Mc Ardell after Reynolds with a Latin inscription on the back.



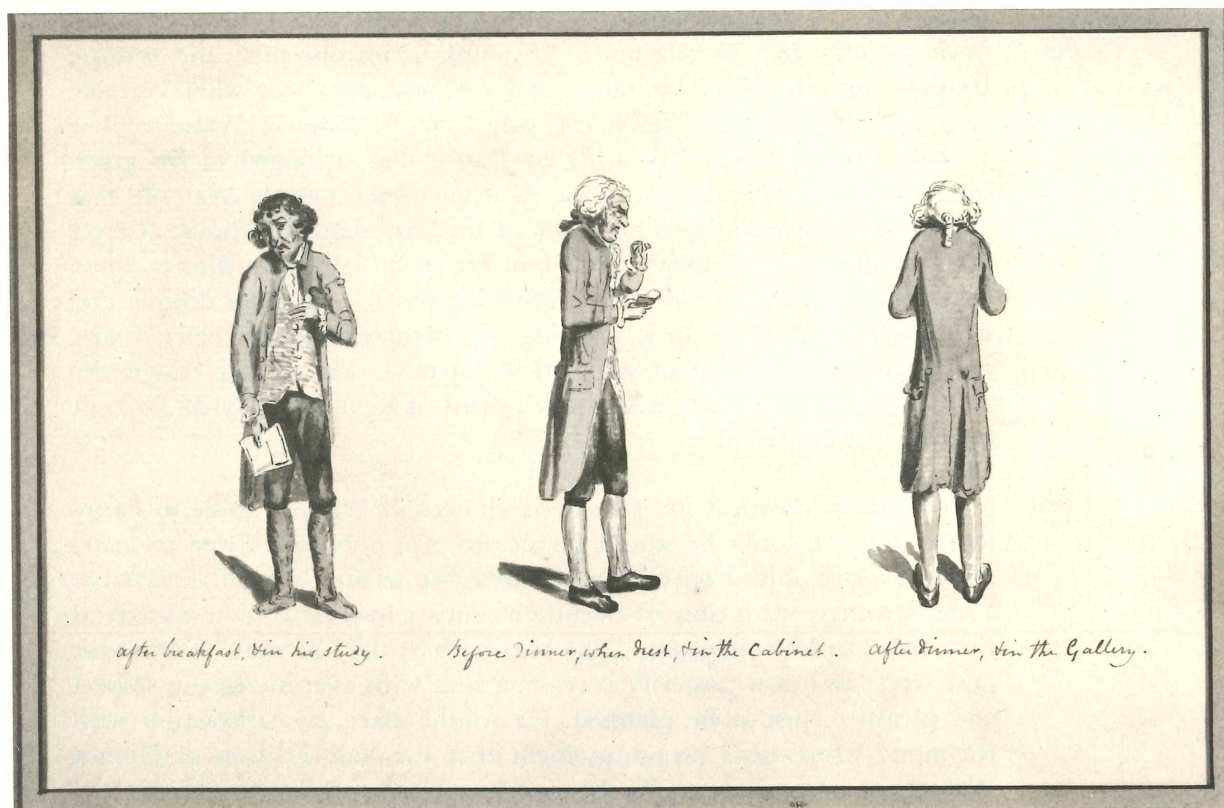
literature, and antiquarianism. The future owners of the objects mentioned in the *Description of Strawberry Hill* would enjoy them the more because he had owned them.

John Pinkerton in his *Walpoliana*, 1799, says that McArdell's print of Walpole "must have been very like, as strong traces of resemblance remained, particularly about the eyes." Earlier Pinkerton wrote, "The person of Horace Walpole was short and slender, but compact and neatly formed. When viewed from behind, he had somewhat of a boyish appearance, owing to the form of his person, and the simplicity of his dress. His features may be seen in many portraits; but none can express the placid goodness of his eyes, which would often sparkle with sudden rays of wit, or dart forth flashes of the most keen and intuitive intelligence." One is reminded of General Fitzwilliam's witness to Walpole's "natural talents, his cheerfulness, the sallies of his imagination, the liveliness of his manner."

The accessories that Reynolds chose to suggest Walpole's interests give us the virtuoso and writer as well as the man of the world. The tall table on which he is leaning and displaying the ruffles at his wrist has a print of his antique marble eagle that was dug up in Rome in 1742. The *Description of Strawberry Hill* calls it "one of the finest pieces of Greek sculpture in the world," and assures us that "the boldness and yet great finishing of the statue are incomparable. The eyes inimitable. Mr Gray has drawn the flagging wing. It stands on a handsome antique sepulchral altar, adorned with eagles too." Reynolds's portrait also gives us the writer with a quill and inkpot and two or three of his books tumbled together on the tall table.

Hanging next it in our side hall is a lightly colored copy by John Thomas Smith (1766-1833) of the drawing by George Dance in 1793. The first entry in Joseph Farington's diary tells how we went "in company with Mr George Dance and Mr Samuel Lysons to Lord Orford's at Strawberry Hill, where we breakfasted with his Lordship," and how in the forenoon Dance "made a drawing of his Lordship's profile, an excellent resemblance." Dance's original drawing of Walpole is now in the National Portrait Gallery and played a part in Choice 22 when we discarded the Gallery's Hone of Walpole. In our side hall Smith's Walpole is regarding the McArdell print with charitable amusement; one feels that the sober man of seventy-five is studying the elegant forty-year-old virtuoso of Reynolds's painting with approval.

At Farmington is an example of an *objet de vertu* that appears in the



*after breakfast, in his study.*

*Before dinner, when dressed, in the Cabinet.*

*After dinner, in the Gallery.*

Horace Walpole by Carter, "after breakfast," "before dinner," and "after dinner."

sale catalogue, 23rd day, lot 25: "A REMARKABLY FINE OLD BOULE COFFER, a splendid specimen of this work at an early period, the front elaborately finished with tortoise-shell ground work, massive or-molu mountings, masque handles, chased rosette corners, and lined with blue silk, on a pedestal *en-suite*, with richly worked boule back and stand for porcelaine." It stood in the Round Drawing Room where the *Description of Strawberry Hill* merely notes, "A trunk of tortoise-shell and bronze; by Boul, on a frame of the same" and says nothing about what Walpole kept in it. Above the coffer today hang four drawings of Walpole. The topmost one is a second drawing by Dance that belonged to his great-granddaughter. Below it are three sketches of the elderly Walpole that John Carter hurried off as he followed his host about the house. Carter labelled them, "after breakfast and in his study," "before dinner when dressed in the Cabinet" (in the act of taking snuff), and "after dinner, and in the Gallery." Walpole is standing in all three sketches, erect, spare, and wrinkled, an old man still full of purpose. The Carter trio is the runner-up in this Choice to Walpole's print of Reynolds's stylish portrait engraved by McArdell.

Well, there they are, my twenty-six choices. If Walpole came to Farmington I don't doubt he would be pleased, not only to see that so many of his favorite objects have been reunited, but to find himself accepted as a major source of his time by twentieth century historians. You may recall that in his earliest memoirs, "The War with Spain," he said, "I write for posterity," and now posterity is reading him with ever-increasing respect and pleasure, just as he planned. He would share my satisfaction with Raymond Mortimer's pronouncement that the Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence "is the most impressive monument ever erected to any English author," and see that its index of a million entries will serve as an encyclopedia to the eighteenth century and be supplemented by the twenty-odd volume edition of his memoirs. He would receive with pleasure the pilgrims who come to Farmington to pay their respects to him from places as far away as Lima, Osaka, Colombo, and Cape Town. Ambitious as he was, he couldn't ask for more recognition of his lifelong labor to leave posterity a full account and picture of his time.

The contents of Strawberry continue to reach us at Farmington although much more slowly. Many objects that were at Strawberry, its glass and china, for example, have lost their identity; many other objects



that never saw Strawberry have been placed there by owners and vendors—the amount of bogus Walpoliana I have been offered would fill the Metropolitan Museum.

Nevertheless, I close with the hope—and belief—that some reader of this page will rescue a true piece in the vast mosaic for us and set all the bells of Walpoleshire ringing with joy and gratitude.