

## WALPOLE'S SHORT NOTES

THE manuscript of Walpole's 'Short Notes' consists of five sheets (one of which serves as a cover), folded into ten leaves which measure approximately  $12\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$  inches. Walpole originally folded each leaf again and wrote his notes down the right-hand side, leaving the left side blank for insertions; but after thus completing fifteen columns (which he erroneously numbered 1-11, 13-16), he added two more on the verso of leaf 9, then added another in the blank portion of leaf 8 recto, and concluded the notes at the top of leaf 7 recto.

'Short Notes' were first printed in 1843-4, when they were included in the fourth volume of the concluding series of Walpole's letters to Mann, published by Richard Bentley. The text prepared by the anonymous editor was reprinted by Cunningham and Mrs Toynbee in their collected editions of Walpole's letters. In 1937 the original manuscript was rediscovered among the Walpole papers which Bentley had acquired from Mary Berry, and passed into Mr Lewis's possession. The manuscript is here printed in full for the first time. The new material, which is indicated in the text by asterisks, amounts to about one-tenth of the whole.

When were the notes compiled? The early years of Walpole's life are rather sparsely reported, but in 1757-8 the record becomes more copious, suggesting that this was the period of compilation. An examination of the MS, with attention to the evidence provided by handwriting, changes of quill, variations in colour of ink, and the different watermarks in the five sheets, supports this conjecture. By May of 1759 at the latest, Walpole was almost certainly entering each event very soon after it occurred. But his interest in his autobiography declined, and in the latter part of the MS we again find groups of separated events, such as those for 1777-8, apparently entered at one sitting. The record ends in 1779, with an entry referring to Walpole's commentary on Mason's poems.

We do not know why Walpole dropped the notes eighteen years before his death. Records of a similar nature, his account-book and his printing-house journal, he continued for another decade and more. Perhaps he mislaid the MS, and thought it hardly worth the trouble of looking for it in order to enter the doings of his increasingly uneventful life, which, moreover, was being fully documented in the ever-growing correspondence that he already knew would survive him.

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