

converse in—yet I cannot preclude myself from telling you agreeable truths. I confess I was at first prejudiced against the subject of your work—it appeared dry, and I doubted even of your ability to render the laborious compilations of an antiquary² both amusing and instructive to a common reader. I wished your leisure had been employed in explaining some problem in English story, in exploding old errors, and setting mistaken characters in a new point of view. But how agreeably was I surprised to find a methodical history of a fine art under the modest title of *Anecdotes*. The subject is indeed worthy of the pen that has undertaken it—a pen which finishes while it seems only to sketch. The world in general is indebted to you for a curious work—the antiquaries in particular for giving grace to their labours and dignity to their anecdotes—the painters for kindly rescuing their names from oblivion. May I not offer one and perhaps not a very far-fetched reason for the scarcity of English painters? They never yet had a Félibien,³ a De Pile,⁴ to immortalize them—their own perishable works were the only support of their reputation, and when they suffered the injuries of time, their names perished with them. Was not this discouragement sufficient to check the faint efforts of an infant art? In Italy deification and plenty, in England poverty and a transient fame has been the painter's lot. But the fine arts may now expect better days, when the Throne is become the altar of the Graces and Mr Walpole deigns to pay his adorations there.⁵ I am, dear Sir, with great truth

Your affectionate humble servant

BEAUCHAMP

2. George Vertue (1684–1756), whose MS collection of painters in England formed the basis of *Anecdotes of Painting*.

3. André Félibien (1619–95), Sieur des Aaux et de Javeroy, architect and author of many books, including *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres anciens et modernes*, 1666. HW's copy of the 1725 edition is Hazen, *Cat. of HW's Lib.*, No. 1294.

4. Roger de Piles (1635–1709), painter, engraver, and writer on art, whose *Abrégé de la vie des peintres . . . et un traité de peinture parfait*, 1699 (2d edn 1715), was translated into English in 1706 under the title of *The Art of Painting, and the Lives of the Painters . . . to Which Is*

Added an Essay towards an English School; 2d edn 1744; 3d edn [?1750]–54 (E. Bénézit, *Dictionnaire . . . des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs, et graveurs*, 1948–55, vi. 684; Bibl. Nat. Cat.; BM Cat.; Yale Cat.). HW's copies of the second French edition and the third English edition are Hazen, *Cat. of HW's Lib.*, Nos 308, 350.

5. Beauchamp is echoing a sentence in the 'Preface' to the *Anecdotes of Painting*: 'The Throne itself is now the altar of the Graces, and whoever sacrifices to them becomingly, is sure that his offering will be smiled upon by a Prince, who is at once the example and patron of accomplishments' (i. p. xiii).