sarcophagus, or upright altar-tomb will be the more proper, as more durable, since it is to be placed in the open air; and will at the same time have a classic air, so characteristic of Mr Wood's talents.

As I never was a good poet, and have long disused metre, it is very natural for me not to adopt that kind of inscription. But I have a better reason: an epitaph in rhyme is a barbarous mode; and to make it excusable, ought to be much happier than it would be, if I composed it. Simplicity and brevity are the master beauties of Roman epitaphs. Some one great peculiarity stamps an inscription with dignity, and appropriates it to the person; and it effaces, or renders unnecessary a thousand little circumstances that might be related of many other men. For this reason I should choose to single out an illustrious point of Mr Wood's life, and which certainly distinguishes him from all other men. I mean his editions of *Palmyra* and *Balbec*.[2] Others have visited those renowned spots: Mr Dawkins[3] even partook of the journey: but nobody rivals Mr Wood in that part in which genius alone was concerned, the dissertations.[4] That part becomes by his art a sublime circumstance; though by my want of equal art I have not done justice to it. The fact however is true, and thence dignifies itself.

Let me again entreat, Madam, that you will freely make objections to any part or to the whole of my plan. You are the person to be satisfied; and I can only be so by succeeding. Let me beg you to consult others: let them point out any faults: I pretend to nothing but to please you; and I hope I have done that at least by trying to please, and by showing with what readiness I am

Madam

Your most obedient humble servant

Horace Walpole

PS. I have inserted a Christian name at random,[5] not having the honour of knowing yours.

2. See *ante* 19 Nov. 1769, n. 1.

3. James Dawkins (1722–57), orientalist and traveller; M.P. He accompanied Wood on his archæological expedition to Asia Minor, Egypt, and the Levant in 1750–1.

4. The dissertation in *The Ruins of Palmyra*, 1753. '*Palmyra* is come forth, and is a noble book; the prints finely engraved, and an admirable dissertation before it' (HW to Bentley 19 Dec. 1753, Chute 160).

5. See enclosure printed below.