

INTRODUCTION

THIS and the previous volume with which it is published call attention to the range of Walpole's friendships. The men who appear in the earlier volume were his intimates when he was an active member of the Young Club at White's and of Parliament; here we see him drawn to wise and spirited dowagers and, later, to pretty young women with good minds and literary tastes. That he enjoyed the society of older women as much as White's did not go unnoticed by his earlier friends. When he visited Lady Elizabeth Germain in Northamptonshire 'Gilly' Williams wrote George Selwyn, 'Is it not surprising how he moves from old Suffolk on the Thames to another old goody on the Tyne, and does not see the ridicule which he would so strongly paint in any other character?'¹

Lady Suffolk, one of George II's mistresses, had been an enemy of Sir Robert Walpole, but when Horace moved to Twickenham he and she became affectionate neighbours. She was flattered by the young man's attentions and gladly filled in bits and pieces of court history that he did not know; he, in return, was able to tell her some things from the Walpole side. We can see him leaning towards her (she had grown very deaf) shouting questions about Miss Bellenden and Lady Albemarle in the conversations that he recorded thirty years later for the Berrys. For Molly Lepell Lady Hervey, he had a particular regard. She was only seventeen years his senior, but she was exceptionally well read, and about her was the aura of the fame and beauty that had inspired Pope, Gay, Voltaire, and Chesterfield to sing her praises in verse. His devotion to her was that of a much younger brother rather than of a son, and she did not hesitate to take him down a peg when she thought it advisable. He dedicated the first two volumes of his *Anecdotes of Painting* to her; she helped pave the

1. John Heneage Jesse, *George Selwyn and His Contemporaries*, 1843, i. 252.