PREFACE

A LECTURER whose remarks are going to be published is faced with two audiences, the one that hears him and the one that reads him. Since he hopes and trusts that the second will be the larger and more permanent of the two, he is tempted to write for the eye rather than for the ear. His readers, especially his fellow specialists and the reviewers whose good opinion he wants, loom larger in his mind than the friendly people who come to hear him (even though they come bearing pads and pencils). When his first audience goes home, he hopes that they have taken with them something of what he said, together with an agreeable impression of himself. Still, the fact is that they have dispersed.

A second course for the lecturer is to put his carefully prepared paper to one side and "talk" to his first audience, a solution that can be as unsatisfactory as a relentless reading. A third course is to remove all traces of the lecture hall and to lengthen the book with additional chapters; a fourth is the one that I have chosen to follow, which is to try to write a lecture that will interest both those who hear it and those who read it. Far from trying to decontaminate his printed text by removing every evidence that the book's existence is owing to a lectureship, I think the author should remind his readers occasionally that what they are reading is a lecture written for a particular audience. In any event, the text printed here is virtually the same as the one I read in our National Gallery in February and March 1960, the A. W. Mellon Lectures for that year.

When most of us go to a lecture, we are braced for an hour and

are grateful when the trial is shortened. How much may it be shortened? Ten minutes, certainly, but there are those who feel that in a greater curtailment the lecturer has let them off too lightly. Therefore I have kept these lectures to about fifty minutes, resisting the temptation to exceed the limit imposed by the auditorium and to take another year or so adding to the book. This self-control has forced me to spend a good deal of time (three years) in choosing and arranging my material, in saying what I had to say as briefly as I could, and in writing with both audiences in mind. The limitations of a lecture can, I think, be turned to advantage if the lecturer will take them seriously. At any rate, I have lain upon my Procrustean bed without flinching, and I don't expect to rise and write a longer book on Horace Walpole.

As suggested in my first lecture, I have thought a great deal about what aspect of him I should take for my subject. Over thirty years ago I started off bravely to write his biography. As I wrote it I asked myself, Why should I try to say what he himself has said so much better? I began quoting more and more from him until I had a mere scrapbook of the facts of his life and amusing passages from his letters. Fortunately, I gave it up. Then, in the thirties, Mr. Ketton-Cremer came twice to Farmington for several months and wrote the biography that makes, I think, another full account of Walpole's life unnecessary. Accordingly, I have concentrated here on the man as I see him after thirty-five years of collecting, editing, and study. What was he like? What is the explanation of the contradictions and complexities of his character, behavior, and achievement? Why have so many found him baffling?

I hope that this book will answer these questions. I have been mindful of the expedient Plutarch says ancient cartographers resorted to when they crowded into the margins of their maps some such remarks as " 'All beyond is nothing but dry and desert sands, inhabited only by wild creatures; or dark unpassable bogs, or Scythian cold, or frozen sea' . . . beyond which 'is nothing but monstrous and tragical fictions. There the poets, and there the inventors of fables dwell.' " Expeditions to these fabulous regions are full of peril, but the audience to which

the Mellon Lecturer is introduced is a most congenial company in which to make such an attempt.

There remains for me only the pleasant duty of thanking those who have read these lectures or have heard me read them privately and who have helped me by their suggestions and criticism: Mrs. Francis W. Cole, Mrs. Blair Flandrau, Mr. Robert Halsband, Mr. Ketton-Cremer, Dr. J. H. Mannheim, Sir Lewis Namier, Dr. J. H. Plumb, Mr. A. L. Rowse, Mr. Romney Sedgwick; the friends in New Haven to whom I read them first, Mr. and Mrs. Herman W. Liebert, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew C. Ritchie, Mr. and Mrs. Carl P. Rollins (who also designed the book), Miss Isabel and Mr. Thornton Wilder. Among the Walpolians at Yale and Farmington I am particularly grateful to Messrs. Allen Hazen, George Lam, Robert Smith, Warren Smith, and Dayle Wallace, Miss Mabel Martin and Miss Julia McCarthy.

Finally, there is my indebtedness to my wife. To her great knowledge of Walpole and his time she brought judgment, impeccable taste, critical perception, and patience. Not long before she died I came across hundreds of slips on a Walpolian subject that she had made so many years ago that both of us had forgotten about them. Throughout our library are similar studies that will leave scholars in her debt to the end of time. She read four of these lectures before she died in May 1959. They have been rewritten as a result of her advice. No husband can have owed more to his wife than I owe to her, and no dedication of a book was ever more fitting than the one that I have made to her here.

W. S. L.

Farmington, Connecticut, May 1960