

Choice 3

Walpole's Mezzotint of The Ladies Waldegrave

As I have said, the memorials at Farmington of Edward Walpole and his family are so numerous I have put them in a Choice of their own.

Edward was eleven years older than Horace. The brothers were not at all friendly as young men when they had a serious row about money. Their published correspondence begins in 1745 with a letter from Edward that works up to

your conduct to me has always . . . made it the most painful thing in the world to me to have any commerce with you. You have, I must confess, showed a great disposition to me and to my children at all times, which is agreeable to the good nature that I shall ever do you the justice to think and say you possess in a great degree. But it has been mixed with what I dare say you can't help and never meant offence by, but still what I am not obliged to bear, such a confidence and presumption of some kind of superiority, that, my sentiments not tallying with yours upon that head, it has been very unpleasant. You have assumed to yourself a preeminence, from an imaginary disparity between us in point of abilities and character that, although you are a very great man, I cannot submit to.

This letter and Horace's rejoinder, which he marked "not sent," came to Farmington from Upton. The unsent letter begins: "Brother, I am sorry you won't let me say, Dear Brother, but till you have still farther proved how impossible it is for you to have any affection for me, I will never begin my letters as you do. Sir," and Horace goes on to rebut Edward's charges for several pages. One passage is "In my mother's lifetime, you accused me of fomenting her anger against you. The instant she died, did I not bring you all my letters to her which she had kept, in never a one of which, was your name mentioned, but to persuade her to continue that love to you, which your behaviour has always laboured to extinguish in the hearts of all your relations. As to my father, I well know how ill you always used him on my account. . . . Your converting all the jealousy you used to have of Lady Mary, into a friendship with her, to prevent her

loving me, is another." Hours of seething rage must have gone into the unsent reply, but Horace prudently put his letter aside and in two days answered more in sorrow than in anger, a display of self-control that must have made Edward detest him all the more. When three years later Edward planned to use Horace's house without permission for his daughter Laura who was ailing, Horace wrote Montagu, "I can conceive forgiveness; I can conceive using people ill—but how does one feel to use anybody very ill without any provocation, and then ask favours of them?" Three years later still Horace proved he was a good brother rising above ill-usage when a gang charged Edward with sodomitical assault. Horace took the stand as a witness for the defense and helped to convict the conspirators who were heavily fined, made to stand in the pillory, and were imprisoned at hard labor.

As time went on Horace and Edward's association became easier. Even in his first furious letter Edward acknowledged Horace's kindness to him and his children "at all times." Horace's summary of Edward in his *Last Journals*, which was written in 1772, shows him at his most just and charitable:

My brother Edward . . . was a man of excellent parts and numerous virtues; the first he buried in obscurity and retirement, the latter he never failed exerting. He had great natural eloquence, wit, humour even to admirable mimicry, uncommon sensibility, large generosity and charity. He drew well, but seldom, was a profound musician, and even invented a most touching instrument, which from the number of its strings, he called a *pentachord*. All these engaging qualities and talents, formed for splendour and society, were confined to inferior companions, for he neither loved the great world, nor was his temper suited to accommodate himself to it, for he was exceedingly passionate, jealous, and impatient of contradiction, though in his later years he acquired more mildness. He wrote several small pieces in prose and verse, a very few of which were printed, but never with his name, for no man had less parade. In pathetic melancholy he chiefly shone, especially in his music, and yet, though his ear was all harmony, his verse was more replete with meaning than it was sonorous.

A small collection, "Verses and drawings by my brother Sir E. Walpole, which I desire may be preserved in my family. H.W." is bound in Choice 8, the most notable of Horace's own copies of his 1774 *Description of Strawberry Hill*. There are several of Edward's verses in manuscript; two more are identified by Horace on cuttings from the *Public Advertiser*. Edward's spirited rhymed couplets show that he was one of "the mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease." Other of Edward's verses that Horace transcribed in

his Book of Materials, 1759, (Choice 4) are chiefly notable for a four-letter word written out in full with a freedom only recently regained. Among Edward's pencil sketches is an excellent one of Sir Robert. Horace's extreme partiality to the productions of amateur artists and writers (which is shown in Choice 10) played a part in his improved relations with Edward.

Slaughter's portrait of Edward hung in the Refectory, or Great Parlour, at Strawberry Hill with a dozen other family portraits including the one of Lady Mary Churchill now at Farmington. The Slaughter of Edward is now at Wolterton, the Norfolk house built by "Old" Horace Walpole where his descendants still live, but a water-color of it by G. P. Harding, who copied so many pictures and objects at Strawberry, is at Farmington and shows Edward very splendid in the scarlet robes of the Bath. In 1930 I bought from Agnew in London a portrait of him in a beautiful blue-green coat. This was exhibited in the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1781, "Portrait of a Gentleman by Edward Edwards," and identified by Walpole in his copy (now in the possession of Lord Rosebery), "Sir E. Walpole." I also have a miniature of him in middle age and one in old age by Edward Edwards that was reproduced in color as the frontispiece to *The Connoisseur* of September 1915. All four portray a much more portly and rosy man than Horace, who was excessively thin and pale.

Edward had four children by his mistress, Dorothy Clement, who Horace said was "a milliner's apprentice at Durham." The children were Laura, Maria, Edward, and Charlotte. They appear together in a most attractive conversation piece by Slaughter that is now in the Minneapolis Art Museum. When they were ill Uncle Horace took them to Strawberry Hill and looked after them, an instance of his "great disposition" to Edward's children. Laura married a Keppel who became Bishop of Exeter. Maria's first husband was the second Earl Waldegrave; her second husband, whom she married secretly without her Uncle Horace's approval, was George III's younger brother, the Duke of Gloucester. Charlotte married the fifth Earl of Dysart. Walpole reported the death of the younger Edward to Horace Mann: "My brother has lost his son, and it is no misfortune, though he was but three and thirty, and had very good parts; but he was sunk into such a habit of drinking and gaming, that the first ruined his constitution, and the latter would have ruined his father."

Maria, the beauty of the family, was her Uncle Horace's favorite. He boasted to Horace Mann of how he brought about her marriage to Lord Waldegrave who was twenty-one years her senior. "A month ago," Horace

wrote, "I was told that he liked her. . . . I jumbled them together, and he has already proposed. For character and credit he is the first match in England—for beauty, I think she is. She has not a fault in her face or person, and the detail is charming. A warm complexion tending to brown, fine eyes, brown hair, fine teeth, and infinite wit, and vivacity. . . . My brother has luckily been tractable, and left the whole management to me." A pastel of her, very beautiful in her coronation robes, has appeared since I wrote this chapter. It hangs in the center of the new library at Farmington next to her father. Horace's affectionate concern for Maria extended to her three Waldegrave daughters, Elizabeth Laura who married her cousin the fourth Earl Waldegrave, Charlotte Maria, Duchess of Grafton, and Anna Horatia, who married her cousin Lord Hugh Seymour Conway after the death of her first betrothed, the Duke of Ancaster. These three are "The Ladies Waldegrave" of Reynolds's conversation piece that shows them sewing at their work table. The original picture is now in the National Gallery of Scotland; Reynolds's bill for it, 300 guineas, is at Farmington and so is Walpole's copy of Valentine Green's mezzotint of it, a proof before letters. It is what I have chosen to save from all the objects relating to Edward and his family at Farmington. Walpole pasted it into his copy of the 1784 *Description of Strawberry Hill* saved in Choice 9. That copy was acquired in 1919 for £1650 by Sabin and Co. of Bond Street. They removed the mezzotint of The Ladies Waldegrave and held it for 2000 guineas because they said it is "the finest English mezzotint in existence." The book itself came to Farmington in 1927 at a greatly reduced figure. During the next eleven years I would stop in at Sabin's to pay my wistful respects to the print. Its price wilted during the Depression and I was not surprised when on the day war was declared my cabled offer of \$500 was promptly accepted. The beautiful print sailed safely through the newly laid German mine fields to Farmington where it hangs beside drawings of Strawberry Hill that were formerly with it in the book. Drawings of Charlotte, Horatia, and Elizabeth Laura are also at Farmington along with a lock of the latter's hair, braided, in a gold case.

On Lord Waldegrave's death in 1763 his widow was painted by Reynolds as "The Mourning Bride"; a miniature of it is at Farmington. She was comforted by the Duke of Gloucester who married her secretly in three years. The duke is best remembered for his remark, "Another damned thick book? Always scribble, scribble, scribble, eh, Mr Gibbon?" Uncle Horace disapproved of the marriage because he foresaw Maria's unhappy situation when the king refused to accept her, but he stood by her loyally



The Ladies Waldegrave by Valentine Green after Reynolds, mezzotint.

then and after her extravagance and imperious temper estranged the duke. One of her letters at Farmington to her Aunt Jane Clement in 1777 feared for her future because she believed, correctly as it proved, that her father would leave her sister Mrs Keppel the bulk of his fortune. "I once thought myself his favourite," she wrote Aunt Jane, "but it would be ridiculous to think so any longer." Then she came to what never left her mind during the remaining twenty years of her Uncle Horace's life. "Mr Walpole must be worth some money, why am I to get nothing from my relations, he has none nearer to him than me, and now I have a son, he might entail Strawberry upon him, and having an house for shelter would be a consolation, and he must, by his own account be worth at least 10,000£, which you know would be a very great legacy, with an house attached to it—but this won't happen, and yet I believe he loves me as well as he does any body." Walpole left her £10,000 and settled Strawberry Hill on the children of her daughter, Elizabeth Laura Waldegrave, not on her son Prince William of Gloucester, who is remembered as Silly Billy. We shall come to Elizabeth Laura in Choice 4 as an overzealous censor of Walpole's notebooks.

In 1842 her grandson, the seventh Earl Waldegrave sold the contents of Strawberry Hill in a thirty-two days' sale. I regard the sale with mixed feelings, disapproval of breaking up Walpole's library and collections, and gratitude for giving me a life spent in salvaging the fragments. Walpole's three Common Place Books, his letters to Horace Mann, and his memoirs from 1751 to 1783 were kept out of the sale. The present Lord Waldegrave sold all of them to me except the memoirs. They are being edited properly at long last by John Brooke for the Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Memoirs with the fullest cooperation of Lord and Lady Waldegrave, as we shall see in Choice 21.

After Dorothy Clement, the mother of Sir Edward's children, died in 1738, her younger sister Jane took her place in Edward's household and in the affection of his children. That her position was no sinecure is proved by four letters at Farmington that Edward wrote Jane in 1766 with the same intemperance he wrote Horace twenty years earlier: "choleric" was the word for Edward. In the first letter to Jane he informs her of "My conclusion and final resolution—First, that I will live with you no longer. Secondly, that I will never stay in a room where I find you," and so on for another unbridled page. Bishop Keppel gave Jane excellent advice: never contradict Sir Edward even in the smallest matters. Edward's better nature asserted itself in his will, which made ample provision for her. The devotion of his children to her and to her niece Anne appears in their

letters that were preserved by Anne and descended intact to Miss Eleanor Forster of Tynemouth, Northumberland, who sold some of the family miniatures and many letters in 1958. They were bought by Miss Doris Haydock of Newcastle who sold me the miniatures, gave me the letters, and introduced me to Miss Forster, who sold me hundreds more of the letters and bequeathed the remaining miniatures to me. The letters have furnished innumerable footnotes to the Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence and reveal a side of Walpole's nature unknown to Macaulay, his deep and steady concern for the welfare of his family. Both Miss Haydock and Miss Forster came to Farmington to see their former possessions in their final home. Among a collector's greatest rewards are the friendships formed with strangers who join his quest in their own houses and turn their possessions over to him with pleasure.

The runner-up in this Choice is not Edwards's portrait of Edward, but the small oil of Dorothy Clement, the only picture known of her, which Miss Forster bequeathed me. It shows a poised, rather sad and questioning young woman with the good looks she gave her children. The portrait hangs now above another of Miss Forster's bequests, a fine large miniature of Princess Sophia of Gloucester, Maria's daughter by her second husband, who George Cooper informs me was beloved by her first cousin, the Prince of Wales. Not every milliner's apprentice has had a granddaughter who might have been a queen.

The Clement collection is supplemented by dozens of letters between Edward and his favorite daughter, Laura Keppel and her family. This collection was given me by Miss Winifred Myers, whose London firm has through the years provided hundreds of letters for my library. The contributions of scholarly booksellers to learning is not always recognized. Miss Myers gave me the Keppel letters in 1973 to celebrate the fortieth year of the Yale Walpole. The letters include dozens from Sir Edward, Laura, her husband the Bishop, and some verses by Edward on Hope, a virtue he held in low regard. "Mock Herald of the ever distant hour," he called it. The correspondence of Edward and his family illustrates Walpole's pronouncement, "Nothing gives so just an idea of an age as genuine letters; nay, history waits for its last seal from them." "Familiar letters," he wrote, "written by eye-witnesses, and that, without design, disclose circumstances that let us more intimately into important events, are genuine history; and so far as they go, are more satisfactory than formal premeditated narratives." When all the letters of Edward and his family are published their readers will know that family as well as they know their own.



Dorothy Clement by an unknown artist. From the original oil.

Among Miss Forster's and Miss Haydock's contributions to my library are a wax medallion of Sir Robert, the miniature of Sir Edward in middle age, one of his son Edward, very smart in his military uniform, Maria as a maid, countess, widow, and a silhouette of her as duchess (very portly) with the duke on the reverse. Earlier I got two drawings of Elizabeth Laura, as well as one of her aunt Charlotte, Lady Dysart. A copy of Walpole's epitaph for Lady Dysart was brought to Farmington as a present by the Waldegraves. It concludes,

Pain could not sour, whom blessings had not spoiled,
Nor death affright, whom no one a vise had soiled.

Of his three nieces one gathers she was the most admirable.

In his last letter to Lady Ossory, which was written only six weeks before he died in 1797, Walpole speaks of "about four score nephews and nieces of various ages, who are each brought me about once a year to stare at me as the Methusalem of the family." Age and illness lay heavily upon him, but he maintained his position as affectionately regarded head of his family to the end.