

THE CORRESPONDENCE WITH COLE

EACH of Walpole's major correspondences may be given a particular classification, but in none is the subject so uniformly maintained as in the correspondence with Cole. The subject is English Antiquities.

William Cole was born 3 August 1714, three years before Walpole. The Eton List of 1728 shows him (a Colleger) and Walpole (an Oppidan) in the Third Form. He was admitted a sizar at Clare in 1732/3, but migrated to King's in 1735, where Walpole was a Fellow Commoner. They were close friends, but Cole was not of Walpole's innermost circle, although he corresponded with Richard West, was the life-long friend of Gray, and was called by them 'Tozhy.' Between 1736 and 1743 he made three trips abroad, spending six months of 1737 in Lisbon. He went into orders in 1744 and was given livings, due to the patronage of Lord Montfort and Browne Willis, that were just adequate to fill his house with prints and books and to populate, modestly, his farm yard. During the course of his correspondence with Walpole he had four livings, Bletchley, Waterbeach, Milton, and Burnham which he held while living at Milton. The first three places had the supreme merit of being near Cambridge. Cambridge is the capital of Cole's universe. While Walpole dreamed of being a fifteenth century monk at King's, Cole was living the life of one, brought up-to-date with his own house and an occasional visit to London. Against the many hard things said about the Universities of the eighteenth century, Cole's life should be counted. Cambridge is a shining place in his pages, filled with undoubted antiquities and, on the whole, agreeable men; a place of learning to which a man interested in the restoration and preservation of the past could dedicate himself.

Cole dedicated himself to the past, particularly to that part of it which belonged to Cambridge and Fenland. He had a passion for transcribing parish registers and cartularies and for reproducing coats of arms. Village churches were a particular ex-