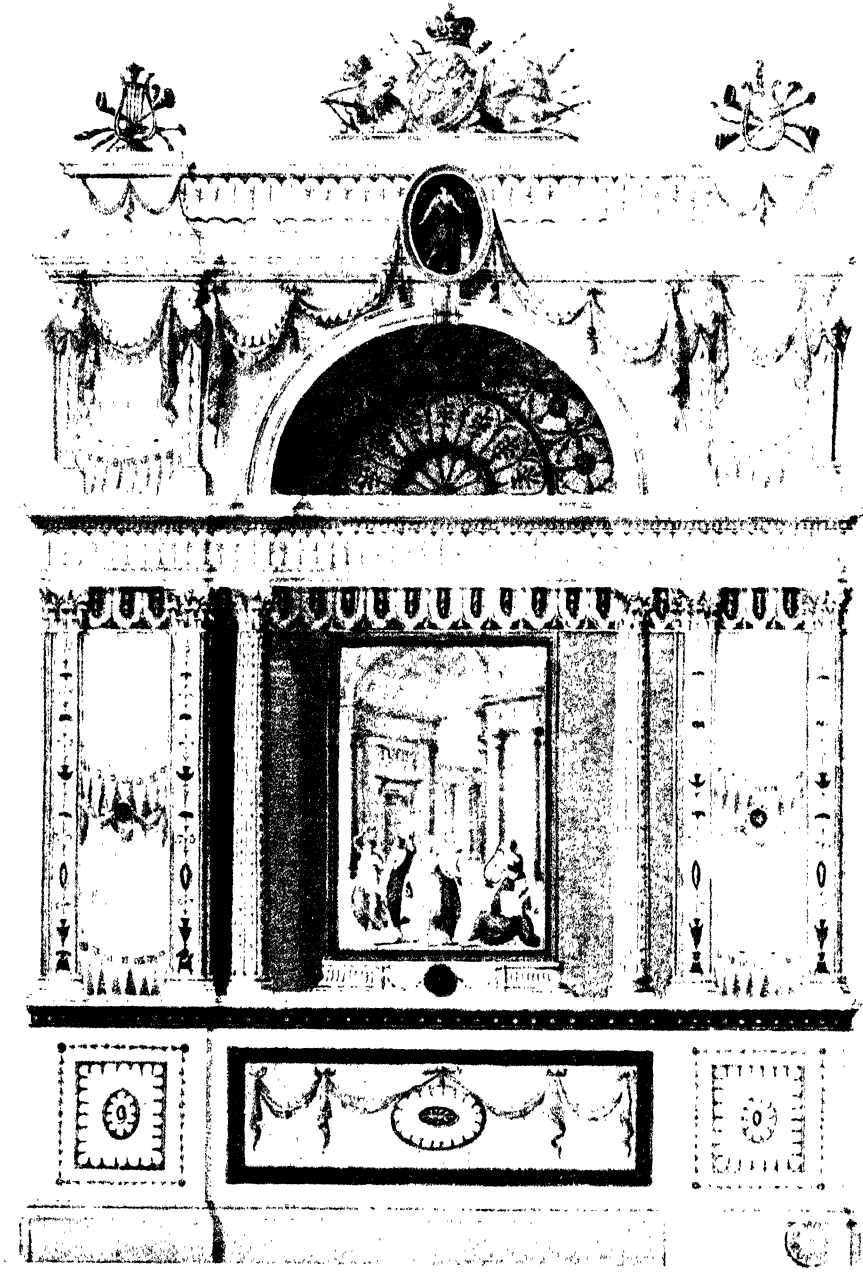
# THE AGE OF ADAM



1 A design by Robert Adam for an organ case for the Duke of Cumberland. From the Soane Museum

# THE AGE OF ADAM

*By*

JAMES LEES-MILNE

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TO MY MOTHER
HELEN LEES-MILNE

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# PREFACE

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age,
When sometimes lofty towers I see down-razed,
And brass eternal, slave to mortal rage . . .
This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

SHAKESPEARE, Sonnet lxiv.

IT was, of course, in no meek abandon but in positive orgies of philistinism that throughout the nineteen-twenties and -thirties the British people once and for all jettisoned their sorely tried architectural tradition. They fairly precipitated themselves upon a piecemeal destruction of the architectural glories of their capital and provincial cities. In concerts of jubilation bishops, aldermen and captains of commerce urged the tearing down of churches by Wren, bridges by Rennie, terraces and town palaces by Adam. There seemed to be no limits to the appetite of our leaders for malignant and calculated iconoclasm. (When the Germans lent their assistance, free gratis, to this same end in the early nineteen-forties these men, by some freakish mental process, were loud in their denunciations.) But what was worse, the monuments these iconoclasts sacrificed gave place to a series of new buildings unparalleled in the annals of the world's history for the infringement of every artistic canon. In this respect England, Wales and Scotland were unique in christendom.

But to-day, since Great Britain has won the war, we *exist* (for human beings have long ceased to *live*) in a more progressive vacuum—one of political ineptitude, social decadence, spiritual deadlock and artistic gelidity. We are, for the time being, tired of destroying. There is of course so much less of merit left to destroy, and while we are still allowed by those little subfusc men at Westminster to retain a semblance of our native sanity, we may yet soothe our minds—starved like our bellies—in nostalgic reflections upon that earlier, less progressive age, when politics was a game, society an art and art religion. And so our last solace is to let our minds drift, as often as they may, upon delicious tides of retrogression, away from the present quagmire of existence, towards the quickened elegance of eighteenth-century living.

In 1904 Mr. Percy Fitzgerald prefaced the first chapter of the first book on Robert Adam with the words: "For many years now have I been striving to secure recognition for that gifted architect and artist, Robert Adam." Since that date, besides innumerable learned treatises, two important books on Robert and his brothers have established the belated "recognition". They are Mr. John Swarbrick's *Robert Adam*

(1915) and Mr. A. T. Bolton's *Architecture of Robert and James Adam* (1922). Mr Bolton's two copiously illustrated folio volumes must long constitute the standard reference work upon the great architect and it would be an idle impertinence for anyone to "strive" for further recognition by emulating that comprehensive mass of scholarship. *The Age of Adam* consequently makes no attempt to be comprehensive, nor does it mean to underestimate those of Robert's—or James's—buildings cursorily referred to in the text, or omitted altogether. The buildings described in Chapter VI have rather been selected as the fulfilments of Robert Adam's architectural principles or as random examples by which to assess his place in the age dominated by his name.

There are several people for whose help and advice I should offer special thanks: Mr. G. Forbes Gray for putting at my disposal hitherto unpublished letters and records of Robert Adam, that throw some fresh light upon his curiously elusive personality; Mr. G. Eland for allowing me to refer to his discovery of the connection with Leadbetter at Shardeloes; Dr. Rudolph Wittkower for affording me access during the later war years to the eclectic library of the Warburg Institute; Mr. John Summerson for letting me examine the vast collection of Adam drawings in the Sir John Soane Museum; Miss Margaret Jourdain for correcting chapters III and IV; and Mr. H. Clifford Smith for his encouragement and the constant benefits of his erudition. Lastly, I am indebted to all those owners (in particular Lord Jersey, Mr. H. Goodhart-Rendel, Lord Scarsdale's family, Captain and Mrs. Edward Compton) and guardians of Adam buildings which I have been fortunate enough to visit.

J. L-M.

June 1947.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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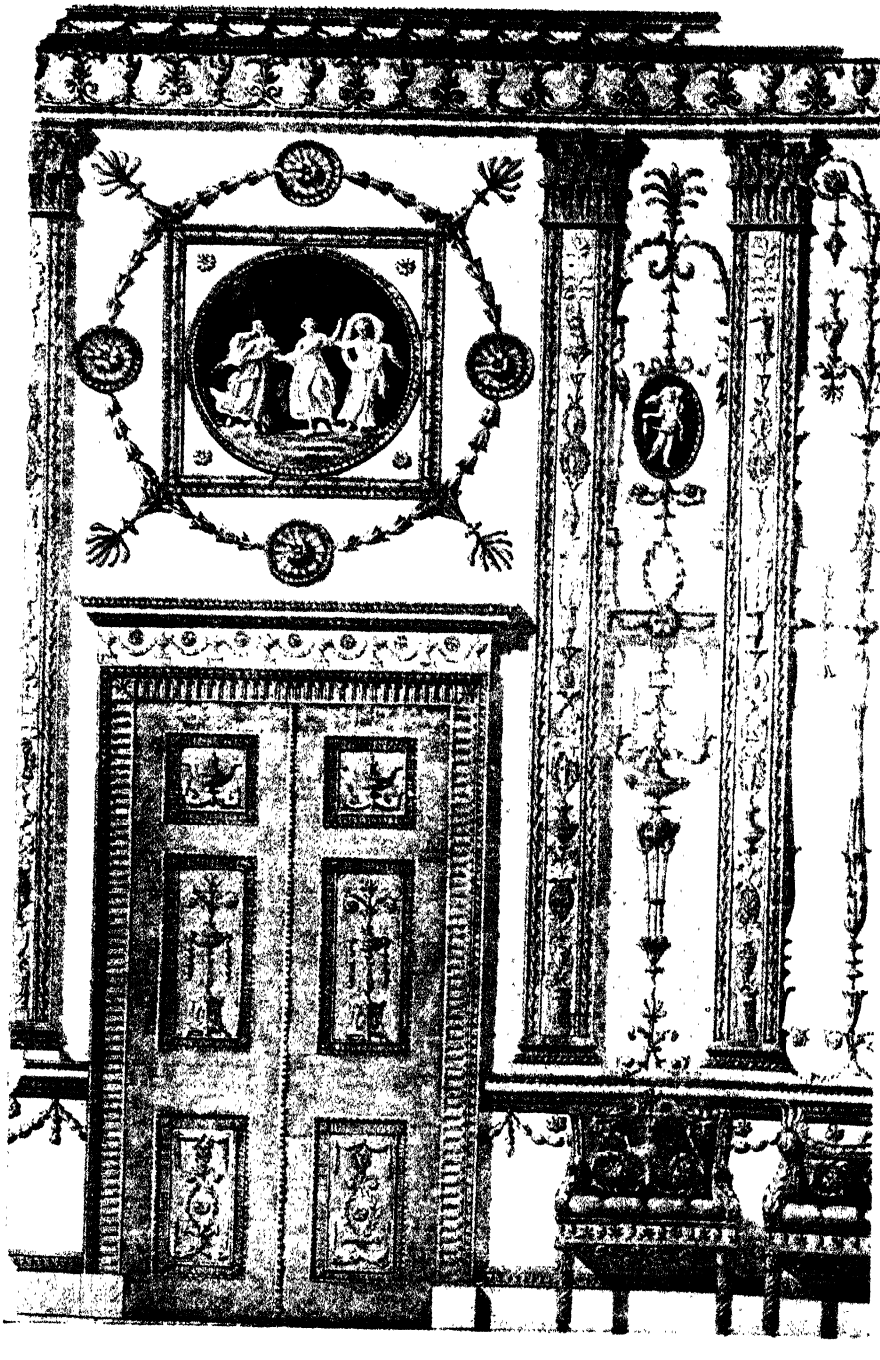


2 Section of a Drawing-Room at Northumberland House, London, designed by Robert Adam. From the original drawing at the Soane Museum

# I

## THE BURLINGTON LEGATEES

REPEATEDLY we overhear the untutored loosely ascribe any mid- or late Goergian, although less frequently early Georgian, building to the Adam brothers. The too common ascription indicates how far the terms "Adam" or "Adam style" have become household ones. As it happens, the Adam brothers' active lives and that of the greatest of the four, Robert, lasted only a little over a quarter of a century. Their influence, of course, lasted far longer. In this volume we mean to postulate what is not so platitudinous as may at first appear, namely that the neo-classical or, as we prefer to term it, the "Adam style" emanated exclusively from Robert Adam himself. At the same time we disclaim all charge of belittling his immediate predecessors, contemporaries, or successors, although the two latter, sure enough, at some time or other fell under his spell. As for personal tastes, partiality may attract us to the pre-Adam or post-Adam periods rather than to that of the eminent man himself, who, when all is said and done, was pre-eminent among his contemporaries and one of the very greatest men in the history of British art. It is right that Robert Adam should be estimated as an architectural innovator as well as just a prolific builder, no matter whether our own tastes or the fashionable foibles of the hour decree his works to be unpalatable.

Robert Adam, as we shall see later, started upon his career in earnest in 1758. By the beginning of George III's reign he was fairly launched in his profession and the world of architectural cognoscenti recognised in his buildings a deviation in style from what had preceded him. In 1758, too, Thomas Ripley died, and thus we have a convenient chronological link and landmark, which is always a help to the student of the arts. But who, we may ask, was Thomas Ripley? Not anyone perhaps of momentous historical importance, but the fates did not decree that anyone of more consequence in the architectural hierarchy should die in that particular year. Had it been William Kent or Lord Burlington or James Gibbs (the two last only missed the distinction by a year or so), or even John Vardy or Isaac Ware, how much more didactic our arguments could have proved. Thomas Ripley, however, was no insignificant architect, in spite of Pope's highly unjust couplet that has always been quoted in his disfavour:

> Heaven visits with a taste the wealthy fool
> And needs no rod but Ripley and a rule.

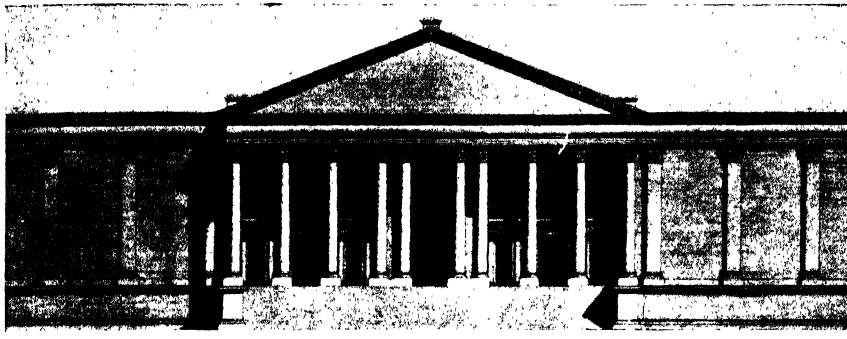
Ripley built Wolterton Hall, in Norfolk (9), which shows effective planning and considerable craftsmanship; also the admittedly unimaginative

Admiralty in Whitehall, which Robert Adam the following year did his best to conceal with his screen (4), and helped Kent build Houghton Hall (7) for Sir Robert Walpole. He was, moreover, a junior member of the Palladian or, more precisely, Burlington School, being a contemporary of the earl himself. It is this connection that makes his demise in 1758 convenient and significant.

Before we shall attempt to appreciate the changes brought about so drastically by Robert Adam, and certainly before we consider the causes of them, it is as well to estimate the sort of building that was going on in England in the 1750s, the decade during the greater part of which the revolutionary Robert Adam was quietly schooling himself at home and overseas for fresh woods and pastures new. The eighteenth century, as far as the arts are concerned, was extremely flexible, quick-moving, and volatile. In architecture particularly, schools, movements, and styles developed with such rapidity that it is seldom the expert cannot attribute a building to its own decade. Often enough three or more different schools or styles would flourish separately and sometimes intermingle during the same era. Every now and again a new style would flourish above all others, when the older would wither at the roots and dwindle away. About once in a generation this would happen. The generation immediately preceding Adam's was predominantly the Burlingtonian, the heyday of which was the twenties and thirties. Ripley belonged by rights to this generation and these decades, rather than to the forties and fifties, during which time Burlingtonianism, though still predominant, was a little shop-soiled and making slightly heavy weather against subsidiary heterodox influences in the guise of the Rococo taste, Gothic taste, and Chinese taste. In fact, throughout the forties the Burlingtonians were beginning to grow old and out of date and by the fifties to die off altogether. It was not until the sixties that the ordinary man agreed to find them just very slightly ridiculous.

The two men chiefly associated with the Palladian movement, or Burlingtonian school, were of course William Kent and Lord Burlington. In the annals of English architecture their names will be inseparably connected. Throughout the eighteenth century they were mutually held in almost continuous and universal esteem—even when outmoded—not only by their contemporaries but also by their followers who were practising architecture, so long in fact as the classical was the prevailing form of building, whether the neo-Roman or the neo-Grecian [1] variety. Sir John Soane so late as the early nineteenth century, though a Grecian to his finger-tips, refers in a lecture to Burlington as "that great luminary of architecture". By one of those freaks of injustice, the sharply ascending Victorian Gothic scale tilted the two men into the bottomless pit of degradation and obloquy. So precipitate was the weight of their posthumous

[1] Throughout this book we make "Roman" the first of the conjunction because, unlike the sequence of the two civilisations, the Grecian revival came last in the eighteenth-century renaissance.

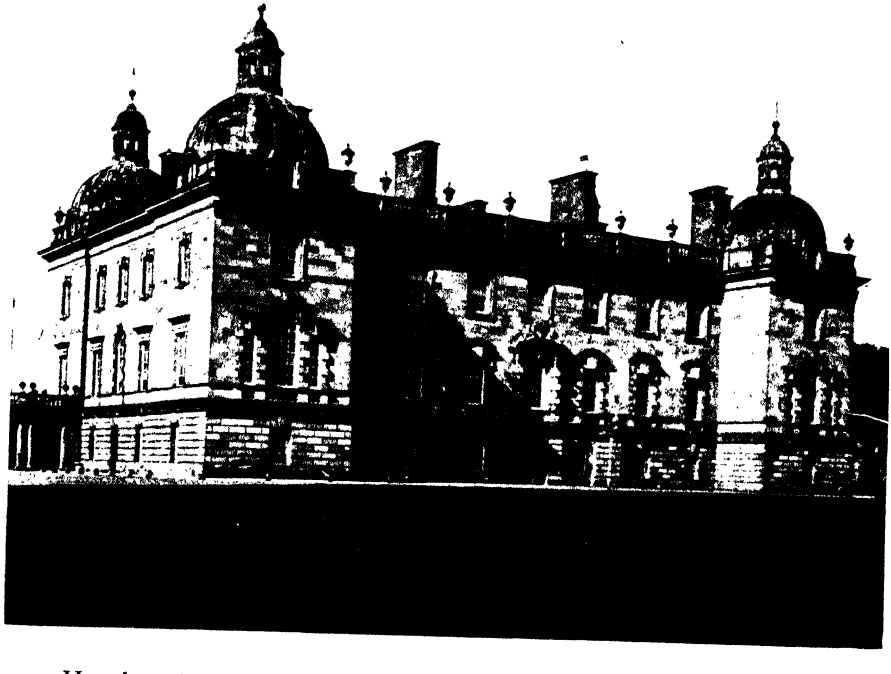


3 The Sun Court at the Temple of the Sun, Palmyra (cf. the Great Portico at Osterley, fig. 95) from Robert Wood's *The Ruins of Palmyra* (published 1753)

4 The Admiralty, built by Thomas Ripley (1724–6), and Robert Adam's Screen (1760)

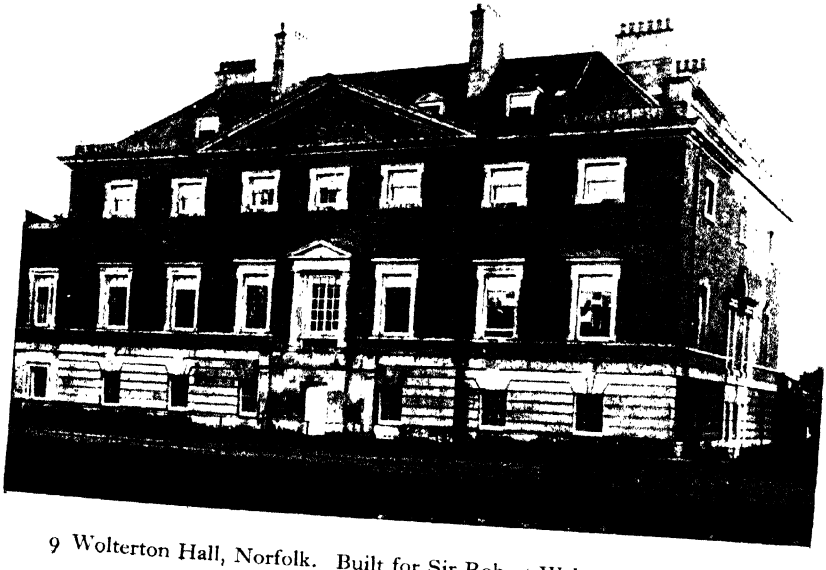
5 Carved detail by Michael Spang, sculptor, on the Admiralty Screen

6 Hagley Park, Worcestershire. Architect, Sanderson Miller (1753)



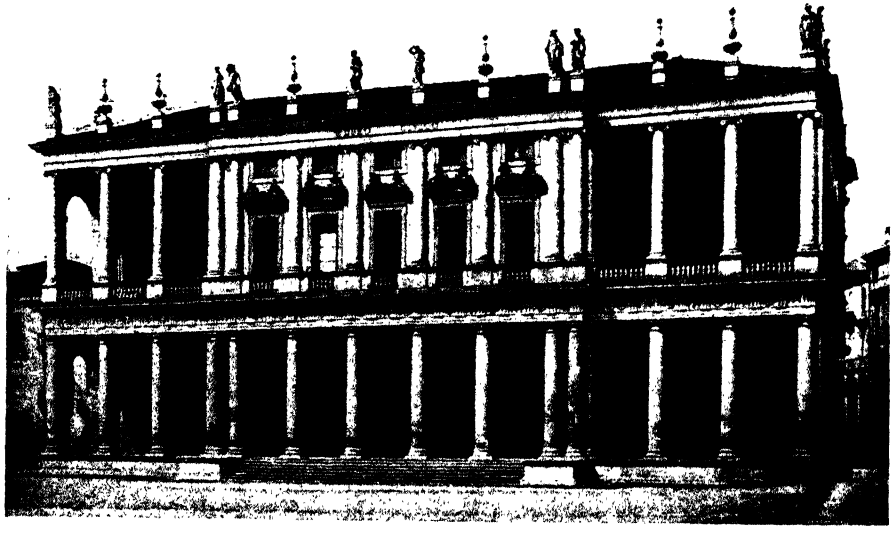
7 Houghton Hall, Norfolk. Built for Sir Robert Walpole in the Palladian style and decorated by William Kent (after 1722)

8 Chesterfield House, Mayfair. Built by Isaac Ware (1749) and demolished (1937)



9 Wolterton Hall, Norfolk. Built for Sir Robert Walpole's brother, by Thomas Ripley (1726)

10 Chiswick House, Middlesex. Built by Lord Burlington and William Kent (1727–36) after Palladio's prototype at Vicenza (see fig. 56)



11 Palazzo Chiericati, Vicenza. Built by Andrea Palladio (1551)

fall that when the classical scale righted itself once more they were left behind, firmly fixed in the mud of oblivion. The protagonists of the "Queen Anne" rage in the 1880s and 90s might on occasion condescend to stretch out a delicate forefinger of approbation, only to withdraw it quickly for fear of contamination—with what exactly? The snobbishness of the Gothic Streets and Burgeses descended to the Norman Shaws, the Reginald Blomfields of our present century. William Kent was a coach-builder's son, and so taboo; Lord Burlington was an earl, and so the same. Both—and here we come to the pith of the objection—were dilettanti, and this from the zealous professionals, the authors of the Law Courts, Pont Street, and of modern Regent Street, invited irredeemable damnation. Of none of these charges can we acquit Kent and Burlington, but happily our present generation has thought fit to overlook them, and rather to dwell with delight upon the scholastic sense of form, the robust regard for nicety of mass and balance displayed in all the works from their hands. William Kent was the first whose reputation has been re-established. Lord Burlington's reprieve has followed in the wake of his protégé's. At the moment of writing the biographies of both are, for the first time in history, in process of compilation.

It was until very lately assumed, even by the most intrepid of the pioneer reprievers, that Burlington may have been the enlightened patron, the Maecenas gifted with taste, discernment, and wealth, but that Kent was the artist who executed the work. Most certainly Kent was the greater artist (that was his vocation), the more versatile genius and by far the more prolific executant; but recent researches have revealed that Burlington himself designed and in fact created buildings. When we come to assess their actual works we find that, in spite of the preponderance of buildings in Kent's favour, the earl's have the advantage in originality of design. Unstintedly though we admire the monumental splendour of Kent's Holkham and his Horse Guards (19), the consummate artistry of his interior decoration at, say, Houghton (7) or 44 Berkeley Square (12), we must award the palm to the eclectic provenance of Burlington's Dormitory at Westminster and his Assembly Rooms at York (23). For these are creations of a new order in English architecture, for which the earl's scholarship is solely responsible. We may take a better example for comparison where the two men worked together at Chiswick House (10). The decoration, the trimmings upon which we feast our eyes and senses, is the artist's, Kent, but the planning, the classic composition itself, is the creator's, Burlington.

This leads us to some preliminary discussion as to what were the exact innovations for which Burlington was responsible. He would be a rash man who out of zeal for architectural purism were to suggest an advance made by Lord Burlington upon the architectural tenets set by Sir Christopher Wren, who was one of the most individually stylistic master-builders of the whole European renaissance. But Burlington himself had the temerity to arrogate to his return to a severer classicism an improvement

upon Wren's work, which he considered licentious and corrupt. "The Jews", he said allegorically, in reference to the rebuilding of St. Paul's, "who recalled the first [*i.e.* Inigo Jones's west portico], wept when they saw the second Temple [Wren's]."

Such conviction expressed by one artist in the extremity of his self-assurance at the expense of his predecessor is beside the point for posterity to argue. None the less, the academic importance to us of Burlington's tenets lies in his determination to react against the baroque,[1] as he saw it, of Wren and his followers, Vanbrugh, Hawksmoor, and Gibbs, and instead to revert to the unadulterated classicism of Inigo Jones and so of Andrea Palladio. This much was his own claim for the cause of British architecture, and this his undoubted achievement.

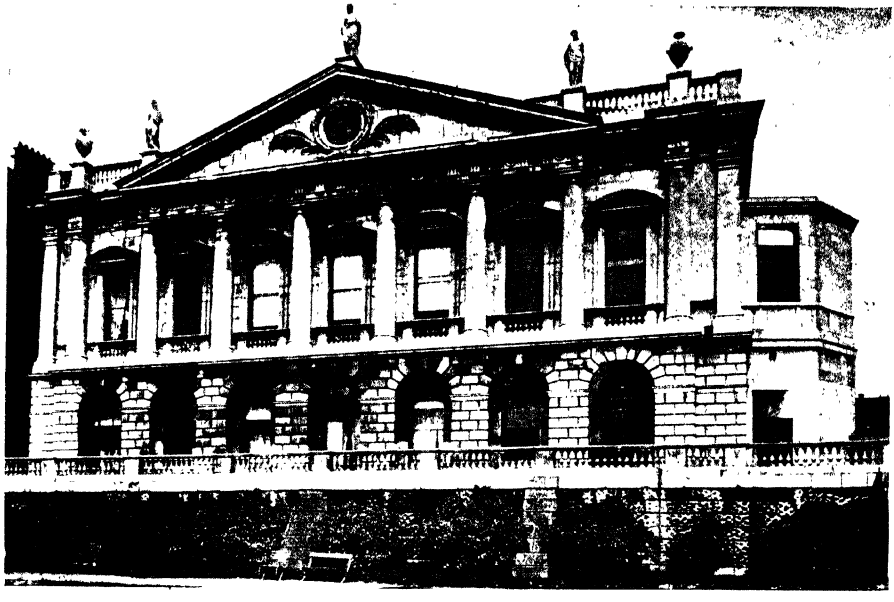
It is easy enough to disparage the earl by dismissing him as old-fashioned, dry-as-dust, reactionary. What, you may say, did the man do but put the clock back to where Inigo Jones left it in 1652? In any event the school he revived was short-lived, lasted but a generation and was swept away by Robert Adam in 1758.

In the first place Lord Burlington, to our way of thinking, came upon the scene at the opportune moment when the English baroque, magnificent as it was, had not quite overshot the mark. Lord Burlington, by preserving the Roman continuity, prevented the baroque from overreaching itself and possibly degenerating into that aimless anarchy of continental rococo. How much more satisfying are, for instance, Vanbrugh's restrained contours at Blenheim than the uncontrolled swirligigs of the Roman baroquists, Carlo Maderna at Sta Maria Della Vittoria, for instance, or Borromini at Sta Agnese. As to the rococo, English architecture never devolved into that interesting phase at all, simply because Lord Burlington arrested the trend. The only trace of the rococo appears in very modified form in interior designs for ceilings and walls of the period. Burlington himself even dallied with it in a cautious fashion in his interiors, for at Chiswick we see the familiar repeated device of the shell, the whorl, and the scroll. Thus did the great Palladian revivalist adroitly take the wind out of his own sails by putting a brake upon the natural exuberance of his age. Instead, he directed the English architectural impetus into something grand and lasting at a time of great prosperity and large-scale artistic activity that was to last a full century. There is nothing in the history of any civilisation so profuse, so prolific, as the inexhaustible flow of country-house architecture evolved by the wealthy Whig aristocracy in eighteenth-century England.

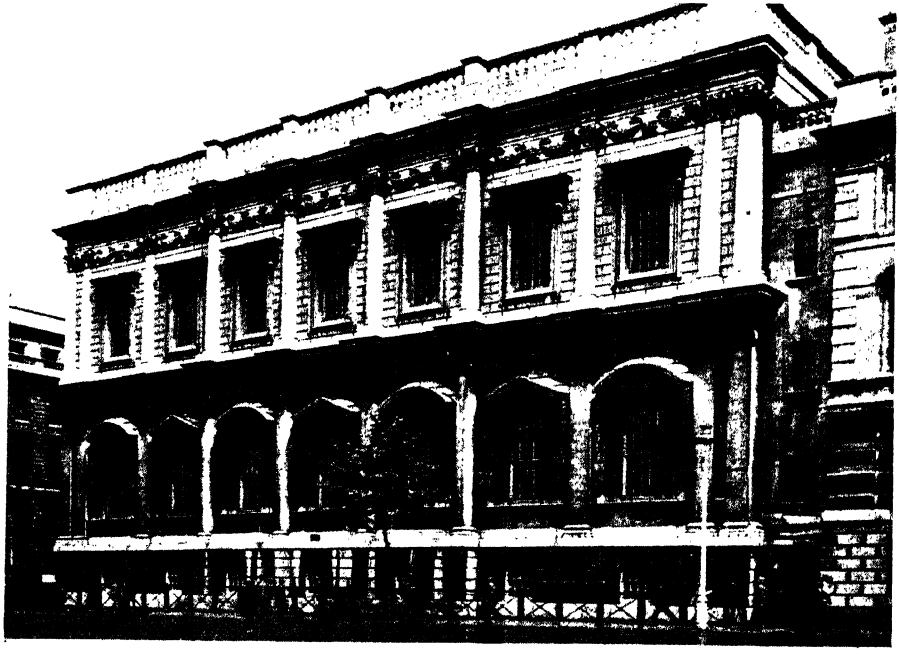
In the second place, although Burlingtonianism came to a recognised end in the fifties it was not swept away in every vestige with Robert Adam's advent. On the contrary, as we shall see, in spite of every attempt to arrest it, Adam unconsciously inherited much from it and developed it along his own innovatory lines. Like a true artist's, his work did not

[1] Lord Burlington even strove, as his own publications testify, to purge his master of baroquism, whenever he came across it in Palladio's original drawings.

12 No. 44 Berkeley Square, London: the stairwell. Built by William Kent for Lady Isabella Finch (1744–5) (*Country Life* photograph)



13 Spencer House, Green Park, London. Designed by General Gray and built by John Vardy (1755)



14 The Banqueting Hall, Whitehall. Built by Inigo Jones (1619–21), and one of the earliest Palladian buildings in England

break with but evolved from past traditions. Not for nothing was he the son of William Adam, Scotland's only representative Palladian in that still backward country. Especially is the father's influence apparent in the son's earliest endeavours.

We all know that the English progenitor of the classical form of building in these islands was Inigo Jones. He had returned from Italy in 1614, and at a time when the English landscape was casting up lordly palaces in the still semi-barbaric Jacobean style, like gigantic mole-heaps—the Blicklings, Hatfields, and Audley Ends—astonished the world of art with the Banqueting Room at Whitehall (14). This was in 1619–21, when men suddenly saw breasting the London river fogs a building of, to them, revolutionary type. In actual fact it was a building that in Italy had been common for two hundred years past, such as even the foreign master-masons and craftsmen at work in this country a century previously had in their youth taken for granted at home. Giovanni da Maiano, sculpturing busts of Emperors for Wolsey at Hampton Court in 1521, Benedetto da Rovezzano, working for him there three years later, and Giralano da Treviso and John of Padua during the next decade had all seen in their native land similar buildings to the Banqueting Hall, which one hundred years afterwards so astonished the unsophisticated Englishman. The fact that the Italian artists had not been allowed to reproduce in these islands what was so common in their own country can only be explained by the extremely strong native prejudices and traditions of the English race. It was left to Inigo Jones to introduce unadulterated classical architecture to England, and because he was entirely British, his interpretations of the foreign were tolerated.

Since Jones's classical compositions were in fact of Palladian derivation, it has become the habit to dub all classical architecture in England by that term. This is a great mistake, for in the interests of exactitude it is wrong to entitle Wren's or Robert Adam's buildings Palladian, and grossly erroneous so to describe the works of Athenian Stuart or Sir John Soane. For reasons that no one may explain, the Italian architect who captured Jones's imagination and retained his allegiance was the sixteenth-century Vicentine, Andrea Palladio. Palladio cannot be classed among the greatest of Italian Renaissance architects, like Brunelleschi, Bramante or Michael Angelo. In Italy he is regarded in about the same light as Galsworthy amongst novelists in this country, a man of painstaking talent and a correct sense of order and rule: a man who could not easily go wrong. In England, however, Palladio has long been esteemed amongst the most exalted builders of all time, just as Galsworthy, for some unexplained reason, ranks with Tolstoy in the German mind. Palladio was wholeheartedly adopted by the young Jones as his guiding star, and the *Quattro Libri dell' Architettura*, first published in Italy in 1570, became for him a holy script, to be more precise the Vulgate version. It was left to Lord Burlington to play the part of Wyclif and to present to a hungry world, through the 1715 translation of Leoni, an authorised version in the vernacular tongue.

The first purely classical style of building in England was introduced in the Palladian form. As such it was based upon the principles of, perhaps, a minor architect of the late Italian Renaissance. It worked out none the less extremely happily. The strong individualism of the English craftsmen soon tempered it to a peculiarly English form that assumed an entirely vernacular expression and tradition. Do we not justly rank Shakespeare with the most renowned of the world's literary giants? Yet Shakespeare based his comedies and tragedies upon minor continental story-tellers whose names are lost in oblivion. By whatever measure the Italians themselves may assess Palladio in relation to their greatest creative architects, we must credit him with an academic regard for purity of form that provided an exemplary basis upon which to build our national and invariably undisciplined tradition of architecture—a tradition that has been this country's first contribution to the world of art. This ordered aspect of Palladio's teaching was appreciated by Sir John Soane, who spoke highly of Palladio to his pupils for the valued reason that they might look to him for classical purity of form.

Without retracing the theme too far, we may merely say that Palladio was the disciple of that renowned pedant of the Augustan age Vitruvius, whose teaching essentially derived from the Roman form of building. As Roman, then, Inigo Jones founded the English school, and as Roman Lord Burlington revived it, after a glorious interlude of the Wren school that in spite of its resounding virtues was certainly not Roman in principle. Nor would Wren, who never went to Italy and paid not the slightest heed to Italian methods, nor to Inigo Jones for that matter, wish it to be supposed that he was influenced by them. During his ninety-odd years Wren only once left these shores—on a reluctant six months' visit to Paris in 1665, when he achieved a fleeting interview with Bernini and suffered the barest contact with the leading French architects and artists. Wren was one of the world's great creators, who lived wrapt in his own glorious isolation, professedly owing nothing to another's teaching and on that account leaving behind him a vacuity and no architectural heirs.

Second only in academic importance to the date 1621, which marked the completion of the Whitehall Banqueting Room, is the year 1721, which marked the rejection by the Dean and Chapter of Wren's design in favour of one by Lord Burlington for the new Dormitory at Westminster. In one step the young nobleman had bridged the gap (yawning since Jones's death in 1652) in the classical tradition by the triumph of his revived Palladianism over the reigning baroque school. Once more the classical tradition of building had asserted itself. Do not, however, let us overaccentuate the earl's intention in this volte-face. Like many another dawn of a new era, this one was brought about as much by accident as by design. Lord Burlington was undoubtedly pleased to bring it about. A true born man of culture, he had spent his grand tour between 1710 and 1713 visiting, and far more thoroughly than poor Mr. Jones could afford to do, all those pilgrimages then accessible to travellers on the Italian peninsula.

In spite of his advantages of choice and of wider travel, Burlington, possibly from earlier predispositions in Jones's favour, returned satisfied that he too would set up no other god but Palladio. He tells us that he saw, studied, and measured every building known to be from the hands of the master. Moreover, he bought all the manuscripts and drawings of Palladio that he could trace. On his return to England he eagerly disseminated his Palladian principles to those disciples that readily assembled at Burlington House, such as William Kent, always to remain his chief ally, Colen Campbell, Flitcroft, Leoni, Ware, and our old friend Ripley. Lord Burlington was young, intellectual, of great judgment and great wealth, fired as though with a crusading spirit, and, last but not least, an earl. Sir Christopher Wren, on the other hand, was extremely aged, exhausted, under a cloud with the authorities, and had recently been treated by them with reprehensible neglect and discourtesy. As so often happens to the old war-horse in England, his past services were abruptly overlooked and he had been flung aside.

The original Burlingtonians, then, flourished in the twenties and thirties. With a fanaticism that at times verged on the ludicrous they adhered tenaciously to the holy script of Andrea Palladio. Palladian palaces of the great Whig lords, cousins for the most part of the leader of the movement, sprang up like mushrooms—Chiswick (10), Mereworth, Houghton (7) and Holkham, Wanstead, Moor Park, Londesborough and Clandon. There was no end to them. In 1748 William Kent died, and the Tinkerbell, as it were, of the whole pantomime having gone out the movement lost heart. In 1753 the Vitruvius Britannicus himself was dead.

The lesser and younger breed of Burlingtonians meanwhile still nobly upheld the dynasty. We are now coming to the generation immediately preceding that of Robert Adam. It has been claimed that the last thoroughbred Burlingtonian houses were Wentworth Woodhouse (1740) (18), by Henry Flitcroft, and Chesterfield House (1749) (8), by Isaac Ware. Wentworth Woodhouse enjoys the distinction of being the largest country house in all England, and were it not for its unbroken front of 600 feet, its elevations would evoke little enthusiasm, for their ingredients are decent and painstaking without being inspiring. It is difficult to defend Wentworth against the jibes of the untutored, still carelessly hurtled against the Achilles' heel of Burlingtonianism, which is a text-book heaviness.

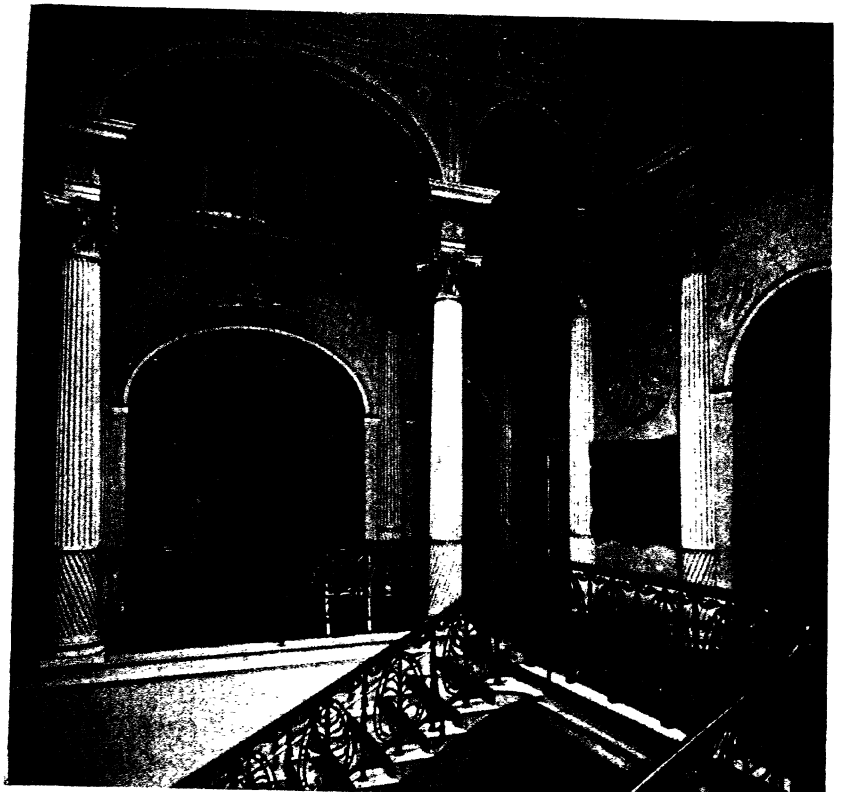
Chesterfield House is, or rather was, in quite a different category. Standing in the heart of the metropolis, it has already been immolated to Mammon, and all that reminds us of its memory is the mockery of its name in the shape of an amorphous lump of luxury flats. Isaac Ware always gave the impression of having been a slightly reluctant Burlingtonian, as though his Gallic spirit strove to fly away from the puny body of that once small boy in rags found chalking elevations out of his head upon any empty wall space or virgin pavement-stone of a London street. A

penurious youth no doubt impressed upon him the recognition which side of the angels his bread was buttered. In his *Compleat Body of Architecture*, published in 1756, poor Ware dallies with anti-Palladian heresies. Though Chesterfield House, with its stark exterior, rigidity of roof line, and square precision of flanking colonnades, faithfully reflected the English tradition of classic building, there was more than a French flavour about the rich plaster ornamentation of its saloons. Did Ware suppose that by 1749 he could fairly safely risk offending the ageing master with free indulgence in interior licence? At least he had the undoubted excuse that his patron, Lord Chesterfield, was an acknowledged Francophil, whose erudition and tastes derived from across the Channel.

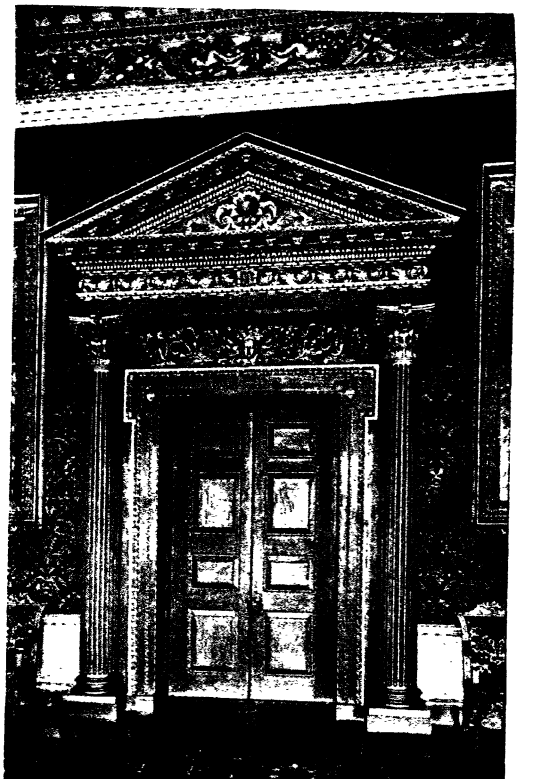
The striking and immediate consequence of the Adam revolution of 1758, which we shall elaborate in later chapters, was the far-reaching and pervasive tide of the new style. It fairly swept over Adam's contemporaries, his elders as well as his juniors, and like the recurrent ocean wave metamorphosising shingle on a beach, wrought a sea-change upon them in his own image. Mr. John Steegmann acutely observes that the chief symptom of the change from Burlingtonianism to Adamism was a tendency to design in two dimensions rather than in three, or in line rather than in mass, culminating in a lightened elegance, in the pretty rather than in the sublime, in the feminine rather than in the masculine. To some extent this tendency is noticeable in so far as Adam's own middle, or decorative, period is concerned—and it is from the middle period that his imitators profited—but we must guard against too many abstract generalisations in dealing with an artist of Adam's potentially monumental qualities.

The Adam style certainly spread like a disease in the sixties, and above all in the seventies, so that architects like Carr, Mylne, and Paine, whose early works in the fifties were still distinctly Burlingtonian, changed their direction, as it were, practically overnight. Chapter VI will deal with a number of country houses begun by older architects and transformed or completed by Robert Adam, where the comparison in a single building between what he found and what he left will make the change-over even easier to follow. For the present let us take at random five examples of fairly well-known buildings erected during the 1750s by five architects of repute, all of them just a few years senior to Robert Adam—only one of them born a generation older, three between eleven and sixteen years older, and one only a mere two years older. They shall be Spencer House, St. James's Park (13), begun by John Vardy in 1755; the Stone Buildings in Lincoln's Inn Fields (17), by Sir Robert Taylor, in 1756; Brocket Hall, Hertfordshire (15), by James Paine, begun in 1751; Hagley Park, Worcestershire (6), by Sanderson Miller, in 1753; and, lastly, the High Wycombe Guildhall (21), by Henry Keene, in 1757.

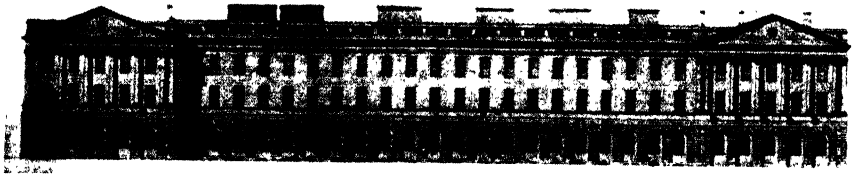
A glance at these buildings is enough to convince us that they all belong to the pre-Adam era. Four of them distinctly carry out the Burlingtonian principle in elevation; whereas the High Wycombe Guildhall, oddly enough by the youngest of the five architects, could actually be assigned



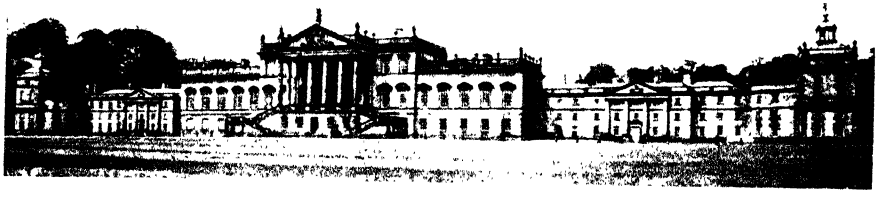
15 Brocket Hall, Hertfordshire (by James Paine, 1750–75), the staircase treated in the Roman manner



16 Houghton Hall: one of William Kent's doorcases



17 The Stone Buildings, Lincoln's Inn Fields. Built by Sir Robert Taylor (1756)



18 Wentworth Woodhouse, Yorkshire, by Henry Flitcroft (1740)

19 The Horse Guards, Whitehall. Architect, William Kent (1753); clerk-of-the-works, John Vardy

to a member of the even earlier Wren school. Of these five men Vardy, once clerk of the works to Kent at the Horse Guards and by far the eldest, is not known to have built anything else after the advent of Adam; Sanderson Miller and Keene both diverged from the paths of classicism and built only in Gothic; Taylor and Paine, who, in the oft-quoted words of Thomas Hardwick, had "nearly divided the practice of the profession between them" until their simultaneous eclipse, both continued to build widely nevertheless, but under the unmistakable influence of the Adam style.

In Spencer House (13) we shall straightway ignore the additions of the famous painted room by Athenian Stuart, the stairway by Taylor, and the occasional doorways by Henry Holland. These were adventitious embellishments to the bare bones begun by John Vardy.[1] The skeleton is what concerns us here, notably the park elevation with its impressive statues and urns, which have miraculously survived successive blitzes and are the work of Michael Spang, the sculptor. Over the existing terrace the ground floor is heavily rusticated, just as any sixteenth-century palazzo in Vicenza would have been. Above this storey is the great floor where seven bays are formed by eight engaged columns under a Doric entablature. The seven windows are pedimented, pointed, and elliptical alternately. The whole front is still essentially Palladian, and would have met with the full approval of the authors of Marble Hill or the York Mansion House in the 1720s and 30s. The only falling away from grace is the too great width of the front in relation to the height, for the engaged columns are further apart than would have been allowed by Palladio. As to the interiors of Spencer House, the ceilings are still compartmented, as in Inigo Jones's day, whereas the exquisite palm room was a direct adaptation by Vardy of Jones's Bedchamber for King Charles I at Greenwich.

The Stone Buildings (17) are likewise frankly Burlingtonian still. Of exquisitely beautiful Portland stone, they glisten like silver through the gauzy sun that curtains London on an autumn afternoon. The long west wing is constructed upon the familiar heavily rusticated lower storey. The cut and hatching of the dressed stone is what we would expect from the hand of an expert master mason. The elevation of Ely House in Dover Street (20), which somehow has survived civil and martial mutilation, and was built by Taylor nearly twenty years later, shows no superiority in this respect. The two end projections of the Stone Buildings have massive high pediments with obtuse apexes and there is a pierced roundel in each tympanum. The entablatures rest upon engaged Corinthian columns in a strictly Roman manner. Along the whole skyline runs a thick balustered parapet. The Stone Buildings are the work of an artist of the uniform competence that Robert Taylor consistently maintained. If they had been executed from a design in Colen Campbell's first volume

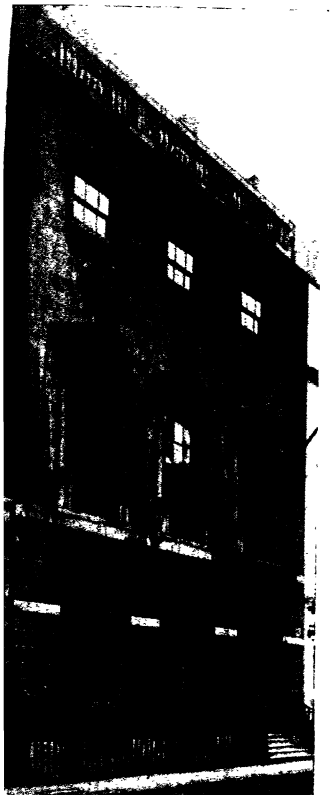
[1] Here we do not overlook the legend that General Gray made the first rough designs for the principal façade. The house was certainly executed by Vardy and as such can safely be called his work.

of *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1717), Taylor's contemporaries would not have expressed astonishment, nor for that matter have deemed them old-fashioned.

Brocket Hall (15) is a rare and unusually interesting example of a large country house begun in one age and style and carried through by the same architect over a number of years into the next. Paine did not complete his work here until 1775, and it is fascinating to trace how he abandoned his Burlingtonian methods and adopted finally the prevailing Adam mode of the day. The early work is well illustrated in the entrance hall, with its mid-Georgian door-cases; in the constructional arcading of the staircase landing, the columns of which support little sections of entablature according to Roman tradition; in the whole of the dining-room and in nearly all the bedrooms. The later work is equally clearly illustrated in the ceilings of the library and drawing-room and above all in the magnificent coved saloon. The ceiling of this room is unusual in that the painted panels are the work not of foreigners like Angelica Kauffmann or Biagio Rebecca, whom Adam and Wyatt employed, but of the Englishmen "the late ingenious Mr. John Mortimer", to use Paine's own words, and of his successor, Francis Wheatley, of "London Cries" renown.

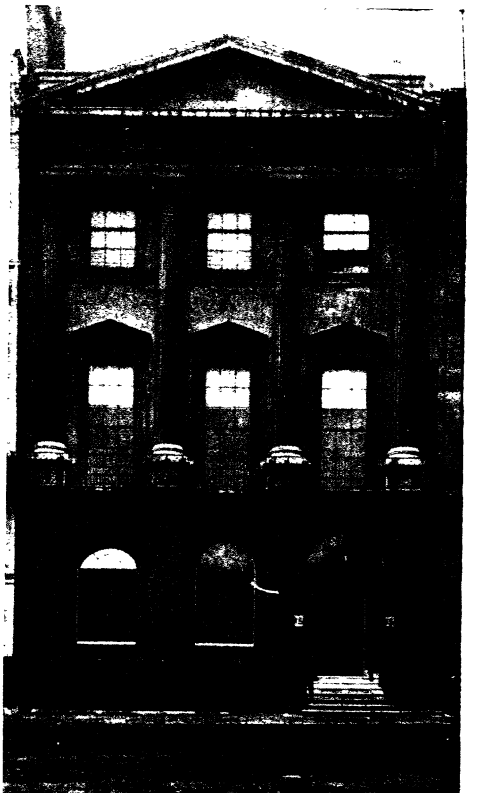
Hagley (6), the home of the Lyttleton family and in the mid-eighteenth century the most coveted haunt of men of letters in the whole kingdom, has probably been more written about and praised by poets than any other country house. The published letters of Sanderson Miller make it quite plain that he was the first Lord Lyttleton's architect. Here we have a compact rectangular mass, flanked by four square angle towers with a four-ribbed cupola over each rising to a blunt apex. Than these towers nothing could be more reminiscent of Kent at the Horse Guards and Holkham or of Lord Burlington himself at Savenake. In actual fact the whole composition is practically a reproduction of Colen Campbell's Lydiard Tregoze. The subordinate relation of voids to solids is in itself an emphasis upon which the Burlingtonians flattered themselves, and the effect of it is what Lyttleton had unconsciously in mind when he wrote to Miller in 1752: "We are pretty indifferent about the outside, it is enough if there be nothing offensive to the eye". Miller, who had little original genius, certainly fulfilled his friend and patron's intentions by following wholeheartedly the Palladian injunctions and producing a Palladian composition. At Hagley the piano nobile is reached on the south front by a curved perron in that manner directly inspired by the Burlingtonians from their Italian master's palaces on the Brenta. As for the interior decoration, the heavily framed compartments of plaster reliefs, unrivalled for their naturalistic quality, and the immense swags and drops draped around the portrait spaces in the saloon are typical of the reigns of the early Georges, and would not for one moment have been countenanced by Adam's standards of delicacy and elegance.

Lastly, we have the beautiful red brick Guildhall of Keene at High Wycombe (21). The material alone recalls the pre-Burlingtonian era,



Ely House, Dover Street, London. t by Sir Robert Taylor (1772), in the Roman style

21 The Guildhall, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. Architect, Henry Keene (1757), showing affinity to Wren's work



22 No. 15 St. James's Square, London. Built by James Stuart (1766), in the Grecian Style

23 Assembly Rooms, York. Built by Lord Burlington (1730–2) in the strictly Palladian style

24 Pantheon, Oxford Street, London: the earliest work (1772) of James Wyatt, Robert Adam's most formidable rival

the suavity of Wren's William and Mary domestic architecture. Only the great Venetian window betrays its later origin and conveys the true Palladian touch. What building in the whole of England could be less easily mistaken for Adam's work or associated with the age that bears his name? Yet it is later than any of the four previous buildings we have been considering, and dates from the very year when Robert Adam was scurrying across Europe, his head teeming with those ideas he was bursting to put into practice the moment he arrived home. It dates but four years earlier than Adam's own little market house opposite it on the other side of the road, which, modest though it is, eloquently proclaims itself a harbinger of the newer age.

# II

## THE MAN ADAM

ROBERT ADAM (27), the second of four distinguished brothers, was born at Kirkcaldy in Fifeshire on the 3rd July, 1728. We know little of his family antecedents, but it is probable that his forebears had corresponded in that northern land to the squireens or yeoman farmers from whom many of us derive in the south. He certainly—if in unjustifiable self-pride—entitled his brothers "esquires" in the list of subscribers to his Spalatro publication, whereas to Rysbrach and Samuel Wyatt, one the famous sculptor, the other to become a distinguished architect, he rather pointedly gave the designation of plain "Mr". Maybe this self-assumption of gentility was in the eyes of his family, and even of his contemporaries, permissible on the grounds of his father's having purchased out of the profits of his profession a 4,000-acre estate, in his native county, which is known to this day as Blair Adam. William Adam, senior, assuredly came to enjoy what is called a good position in Edinburgh society. He had built up, in a hard-working life, an immense and lucrative practice. He is said to have begun his architectural career as assistant to Sir William Bruce of Balcaskie, who died in 1710, and whose works with William's own practically monopolise the designs illustrated in the father's posthumously published *Vitruvius Scoticus*. William Adam, senior, was the first strictly classical architect that Scotland produced, and his buildings are generally of sound quality, and in England would not have fallen far short of the best work by the Burlingtonians.

William Adam was, above all, a successful business man. He enjoyed fairly important government contracts for raising forts in the Highlands, and, with his eccentric bachelor brother-in-law, Archibald Robertson, long held a lease of the Pinkie coalfields, which were not unresourceful. As the result of the father's plodding and painstaking career, the sons were from the start made independent. All of them were given the advantage of the best possible training in architecture. Of the four who devoted themselves to the profession, Robert was, of course, the genius, the inspiration and driving power behind his brothers. John, the eldest, inherited Blair Adam,[1] and the care of the family estates eventually became his life interest. He also succeeded his father as Master Mason in North Britain to the Board of Ordnance and built several fortifications at Fort George. But with John, on the whole, architecture became a recreation rather than a profession, although he never dissociated himself from the

[1] Some designs by Robert, dated 1772, for a new house at Blair Adam exist, but were never carried out.

firm which the brothers set up and of which he was the chief financial backer in all its most ambitious ventures.

James, the third son and next best known after Robert, acted as chief of staff in the family firm. He was a neat draftsman, a scholar, and like his father an excellent business man. But unlike Robert, he possessed little genius, although he rendered him such faithful and loyal service that in James's own work we may see accurately reflected the principles and the inspiration of his elder brother. Dr. Alexander Carlyle, an old friend of the Adam family, gives us in his *Autobiography* [1] a few scraps of information about the personality of James, who was clearly his favourite. "Jamie Adam", he says on one occasion, "would not get up, and had, besides, a very tedious toilet", and these few words at once convey an entirely contradictory impression in the amiable foppish sluggard to the level-headed business man we have just been depicting. Again, Carlyle vouchsafes, "James Adam, though not so bold and superior an artist as his brother Robert, was a well-informed and sensible man, and furnished me with excellent conversation, as we generally rode together".

William, junior, was the fourth and youngest of the brothers. His part in the firm was to look after the finances. He acted as a sort of general manager and treasurer, and it is questionable whether he was altogether very capable. The procedure of the business dealings passed through his hands. William was the last to die, in 1822, in great penury. He cherished until the end the fifty-three volumes of his brother Robert's drawings, and left them in his will to his niece. She sold them to Sir John Soane, in whose museum they are preserved to-day. For his care of these invaluable records we must ever remain indebted to William Adam, if for little else.

Robert Adam presumably first went to school at Kirkcaldy, for Adam Smith, author of the *Wealth of Nations*, records that he was his schoolfellow there. From 1739 until 1742 he was at the High School in Edinburgh. In 1743 he matriculated at Edinburgh University; and it appears that on the father's death five years later the entire Adam family of mother, brothers, and sisters moved their residence into the capital. This is the first record of those wholesale family migrations which henceforth were regularly to punctuate the life of the architect. Hardly any move, it seems, could be made by Robert without the rest following suit. Alexander Carlyle constantly refers to them as that "wonderfully loving family", and the unanimity with which they confronted the world and breasted every adversity forged the strongest of ties that never broke. Carlyle writes at this time of frequent visits "where Mr. Robert Adam, the celebrated architect and his brother lived in Edinburgh with their mother". The sons' devoted affection for Mrs. Adam was, if not inordinate, at least extravagant, and psychologists to-day would diagnose a mother fixation to explain the extraordinary introversion and collective contentment of all her children, so few of whom disengaged themselves

[1] *The Autobiography of Dr. Alexander Carlyle, 1722–1805.*

from the parental skirts to venture upon matrimony. The epitaph on Mrs. Adam's tomb records that she was "a woman of exemplary virtue and good sense", in illustration of which Carlyle gives the following anecdote concerning David Hume, the historian. "Mrs. Adam one day said to her son, 'I shall be glad to see any of your companions to dinner, but I hope you will never bring the Atheist here to disturb my peace.' But Robert soon fell on a method to reconcile her to him, for he introduced him under another name, or concealed it carefully from her. When the company parted she said to her son: 'I must confess that you bring very agreeable companions about you, but the large jolly man who sat next to me is the most agreeable of them all.' 'This was the very atheist,' said he, 'mother, that you were so much afraid of.' 'Well,' says she, 'you may bring him here as much as you please, for he's the most innocent, agreeable, facetious man I ever met with.'"

Throughout the fifties of the eighteenth century there had developed in Scotland an intellectual society that was as brilliant as it was circumscribed. The country was just beginning to recover at this time from consistent misgovernment since the Act of Union, which had at one stroke destroyed its foreign trade and made Scotland desperately poor. The Scots with their great natural resilience were awakening from a period of black depression to feel their way into a new age of prosperity that their own hardy and strong-headed qualities were supremely well calculated to exploit. They were still unduly sensitive, touchy, and, of course, strongly nationalistic. Robert Adam's generation was unusually gifted, and the small society in which he moved comprised the nucleus of a new contribution to British civilisation, which has never received the full attention of historians that it deserves. These men were acutely conscious of their northern isolation. While they did not scruple to profit from their primitive shrewdness in the south, where circumstances impelled them to seek their fortunes, they could not forget that they were regarded as foreigners whose uncouth speech and tough persistence were either mocked or regarded by the blasé and sophisticated English with supercilious hostility. As a result the Scots were thrown still more amongst themselves, and in London often became detached, morose, and assertive. So we find that Scotsmen like William Robertson, David Hume, Adam Ferguson, and John Home were all Robert Adam's intimate companions, who flit across the pages of Alexander Carlyle's journals with gusto and purpose. Carlyle, nicknamed "Jupiter" on account of his jovian good looks, was less intellectual than Robert and his Edinburgh contemporaries, but he always retained their confidence and friendship. Genial, cultivated, and sagacious, he was a minister in Holy Orders whose venial hedonism never allowed the austerities of his vocation to interfere with the broader pleasures of the world. Far from subscribing to the narrow Pharisaism of the ministers of his day, he scandalised the majority of his brethren by co-operating with Home and Robertson in supporting the moderate party in the Church of Scotland.

Of Robert's friends William Robertson (1721–93), Principal of Edinburgh University, was a son of the manse, and a first cousin of the Adams through their mother, his father's sister. His life was one of unremitting study. In 1759 he published his *History of Scotland*, which had taken him six years to write. It evoked the unstinted praise of Horace Walpole, Lord Chesterfield, and Lord Mansfield. In 1769 appeared his masterpiece, the *History of Charles V*, which accorded him an international fame. He was a vigorous christian, an avowed eighteenth-century optimist, without, however, a highly developed metaphysical faculty. He had an exasperating fondness for skimming his friends' talk and repeating the gist of it in highly polished paraphrase. Like many of his race, he lacked humour or cynicism, but was human enough to defend passionately those of his friends in Holy Orders who defied convention by cultivating their minds and, above all, patronising the drama. Mrs. Montagu found him "a very agreeable lively man", and Mrs. Delany, another English lady of the world, was moved to tears over his history of Mary Queen of Scots, who though "I fear a bad woman, was yet extremely to be pitied". Robertson was in his lifetime even more renowned than his cousin, Robert.

David Hume (1711–76), the philosopher, was of a different cast of personality. He had an unsettled, but picaresque career. Ill-health and an inability to work dogged him at the start. His earliest writings were not at all appreciated. He became tutor to the lunatic Lord Annandale, but this venture was not a success, and he was soon dismissed. Thereupon he enlisted in an expedition to Port L'Orient and in another military mission to Vienna. In uniform his appearance was totally unconvincing, for he looked just like "a grocer of the train-bands". In 1751, having seen somewhat of the world, he set up house with his sister in Edinburgh. In the following year he was appointed keeper of the Library to the Faculty of Advocates, and embarked upon his first histories. Fired with a love of learning and culture, he nourished a healthy hatred of Puritanism, which distinguished him from most of his countrymen, and a contempt for the English because they abused Lord Bute and the Scots generally, or so he supposed. This was a typical instance of the inferiority complex that gnawed at the vitals of all Scots during George III's reign. By way of giving expression to his Anglophobia, Hume allowed it to be known that he was violently pro-American. Unlike Robertson, he was a great sceptic, who in spite of deep convictions and because of overwhelming good-nature never bothered to proselytise others or to entice them to share his philosophical principles. In 1763 he went with Lord Hertford to Paris, where he was lionised and petted. He was a tremendous success in a *tableau vivant* dressed as a sultan between two slaves—a couple of the prettiest Parisiennes—to whom by way of conversation he repeated over and over, in the lamest French, "Eh bien, mesdemoiselles, eh bien, vous voilà donc," but not a word more, according to Madame d'Epincey. Three years later he brought Rousseau to England and gave him asylum. But Rousseau, who so long as he got all that he wanted out of Hume,

flattered him to the skies, turned viciously upon his protector the moment he suspected the novelty of his unsteady friendship to be wearing thin. In 1769 Hume was again in Edinburgh, where in 1776 he was dying from a cancer in the bowels. "It is difficult", he wrote, "to be more detached from life than I am at present"; and, indeed, it was this too evident content and complacence in the dying atheist, in spite of acute sufferings, that roused Hume's enemies to an impotent rage and despair of the retributory justice of Jehovah of the Old Testament. In April Hume wrote that wonderful autobiography of perfect resignation and reconciliation with death, and in August he expired. Robert Adam designed and erected in 1777 the tomb for his friend who thirteen years previously had written of the Adams: "That family is one of the few to whose civilities I have been much beholden, and I retain a lively sense of them."

Adam Ferguson (1723–1816) is little more than a name to us to-day, whereas to his generation he was a leader of thought, an experimentalist—he was a pioneer vegetarian—an eminent professor of Natural Philosophy at Edinburgh University, and a man of strong personality and opinions. His convinced nationalism led him to found the Poker Club in 1762, ostensibly to promote the establishment of a Scottish Militia in those uncertain times—a seemingly incongruous interest for a professor of Natural Philosophy, but recognised to be fully consistent with the intellectual activities of his circle. Ferguson was besides "a man of the world and a high-bred gentleman" according to Dr. Carlyle, "who conversed fluently but with dignified reserve". His political philosophy was that of a Whig of the old school, but his disposition was too inflexible to allow him to make any very lasting contribution to political thought.

Of the inner band of the Adams' friends, John Home (1722–1808) was the spoilt and cherished darling. He belongs to that recurrent type of individual in all walks of life whose every silliness, indiscretion, and tiresomeness is forgiven because of unremitting personal charm. Home was the son of the town-clerk of Leith. Very handsome and extremely lively, he became a minister and joined the Broad Church party, the duties of which did not prevent him from enlisting in the defence of Edinburgh in 1745. He soon turned his facile talents to writing plays, and his tragedy of *Agis* was very properly rejected by Garrick in 1747. In 1756 his *Douglas* was first performed in Edinburgh. The Kirk was sensibly outraged, and—such are the freaks of spiritual justice—whereas Carlyle for being a spectator of this play was tried by the synod of local clergy, Home, who was the author of it, was allowed to go scot-free. Ten years after his failure with Garrick over *Agis* Home's triumph was made complete by *Douglas* being produced at Covent Garden and acclaimed universally. Walpole, it is true, had little opinion of the production and Dr. Johnson declared there were not "ten good lines in the whole play". David Hume, that "innocent good creature", so far submerged his keener judgment in a natural desire to please his friend as to accredit Home with

"the true theatric genius of Shakespeare and Otway, refined from the unhappy barbarism of the one and licentiousness of the other". This triumph led to favourable regard from the then powerful Lord Bute, who shortly afterwards made Home his private secretary. The playwright-secretary resigned with no show of reluctance from the kirk in 1757, and soon adopted a new role, for which he was eminently unsuited, of tutor to the young prince later to become George III. These worldly successes induced Garrick to review his first unfavourable opinion of *Agis*, which he now consented to produce. Ironically enough, Home, whose fascination to women "was truly irresistible, and his entry to a company was like opening a window and letting the sun into a dark room", married a frowzy female whose appearance was positively repellent. Even David Hume was constrained to express surprise at this unnatural connection, and in asking his friend what on earth had induced him to take so unwonted a step, received the reply, "Ah, if I had not, who else would have taken her?" The marriage, however, did nothing to interrupt the unruffled flow of Home's devoted friendships. David Hume in his will left all his claret to his friend and "six dozen of port, provided that he attests . . . that he himself alone finished" one bottle of claret "at two sittings and a single bottle of that other liquor, called port".

And what of Robert Adam himself in these early days? Little is known of his architectural development during the Edinburgh period, just as little of his personal life is known during his later sojourn in London. In view of his widespread professional renown this is, to say the least, curious. We know that he was received in social and intellectual circles all his life, yet the number of personal references to him in contemporary letters and diaries can be numbered on the fingers of two hands. This was certainly not due to his nationality, for Boswell, Hume, and other contemporaries amongst his countrymen either thrust their way or were enticed into the London salons of the Mrs. Montagus and Mrs. Boscawens. It was due, rather, to an exclusive preoccupation with his profession, to a naturally retiring disposition, and, furthermore, in some degree to a strangely perceptible lack of personality.

There are a number of portraits of Robert Adam, documented and putative, extant. Mr. John Steegmann claims that the only authentic ones are the oil reputedly by Zoffany (27), the miniature and the ivory plaque, and the three medallion reliefs by James Tassie in coloured paste, all from Blair Adam. There are, besides, others with a good claim to authenticity: namely the portrait at the Royal Institute of British Architects, where Adam is shown full face in advanced middle-age, a severe, tight-lipped man of business; the oval inset-portrait over the chimney-piece in the drawing-room at Mersham-le-Hatch, and the ceiling panel at Home House, both by Antonio Zucchi. In all of these mentioned, in spite of a disparity in years, certain common features are throughout unmistakably recognisable. Particularly identifiable are they in the two portraits of the plaque and the Tassie cameo reliefs, both in profile. The

first depicting a young man of almost Olympian regularity of feature and beauty, was done when Robert must have been in his twenties, the second in his late thirties. In both the sweep of the hair straight from the forehead is the same, only in the later portrait the natural short curl clusters have devolved into the stylised pig-tail tied with a bow and the judicial roll of hair over the ear. In the Tassie reliefs the stern, firm lines of brow, nose, and chin, so prominent in the ivory plaque, have relaxed somewhat and the ever determined mouth has almost softened into a smile of contented fulfilment. There can be no question that the young, unusually handsome, and well-to-do Robert Adam must have been an eligible and desirable visitor, on account of these hereditary gifts alone, in the provincial drawing-rooms of the Scottish capital.

Again, we know little about Robert Adam's early artistic proclivities apart from what we naturally deduce from those fifty-three volumes in Sir John Soane's Museum. The earliest surviving drawing in the Museum is a pen-and-ink sketch, dated 1744, when Robert was sixteen years old (25). It is a copy from an engraving of a lake scene with a castle standing upon an island, the first of those typical and innumerable scenes Adam was to reproduce until his death, nearly fifty years hence. Another, dated 1751, is of a tree in pen and brush and signed "R. Adam after S. Rosa".

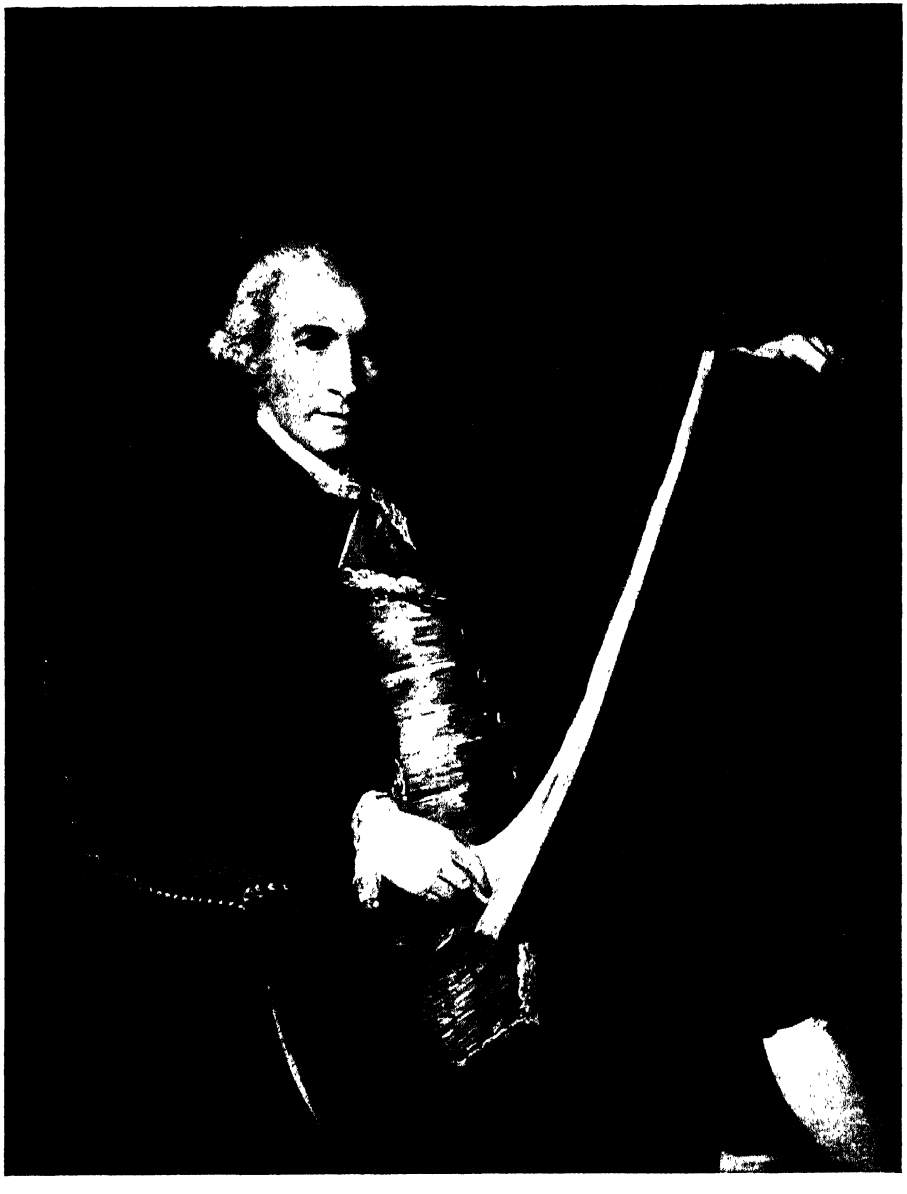
We know that Robert left Scotland for Italy in 1754. Amongst the exiguous material concerning him at this period we have a last kaleidiscopic picture given by Alexander Carlyle of the embryo architect, which at least serves to invest him with some humanity. It is the story of Adam's favourite galloway, christened Piercy, which soon after this incident he gave to his friend John Home, and which reappears in other riding anecdotes concerning Home, only in London, during the next decade. Carlyle relates that just before his departure for the south preparatory to sailing, Robert Adam was seen galloping round a green "like a madman, which he repeated, after seeing us, for at least ten times. He had been making love to my maid Jenny, who was a handsome lass, and had even gone the length of offering to carry her to London, and pension her there. All his offers were rejected, which had put him in a great flurry. This happened in summer 1754". Adam was then aged twenty-six. There are few other specified instances of his fondness for women.

He went first of all to France,[1] where he may have lingered several months, but the only clue to his itinerary rests in a few brief notes and dates on the backs of his surviving sketches. In France he certainly made friends with Charles-Louis Clérisseau, that confusing figure in the history of eighteenth-century art, who lived to be all but a hundred years old, spanning the whole of the Regency and the Empire periods. Clérisseau was seven years Adam's senior, and it is solely on this account that he has been carelessly described as Adam's tutor, whereas in fact he

[1] The Admiralty Screen, Whitehall, one of Adam's first buildings on his return to England, may have been inspired by A-J. Gabriel's screen before the Court of Honour at the Palace of Compiègne.

25 Earliest surviving pen and ink sketch by Robert Adam, dated September 1744

26 Imaginative drawing by Robert Adam done in Italy under the influence of the catacombs



27 Portrait of Robert Adam in middle age, reputedly by John Zoffany. Formerly at Blair Adam

was Adam's employee and never engaged upon a building until he decorated the Villa Albani in 1764. Clérisseau accompanied Adam as far as Nîmes, rejoining him in Italy some years later. Meanwhile Robert proceeded to Portofino and Florence in 1755. In 1756 he was at Rome, where he soon was held, according to Carlyle, "in highest esteem among foreign artists". The most notable of his Roman acquaintances was Giambattista Piranesi.

Piranesi was by birth a Venetian, but by adoption a Roman. In his early youth—he was older than Robert by eight years—he had studied under Valeriani and acquired the art of sketching perspective views and romantic landscapes with architectural ruins in the foreground in the style of Marco Ricci and Panini, whom he excelled. At his father's request he twice attempted to settle as an architect in Venice, but in vain. Rome held him in her distant thrall, and each time he was drawn back to her, where he settled and finally adopted engraving as a profession. At the request of Pope Clement XIII he restored Santa Maria del Popolo and Il Priorato, but it is not as an architect nor, for that matter, as an engraver that Piranesi is best known, but in the role of archaeologist and as the champion of the Roman tradition of building. The two men struck up a warm friendship, and there was considerable sympathy between them. Adam sent several copies of Piranesi's publications to his brothers and agents for sale in England, he having acquired them, characteristically enough, at a specially reduced cost from the author. Piranesi, for his part, dedicated his work and plan of the "Campus Martius" to Adam, addressing him as "Roberto Adam Britann. Architecto Celebirrim". Upon the plan a medal was engraved bearing on the reverse side the inscription: "R. Adam. Academiar. Divi. Lucae. Florent. Bononien. Socius—Romae MCCCLVII", and on the obverse side the heads of both Adam and Piranesi encircled by the inscription: "Io. Bapt. Piranesius. Robertus Adam Architecti".

In Italy Robert, like his brother James after him, moved about in notable style. It is recorded, as though the circumstance were slightly unusual, that a Mr. Capel, painter from London, and "Mr. Adams, architect from Scotland", were travelling together at one time, "these two last rather as gentlemen, rather than students". Indeed, it was not for nothing that William Adam, senior, had leased that coalfield at Pinkie. His children were not stinted for money during their grand tours. The drawings by Robert that date from the Italian travels suddenly reveal a developed architectural character. The majority of them are not so much topographical impressions as still-born creations of a mind constantly titillated with ideas gleaned from the ever-changing architectural masterpieces before his eyes. Meanwhile he managed to keep in touch with wealthy clients in England, either directly or through his brothers, for it is almost certain that before he left England the family firm had to some extent been set in operation. In a letter from Rome in 1756 he puts several commissions of a small business nature through his agents as well

as directing them to despatch "another Parmesan Cheese for my Lady Deskefoord".

In 1757 occurred the famous expedition to Split in Dalmatia in order to take the measurements of and to reconstruct on paper the great Palace of the Roman Emperor Diocletian. The outcome of this enterprise was the lavish publication in 1764, in accordance with the usual practice of self-advertisement then in vogue, of an expensive folio, to which Adam's friends and clients largely subscribed. Adam set sail from Venice on 11th July, accompanied by Clérisseau and two other draftsmen, of whom one was Zucchi, though we are not told whether he was Antonio, the future husband of Angelica Kauffmann, or, which is more probable, his lesser known brother Giuseppe, the engraver. The party arrived in Dalmatia on the 22nd and in the *Ruins of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro* Robert narrates the objects of the expedition and the difficulties encountered with the Venetian governor, who not unnaturally suspected them of that prevalent archaeological ruse, spying. The prodigious work had accordingly to be compressed and achieved by dint of superhuman industry within five weeks. Adam tells how the work started well and was fraught, as it proceeded, with official vexations, restrictions, and impediments, and how sheer pertinacity and hard work overcame them. The Spalatro expedition is only one example of Adam's tremendous capacity for work, which ultimately killed him. When it was accomplished, the party sailed back to Italy. In Rome he lingered but a short time, for in October he was in Vicenza on his way home. In a letter to his agents, dated the 12th of that month, he wrote, "You may plainly discover I am on my departure from Italy as my creditors come so hard upon me; However, there is no remedy for it. . . . Compliments, etc., to all friends whom in two months' time I hope to see in London." That winter Robert returned down the Rhine, and according to his own note scribbled on the back of a drawing we learn that he was settled in England in January 1758.

The first thing we hear of Robert Adam after his return is his election on 1st February to membership of the Royal Society of Arts, which indicates that his reputation abroad had preceded his arrival in London. He soon set up house in Lower Grosvenor Street with his sisters, Elizabeth and Margaret, where they remained until their removal to the Adelphi several years later. James joined the household on his return from Italy, and it is fairly certain that William lived there too. For a glimpse at Robert at this time we must revert to the faithful pages of Carlyle. The Scotsmen were used to keeping their own company. They were wont, Carlyle tells us, to meet at a coffee house in Savile Row for dinner at three o'clock every Wednesday—Home, Robertson, Wedderburn, Jack Dalrymple, Bob Adam. Between five and six in the evening Dr. Adam Ferguson, then the unofficial chairman of the group, would break up the meal by returning on horseback to Harrow. The reckoning, Carlyle assures us, never came to more than five shillings a head. The dinner was invariably excellent and there was a copious flow of punch, though

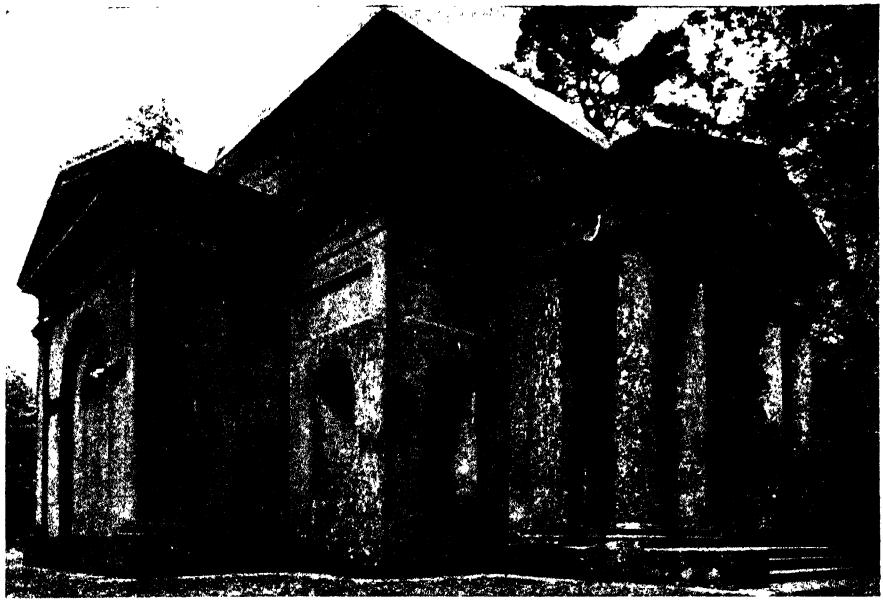
claret could not be obtained for that inclusive sum. The rest of the party would then resort to Drury Lane if Garrick were performing. Adam had probably met Garrick before he left for Italy through John Home, who would regularly ride several times in the season all the way from Edinburgh to London on the stalwart Piercy.

Garrick is so much a leading figure of this age that it cannot be out of place to give a brief sketch of him here. He belonged to an earlier generation than the Adams, having in fact made his great debut in 1741, as Richard III—when Pope, who had seen his performance, wrote, "That young man never had his equal, and never will have a rival". In 1747 Garrick started his famous management of the Drury Lane Theatre. Two years later he married Violetti, the little dancing-girl from Vienna, who was to survive her husband by forty-three years and become the cherished confidante of social and intellectual London until her death at the age of ninety-eight in 1822. Her introduction to us is again effected by the ubiquitous Carlyle, who happened to meet her in the packet on her first crossing to England. It was a bad crossing and both of them were violently seasick. In 1754 the Garricks purchased the villa at Hampton which still stands and bears his name. In 1763 Garrick resolved to quit the stage, as the result of Churchill's *Rosciad* and other attacks, and went abroad. He did not return for two years, but when he made his reappearance on the boards he was welcomed with rapturous applause. But in 1766 he ceased to act for ever, owing to the unrelenting animosity of jealous scribblers and his feuds with different playwrights. In 1778 Garrick, then in poor health, was attacked with a sudden fit of gout and herpes while staying at Althorp, which proved fatal. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and his funeral procession was followed by a string of carriages that stretched as far as the Strand. Johnson's monumental dictum on the occasion is not too well known to bear requotation. "I am disappointed", he pronounced with becoming pomposity, "by that stroke of death which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure."

Garrick as a public figure represented to his contemporaries more than the greatest exponent of the English drama that had hitherto sprung from this island. He was universally acknowledged to represent the traditional English spirit that had long before Falstaff's day infused and was long after his own to infuse English public life with a sense of the ludicrous and sheer fun. Johnson, in spite of the ridiculous tenour of his pronouncement upon "harmless pleasure", had for all that hit the right nail on the head. Jubilant in success, petulant in defeat, generous yet parsimonious, beneficent yet recriminatory, Garrick was above all things uniformly gay. His desire for admiration and his cultivation of the arts were actuated by one motive, the gaiety of living. No one simultaneously by high and low, by the royal family and the cockney inhabitants of Fleet ditch, had ever been more universally caressed. Garrick dearly loved a lord; he also dearly loved his stage hands at Drury Lane, his "Clivey Pivey", and his wife indiscriminately; he dearly loved his hosts of friends, including the

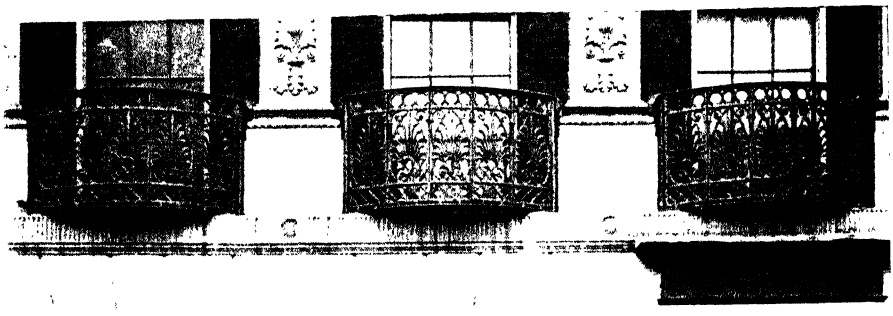
austere Robert Adam and the terrible Samuel Johnson. The Doctor adored him, in spite of a succession of caustic comments at his expense. His conversation, said Johnson "is gay and grotesque. It is a dish of all sorts, but of all good things. There is no solid meat in it; there is a want of sentiment in it". George III complained "he never can stand still. He is a great fidget". But fidget or no, David Garrick, with his friends Robert Adam and Joshua Reynolds, stood more than any other men of their century for a sublimation of existing standards of taste.

The Garricks delighted to entertain—if not too extravagantly—their guests at Hampton Villa on the Thames, where it is not impossible that Robert Adam had designed the beautiful little prostylar temple (29) just before he left England in 1754. At least Walpole tells us that it was in process of building during the following year. The portico still displays an old-fashioned stolidity and the octagon itself a robust quality that we observe in James Gibbs's octagon room, which he had built thirty-five years previously for Queen Caroline at Orleans House, just a little lower down the river. As late as 1772 Robert began alterations to the villa (which had been adapted from cottages by Garrick in 1755–6, whether from design by Adam we do not precisely know), and Hannah More about this time notes that "his house is repairing and is not worth seeing". Carlyle tells of a party given here as early as the summer of 1758. The guests were told to bring golf-clubs and balls for a game on Molesly Heath. A battalion of the Coldstream Guards in patriotic sympathy cheer the clubs on their way through Kensington. The game does not turn out to be much of a success, for neither the Adams nor the Garricks really know how to play at all. The recreation ends in quaffs of wine in the Temple under the shadow of and to the toast of Roubiliac's Shakespeare statue, and in Alexander Carlyle driving a golf-ball in one stroke through the tunnel under the road. That same summer Carlyle tells of a tour with John Home, Robert, James, and William Adam on their way to Scotland. Characteristically enough, the sisters accompany the party as far as Uxbridge. They visited Bulstrode and stayed at Oxford, which Robert had never seen before. They stopped at Blenheim, where we are briefly told that James admired the "movement" of Vanbrugh's palace—a tantalising little observation enough to make us wonder whether this summer visit to the masterpiece of the English architect, whom of all others Robert admired, sowed the seeds of that theory of "movement" which was to become the brothers' main theme in their *Works in Architecture*. At Warwick the castle, the church, and the priory (now removed and transplanted in the U.S.A.) were visited. At Birmingham they were conducted round the most up-to-date factories. No tour to the Midlands was considered complete without a call at the Leasowes, and Carlyle gives a vivid picture of their host, the eccentric Shenstone, who could not make up his mind whether to be truculent or complaisant with his guests. He finally adopted the latter temper and rode with them to Hagley, only very recently completed, where Admiral

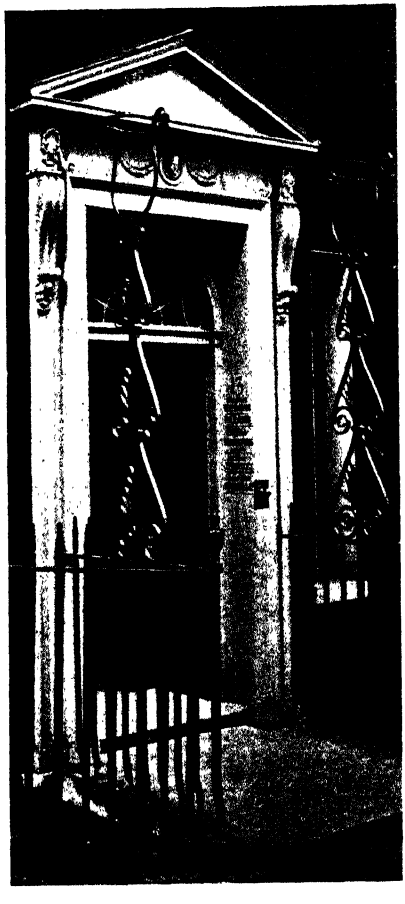


28 Mausoleum at Bowood, designed 1761, for the widow of the 1st Lord Shelburne (*Country Life* photograph)

29 Garrick's Temple of Shakespeare at Hampton, possibly designed by Robert Adam in 1754. From the picture by John Zoffany



30 Ironwork balconies of anthemion design in John Street, Adelphi, London



31 Doorway and lamp standards, 13 John Street, Adelphi


32 Detail of link extinguisher, 13 John Street, Adelphi

Smith (the illegitimate son of the previous Lyttleton owner), whose portrait hangs there in the saloon to-day, acted as their cicerone. It is not uninstructive to note that Robert Adam, who was shortly to work at Croome Court in the same county, had thus himself seen Hagley, which is its undoubted prototype. The party then proceeded to Lichfield and Matlock, where "we took the bath". Chatsworth, Wentworth Castle, and Studley Royal were inspected, without, alas! one recorded comment from Robert. At Newcastle "Adam bought a £20 horse". The account ends with John Home and William being startled out of their wits by a cow with a red flannel tied to its horn, to the infinite merriment and the jeers of Carlyle, Robert, and James.

We are still in the dark as to how Robert's earliest year of practice passed after his return from Italy, but we may safely assume that the influence of Lord Bute was a helpful factor. Horace Walpole in his *Memoirs of the Reign of King George II* hints as much several years later. He gives a cursory reference to the Adams as "Scottish brethren and architects, who had bought Durham Yard, and erected a large pile of buildings under the affected name of the Adelphi. These men, of great taste in their profession, were attached particularly to Lord Bute and Lord Mansfield, and thus by public and private nationality zealous politicians". Bute, an able but undeservedly unpopular statesman on account of his barbaric accent and his too close intimacy with the Princess of Wales, was extravagantly proud and over-sensitive to misunderstanding and criticism. In these respects he reflected an aggrieved and slightly aggressive attitude common to many of his compatriots. He was always prone to take umbrage and to suspect the casual acquaintance of intriguing against his interests with the Crown. He made himself, for example, publicly ridiculous by accusing the Duke of Richmond before the whole court of saying disagreeable things about his personal appearance to the young king. Such outbursts of wounded pride only made him the more dislikeable. But Bute was fundamentally actuated by the best intentions, especially as regards his share in the promotion of the arts. Richard Cumberland remarked: "Lord Bute had all the disposition of a Maecenas and fondly hoped he would be the auspicious instrument of opening an Augustan reign."

It was that erratic playboy John Home who arranged the first introduction, soon after his own engagement as secretary to Bute in 1758. Bute had almost surely heard about Robert Adam previously through his wife, to whom in January of that year her mother, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, had written from Rome, "I saw, some months ago, a countryman of yours (Mr. Adam) who desires to be introduced to you. He seemed to me, in one short visit, to be a man of genius, and I have heard his knowledge of architecture much applauded. He is now in England". So in May of that year the introduction took place. Eagerly looked forward to by Adam, it turned out to be an instant fiasco. Bute received Home and Adam booted and spurred as though about to go out. In his

characteristically gauche and off-hand manner with strangers, he never invited them to sit, and was throughout the short interview cold and haughty. When the young men got outside, Robert, whose self-esteem had received a nasty wound, "fell a-cursing and swearing. What! had he been presented to all the princes in Italy and France, and most graciously received, to some and be treated with such distance and pride by the youngest earl but one in all Scotland!" Nevertheless, the damage caused by this interview was somehow soon repaired. Within a short time Bute was patronising Adam; and Adam in his turn was paying tribute in his Spalatro volume to the virtues of the earl, who had subscribed for ten copies of the book. This reconciliation, however, did not take place before the following recently discovered letter was written by Robert Adam to Dr. Alexander McMillan.

We shall quote this letter in full, in spite of parts of the manuscript being indecipherable, because surviving letters by Adam are extremely scarce, and, apart from his attitude towards Bute at the time of writing, the tone of it shows the severe, prim Scot in an entirely new and irresponsible light. McMillan of Dunmore was Deputy Keeper of the Signet, and incidentally a trustee for the management of Lord Bute's estates. He was a boon companion of Carlyle, who describes him as "loud and jovial, and made the wine flow like Bacchus himself".

11th August, 1758.

"Dear Sandy,

I have a notion that we two mortals feel somewhat in the same way and some folks flatter me much by saying our Dispositions are vastly similar.

Whether this be true or not I shant take upon me to discuss, only if I may guess by the pleasure, enjoyment, and fun we had together in London & the Blank that appeared sometime after Robertson, you and Jamie left it. It is evident our tempers were pretty much turned to the same string & to so convenient a pitch that we either sung heroicks, Pastoral, or Buffoni, as the fancy struck us. But no more of this picturesque sort of writing. I must say something serious, tell you how I live & what immense sums are preparing to enrich me, & how Lord Bute lays himself out to [become my] patron and friend & that in so private and hidden a manner that . . . I have never seen or heard of him since I was with you. Then he is returning me that Book of Piranesi's was another private and masterly stroke. He kept it for 3 months till he got intelligence of some more copies coming by another ship from Italy when [which?] he instantly bought one of from David Wilson and return'd me mine. Neither has the bold Scipio [*i.e.* Bute] been able to [MS. indecipherable]. Gibby Elliot [3rd Baronet of Minto, 1722–77, statesman, philosopher, and poet] & I had a long conversation about this affair before he went last to Scotland. Gibby defends him [*i.e.* Bute] & blames J. H. [John Home] for ever having mentioned my name to him. This delay, caution, and prudence does exceeding well for Admirals & Admiral Lords,

but damn me if any free Scot should acknowledge it to be right. At the same time I know that puffing shoud be done with judgement, otherways it hurts. But in the present case where real merit comes to support the praise, there is very little danger. I know some people through ignorance of the world and genteel company would call this self conceit. But I think it is not amiss for a man to have a little glinb [?] of that infinite merit he is possess'd of. I've always look'd on you as much perfector for it, & no doubt your general acquaintance with the great men of this country was more owing to that just sense you have of your own Merit, address, figure, & face than to the introductions of your friends or any Protection from your own country and people. I shall certainly be revenged on Bute for this conduct. I have a great mind to go out to K— [Kew] and when he and Madame P [the Princess of Wales] are living together, I'll have them put in a boat naked and brought down the river like Adam & Eve, and I'll fell him dead with Piranesi's 4 folio volumes from Westminster Bridge as they are going to pass under the Yoke & Robt. Adam. If you disapprove, write me a better scheme. I consult with none living but you because you and I are God's own begetting. The rest are nothing but dry babs [?] & Cambrick [MS. indecipherable].

Say not a word to Home because he woud rather think the sentence severe. But that is nothing to the purpose. I must go now and dine with William the wine merchant, who is to have good Company with him and will [MS. torn].

I have wrote Robertson I wish these letters may get safely to your Hands as they are not wrote pointedly enough for a public Scrutiny but do well enough *entre nous autres*.

I ever am, with heart and soul, Dr. [dear] McMillan,
Yours, R. A."

Lord Mansfield, mentioned by Walpole as a patron, was, of course, another Scot of great influence for whom Robert Adam worked, but not until 1767, at Kenwood. He was the very well-known judge, correct, impartial, impeccable, infallible, a little subhuman, like Lord Bute, and, as far as his contemporaries could assess, with absolutely no heart whatever. On account of these unsympathetic virtues and because of his nationality all the books in Mansfield's famous library were burnt by the mob in the Gordon Riots. The shared unpopularity of the Scots bound them together and cemented their sense of nationalism. Boswell records how Garrick, speaking on this topic in 1775, said, "'Come, come, don't deny it, they *are* really national. Why, now, the Adams are as liberal-minded men as any in the world: but', with a touch of asperity, 'I don't know how it is, all their workmen are Scotch' ".

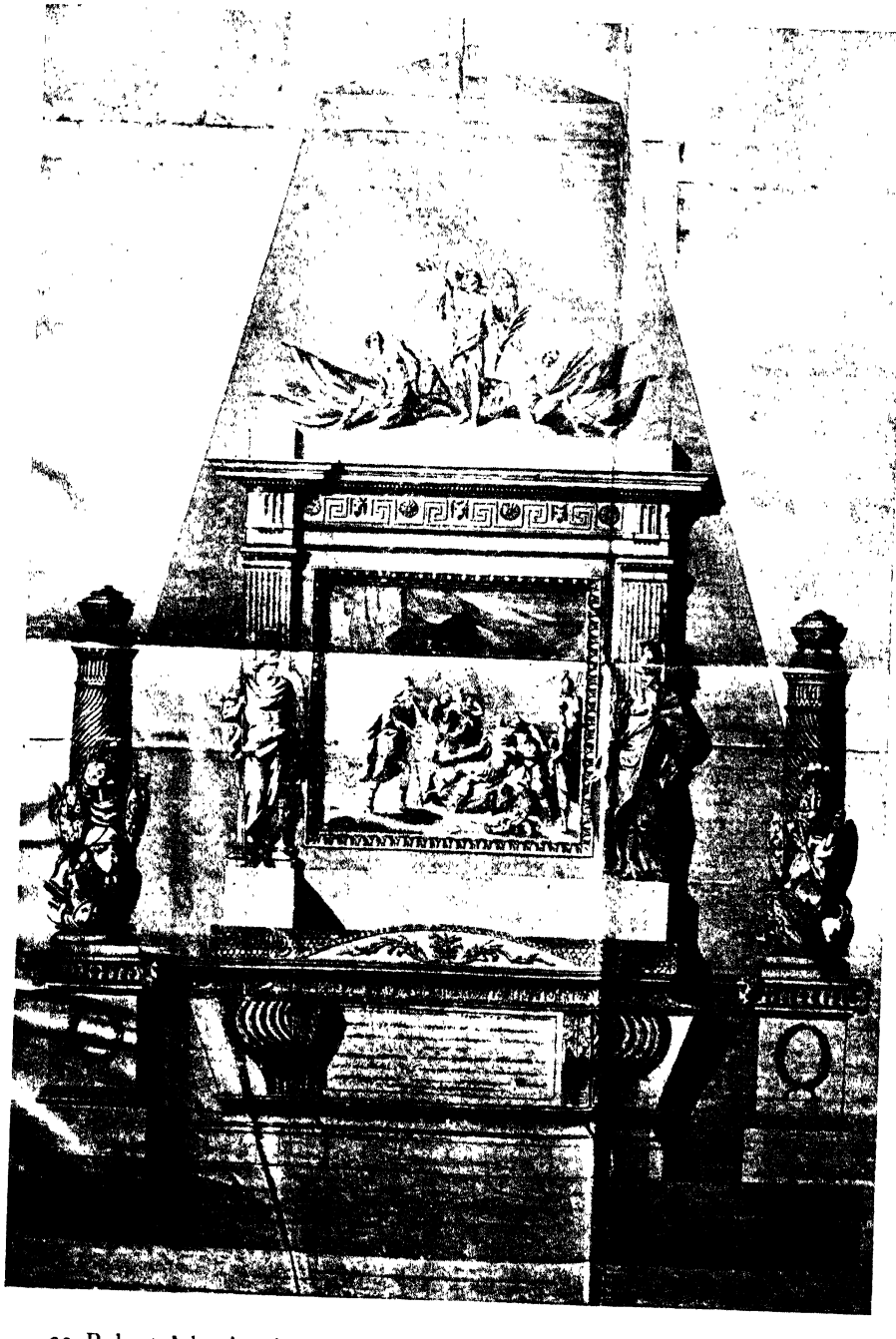
We have remarked that it is hardly known how Adam passed the first years of his practice. It has hitherto been assumed that before he left for Italy he had not actually built anything, although we have surmised that he may have designed Garrick's Shakespeare temple in 1754. Now

investigations made by Mr. W. Forbes Gray reveal that the very earliest proven piece of professional work undertaken by him was to report in 1754 on a scheme for the erection of a hall for the joint use of the Musical Society of Edinburgh and the Edinburgh Dancing Assembly. This was done before he left for the Continent at the request of the two societies, who accepted his recommendation to abandon the site which they had selected, and which on account of its steep slope would necessarily have involved "so much useless building sunk under ground as would eat up the greatest part of the fund". Furthermore, a recent discovery amongst the publications of the Scottish History Society reveals that, in response to a request by the Commissioners for managing estates forfeited by owners who had participated in the Jacobite rebellions, Robert with his brothers John and James submitted a report in 1756 upon a project for converting Lord Lovat's house in the High Street of Edinburgh into an office. The brothers presented a plan of the house, likewise one "showing the way in which we think it will most properly convert into an office"—the alterations to involve a sum of at least £300. Now in 1756 Robert was still abroad. This must either imply that the brothers had previously consulted Robert by post and obtained his approval—causing considerable delay over so comparatively insignificant a commission—or, which is more probable, that before Robert left they had established a practice amongst themselves and the four of them become partners in a family firm. In this case Robert's name, as that of the already recognised leader of the brethren, would be included in any surveys the others presented during his absence.

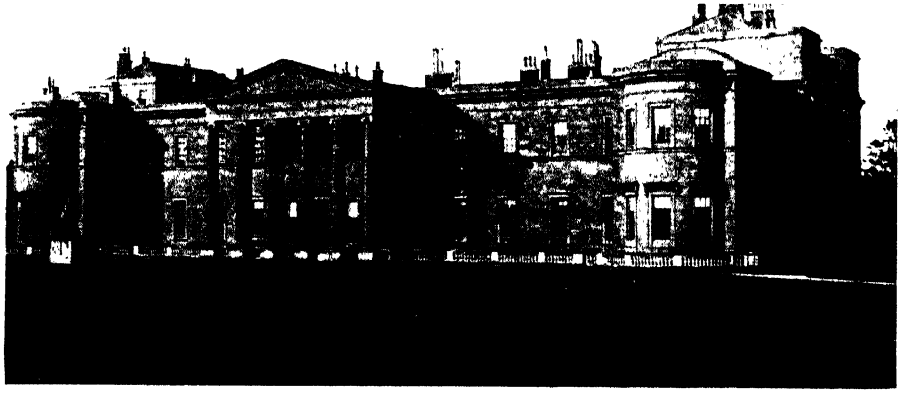
But long before Robert Adam actually did any building for Bute (he began upon Shelburne House in 1761 and Luton Hoo in 1767) we find him competing for the memorial to General Wolfe in Westminster Abbey (33). Neither his design nor that of Sir William Chambers was accepted, the sculptor Joseph Wilton being the candidate selected. Indeed, since Adam's design submitted for this memorial scarcely surpassed his three hackneyed monuments in the Abbey to the poet Thomson, Major John André, and Colonel Townshend, the judges of the competition acted by no means unwisely in turning it down.[1] His failure does not, however, appear to have been received as a blow, and Adam was soon to plunge into a spate of architectural commissions.

At the dawn of the year 1759 Robert had been home twelve months. During the previous year he had been finding his feet. All the evidence we have goes to show that the brothers were unanimously actuated by a common business sense. Convinced of the superiority of Robert's genius

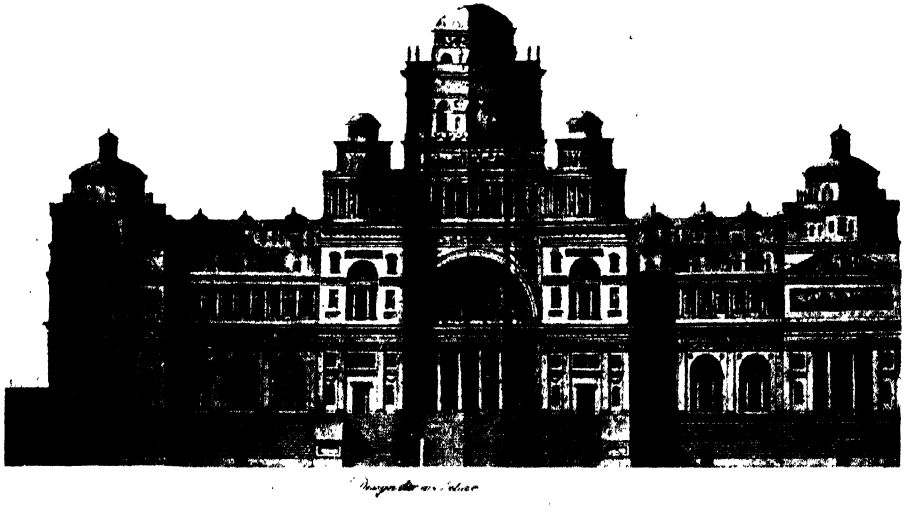
[1] The masons of these three monuments were Spang, Van Gelder, and Eckstein. In Kedleston Church the sculptor of Adam's Curzon monument was no less an artist than Rysbrach. Well-known architects would often provide designs for monumental sculptors of repute to execute. Until well into the first quarter of the nineteenth century the influences of Adam and Stuart upon lesser local masons were universal, as we may see in nearly every cathedral and parish church.



33 Robert Adam's rejected design for the Westminster Abbey monument to General Wolfe (1760)



34 Luton Hoo, Bedfordshire: early photograph showing the principal façade as built by Adam (1766) and before alterations in 1903



35 An early design for a Palace done by Robert Adam in Italy, *circa* 1755

in his early manhood, they laid their plans accordingly, and carried them out to the letter. Robert must spend four years in Italy undergoing the necessary educational tour. No money must be spared to this end. To justify the long absence, some original research must be undertaken by him and the results of it published on the author's return to fulfil the firm's carefully prepared publicity campaign. Hence the expedition to Spalatro and the consequent issue of the *Ruins*. The first year in England (1758) is spent in establishing the London office, touring England so as to assess English classical buildings in the Blenheims and Hagleys in relation to their Italian prototypes, and in fostering useful social connections. By 1759 the career of Robert Adam is well under weigh and the experimental period opens up.

This year Adam embarked upon Hatchlands, near Guildford, the country seat of Edward Boscawen, the ill-fated Admiral of the Blue and Commander-in-Chief of the Royal fleet at the siege of Louisburg. This first interior work is interesting in showing that Adam has not yet completely thrown off the heaviness of decorative style characteristic of George II's reign. High sculptural relief is still the order of the day. Through Admiral Boscawen Adam may have received his commission to build the Admiralty screen. This exquisite Doric screen (4) was at once accounted an unqualified improvement to Ripley's dull façade, just as the interior of Hatchlands was an improvement on the unimaginative shell that was already in existence. The Admiralty screen was not completed until the year following, and the services of Michael Spang, the first recorded of the Adam collaborators, were enlisted for the sculptural embellishments. Unfortunately the screen was horribly mutilated in 1827 by "Octogenarian Taylor" to please the Duke of Clarence by the removal of two of the columns and part of the hind wall to provide additional entrances, in spite of the joint remonstrances of Croker and the architect Smirke. But for some quite inexplicable reason the Treasury has within the last few years been sufficiently enlightened to spend several pounds in the unlucrative cause of aesthetics by having the screen restored to its original design. In the same year Adam did designs for altering Castle Ashby and prepared the ground for work at Shardeloes, Harewood, and Croome.

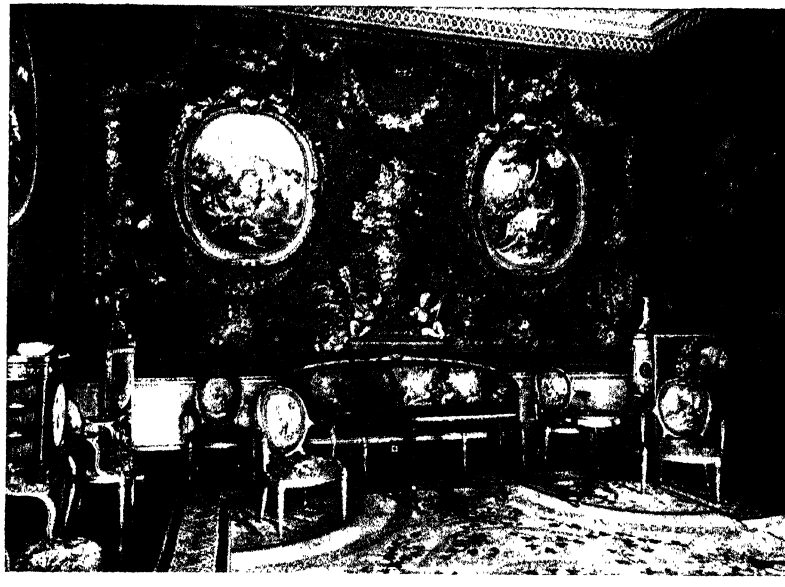
With the new reign Robert Adam's career was fairly launched, and the style that is associated with his name was ushered in with the accession of King George III. In 1760 he produced designs for Compton Verney, Kedleston, Goodwood, and Alnwick. Whereas his work at the first two houses happily survives, his schemes for Goodwood may never have been carried out and his alterations at Alnwick Castle have long since disappeared. These last were remarkable for having been one of Adam's very rare essays in the Gothic taste, and, judging from his designs, they can by no means have been a happy experiment. Joseph Farington in 1801 says of the Alnwick interiors, "the decoration or finishing I thought to be in very bad taste, loaded and crowded without the least simplicity".

His view may partly be an expression of personal prejudice—Farington did not like the Adams—but certainly the surviving Gothic drawings at the Soane Museum might well be mistaken for the flimsiest and cheapest Victorian excesses. They were done, we are assured, at the express whim of the Duchess of Northumberland, and in any case Robert and the Duchess between them succeeded in spending £200,000 of the Duke's money at Alnwick alone.

By this time the firm thought fit to allow James, the next most promising of the brethren, to undergo his continental experiences and under the date 1st October his Journal opens with: "Clériseau, [G] Zucchi and I went out to Sala to visit Farsetti, but missed him." [1] The same costly progresses, the same exalted personages—as far as we can gauge—and very probably, from what we know of James, the same impressions as his more illustrious brother's make this Journal, though only James's, of some importance. In Volume I of the brothers' joint *Works in Architecture* published in 1773, which we know expressed Robert's laboriously deduced principles of building, we come across several echoes of the sentiments in this Journal. James tells us that he was everywhere accompanied by a train of servants and attendants, but that on a special tour to Sicily (where presumably he was roughing it) he reduced this state "to carry only one draftsman and two servants, namely Clériseau, with George and Joseph". In short, he habitually travelled in style, and took his own coach across to Venice in a *piotta*. He went to balls and conversazioni and attended the carnival at Florence. Quite casually he mentions how he was received by princes as well as artists and men of letters. The Journal is full of scraps such as, "to-night I dined at the Duchess of Bridgwater's and Sir Richard's". The local worthies of passing cities fêted him "with great splendour and politeness". In vain throughout this social progress do we find anything indicative of personal indiscretions by this young man. A self-imposed censorship rigidly sets a seal upon the private lives of the whole of this reserved Scottish family. James refers in one fleeting passage to a certain Mrs. Elliot whom he left at Pisa "with pain, as she is easy and agreeable", and herself "seemed a good deal to regret my short stay", but there is no further elaboration of this incident. His comments on the peccadillos of others are brief, neither betraying censure nor sympathy, as when he refers to the Signora Contarini, "a daughter of the procurator Venier. She was served by Hamilton when here", at which the early nineteenth-century editor of the Journal is highly shocked. "Either not very intelligible," he annotates, "or not particularly delicate."

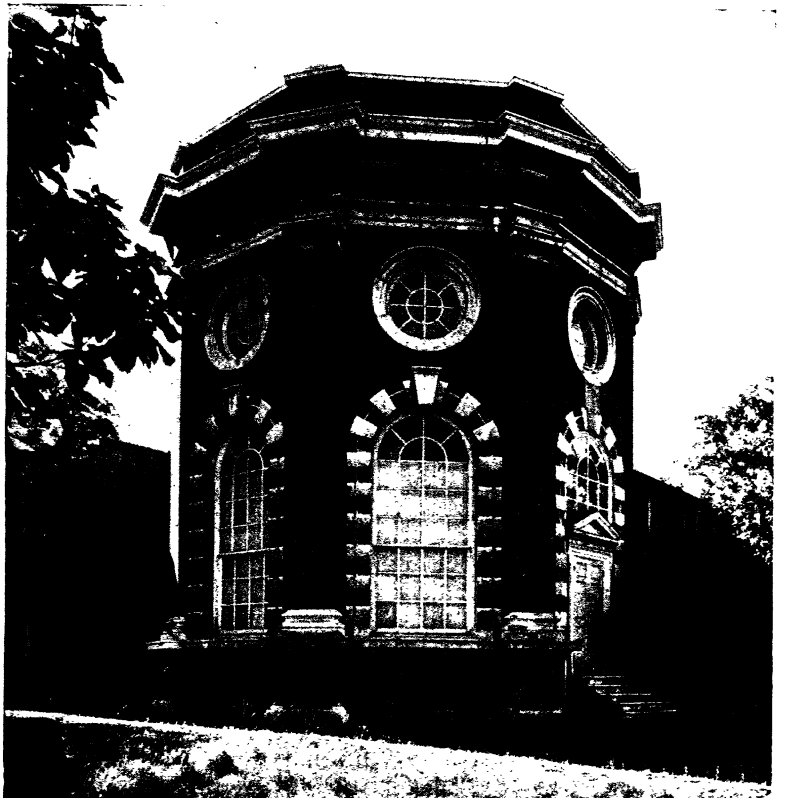
During this tour it was somehow contrived that James should act as agent for George III, and in 1762 he managed to purchase for the King a rare collection of drawings and prints from Cardinal Albani for the large sum of 3,000 guineas. Meanwhile at home the elder brother, with whom

[1] The Abbé Farsetti, the friend of Clérisseau and Wincklemann, had at Sala a garden famous for its facsimile of the remains of an ancient Roman villa.



36 Osterley Park, the Tapestry Room: the Gobelin tapestries are one of several Boucher-Neilson sets, the subject "Les Amours des Dieux", signed and dated 1775

37 Fontainebleau Palace. The Boudoir designed for Marie Antoinette



38 Octagon Room, Orleans House, Twickenham. Architect, James Gibbs for Queen Caroline (1720)

39 Interior of Tea Pavilion at Moor Park, Hertfordshire, by Robert Adam (1763) (*Country Life* photograph)

the younger kept up a close correspondence from Italy, had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and appointed with Chambers "Joint Architects of His Majesty's Works". The appointment of the two Scotsmen was presumably due to the instrumentality of Bute, and in November 1761 James jots down "Received Betty's letter, informing me of Bet's [Bob's] interview with the King".

By 1761 Robert's connections were rapidly increasing. In the neighbourhood of Shardeloes is High Wycombe, where the Petty family's influence was strong. Adam designed the Market Hall in that town, which, in spite of repeated threats of demolition for road widening, still stands, although slightly altered to its detriment in the nineteenth century by the addition of a cupola and some ill-placed windows. At West Wycombe Park he made several tentative designs for Sir Francis Dashwood. His plans for Bowood, again Petty property, were in hand, and the mausoleum in the grounds must belong to this year (28), for the first Lord Shelburne had died in May. Another large commission was Osterley for Mr. Child, the banker. The following year witnessed the beginning of its neighbour, Syon, of Shelburne House [1] in Berkeley Square, and of Mersham-le-Hatch for Sir Wyndham Knatchbull.

In 1763 Adam began upon additions to Moor Park for Sir Lawrence Dundas in the shape of wings connected by colonnades, but these additions were unfortunately demolished in 1785. The tea pavilion (39), however, with its delightful palm-tree decoration, belongs to this period, and so too does the suite of furniture, specially made for the house and the earliest known to have been executed from his designs. This furniture was, until its sale in 1934, to be seen in Lord Zetland's house in Arlington Street, together with the set of Boucher-Neilson tapestries woven in 1765–9 after designs by Louis Tessier and Maurice Jacques (36). Eleven pieces of the Adam suite of furniture are now exhibited at the Philadelphia Museum in the United States. The severe Doric gate house and screen block at Kimbolton Castle were likewise built in this year.

In the summer of 1763 James is allowed to leave Italy, and his return to the firm is a welcome reinforcement to Robert and William, now inundated with commissions, for John has permanently established himself at Blair Adam and Edinburgh. Very soon after James's arrival the *Ruins of the Emperor Diocletian's Palace at Spalatro* is published, and from the impressive list of its subscribers it is easy to see to what heights Robert's reputation had soared. His name was by this time exalted to the ranks of the most successful of his contemporaries in the profession. As an example, we have Lord Bath in a letter to Mrs. Montagu congratulating her building ventures with the most flattering references he can muster. "Nay", he ends up, "you can build castles on Earth, or in the Air, without the help of Stewart, Adams, or Brown." The lavish production of the Spalatro book was an indication of the sort of standard Robert Adam set himself in every department of his art. The plates

[1] Later called Lansdowne House.

were furnished by no less than seven engravers, of whom the best known is Francesco Bartolozzi, who specialised on the illustrations of the views and the bas-reliefs. He had come over to England the year of publication, and almost at once was appointed Engraver to the King with a pension of £300 a year.

Robert Adam's new commissions in the immediately ensuing years were to make additions to Nostell in Yorkshire, already begun by James Paine, to reconstruct Lowther for Lord Lonsdale in "the castle style", and to build Luton Hoo (34) for Lord Bute. At Nostell his work was never finished, at Lowther nothing of it remains, and at Luton nothing but a mutilated and unrecognisable shell. Yet Robert considered Luton to be the very acme of taste and style in his day. Even Dr. Johnson was moved to accord it his undiscerning praise in contra-distinction to Kedleston, where "there seemed" to him "in the whole more cost than judgment". It has been asserted that Luton Hoo was designed on the model of Diocletian's palace at Split. A glance at Adam's own plates in his book is enough to prove that this was far from being his intention. On the contrary, individual features at both Syon and Kedleston would seem to have exacter claims. In Adam's own words, the exterior of Luton was designed to resemble "that of a publick work rather than of a private building, and gives an air of dignity and grandeur, of which few dwelling-houses are susceptible", an admission which in itself seems to be a reproach to his sense of the fitting purposes of a family home. It is only one indication of the haunting obsession of his life, an unfulfilled desire to erect a monumental building that would enlist him amongst the world's greatest builders—an obsession upon which we shall have more to say later. The fate of Luton has been most unfortunate. Only in the surviving designs can we detect signs of the monumental appearance of the great west front, with its continuous blind colonnade sheltering statues in alcoves beneath roundel reliefs (as under the north portico at Kedleston); or of the north end of the house, with its screen of four projecting Ionic columns, bearing figures, and resting upon an arched podium (as upon the splendid south front of Kedleston, which was specifically intended by the architect to convey "movement").

Luton was designed in 1766 and begun the next year. In July 1769 Lady Mary Coke writes that it is unfinished, and Mrs. Delany five years later says, "the house, tho' not entirely finished according to the plan, is very handsome and convenient; but as part of the old house still remains, it does not appear to advantage. . . ." As regards the interior she is frankly laudatory. "I never saw so *magnificent* and *pleasant* a library, extremely well lighted and nobly furnished with everything that can inform and entertain men of learning and virtü. The only objection to ye house is 42 stone steps, which you must ascend whenever you go up to ye lodging apartments." The old lady obviously lamented that resemblance to "a publick work" rather than to a residence whenever the time came to climb upstairs to bed. As to the bedrooms themselves, these excelled

in elegance and luxury, and it is seldom we come across a more detailed description of eighteenth-century sleeping apartments, so comparatively few of which have survived unaltered. "The furniture", Mrs. Delany continues, "well suited to all. The beds damask, and rich sattin, green, blue and crimson, mine was white sattin. The rooms hung with plain paper, suited to ye colours of ye beds, except mine, which was pea green, and so is the whole apartment below stairs. The curtains, chairs and sophas are all plain sattin. Every room filled with pictures; many capital ones; and a handsome screen hangs by each fireside, with ye plan of ye room, and with the *names* of the hands by whom the pictures were painted, in the order as they stand." This description bears out how Robert Adam had by now become the decorator as well as the architect. Simultaneously with Luton, Adam was engaged upon Kenwood for his other Scottish patron, Lord Mansfield, and this likewise he was furnishing and decorating as he built.

The year 1768 found Adam truly at the apex of his career. If he were to have produced nothing more after this date, we should have been deprived of only a few masterpieces, but not of his greatest country houses, Kedleston, Syon, Luton, and Harewood, all at that time in being. The Adelphi troubles that were seriously to detract from his reputation had not yet occurred. In this year the great architect and Horace Walpole's "zealous politician" sat in the House of Commons as the Tory member for Kinrossshire. This assumption of political faith was surely a sign of changed times, for a generation ago his patrons in the leading landowners of the day would almost certainly all have been Whigs. It is difficult to suppose that Adam had much time for his parliamentary duties, and there exist no records of his political activities. His election necessitated his resignation from the post of Architect to His Majesty, with whom we may fancy his relations had never been intimate, if indeed cordial.

An interesting extract from a letter of Robert Adam in 1781 to Lord Buchan touches delicately on this subject. In reply to the earl's request for some favour from the Crown, Adam replies: "My own situation at court, or rather my own situation not at court, prevents me from having it in my power to do what would have been very pleasing to me on this occasion: and, what is worse, my having no correspondence with Sir William Chambers puts it out of my power to use that vehicle of intelligence: nor have I yet been able to find out any other person who could apply, or whose application would carry weight along with it." That "vehicle of intelligence" had, of course, the constant ear of Majesty and ever since the publication of the *Works* had been openly hostile to the Adams. This hostility no doubt explains why Robert Adam was never elected to the Royal Academy, in the foundation of which the King had taken a close personal interest. Its treasurer, moreover, was Chambers himself, and it is significant that Robert's most formidable rival, James Wyatt, was elected, as well as lesser architectural luminaries, such as John Yenn and others. But Adam would doubtless seek consolation in

was not disfigured by the appendage of a gas mask and a steel helmet. In other words, to our eyes accustomed to the distorted applications, masquerading as decoration, upon the façades of twentieth-century monster blocks, even architecture that was deemed ridiculous by our eighteenth-century ancestors may look sublime enough. But, admittedly, there was an element of truth in Walpole's gibe, which became still more applicable after the licentious mid-Victorian trimmings had been added to the terrace in the 1870s. Now we no longer have the opportunity to be either caustic or laudatory, since the whole Adelphi group was demolished in the 1930s, save for a few desultory remains at the south-west and north-east corners. At the time of its completion, however, there was a rush to rent houses, which could do little to support the tottering edifice. Garrick took a house from "My dear Adelphi" and Robert himself occupied another. Josiah Wedgwood literally begged James Stuart to intercede with the brothers for a show-room on the premises.

But the City of London was strongly opposed to the Bill to reclaim the waste waters of the bay, and protested that the Adams were filching something from it—which for centuries it had never needed and done nothing to improve.

> Four Scotchmen by the name of Adams,
> Who keep their coaches and their Madams,
> Quoth John, in sulky mood, to Thomas,
> Have stole the very river from us.

Thus the *Foundling Hospital for Wit* lamely echoed the corporate clamour, while the City fathers petitioned the King not to give the royal assent. In this they were unsuccessful. But they soon had their recompense in witnessing the downfall of the Scotsmen. On 25th February, 1773, Fanny Burney records that all the Adams' collections were being dispersed for sale. Most of them, as it transpired, were bought in, for the brothers' ingenuity and courage found a means of saving their purses, if not their faces. They promptly promoted another Act of Parliament to enable them to dispose of the whole Adelphi property by lottery. Not for nothing was Robert a Member of the House of Commons. Horace Walpole, for one, strongly disapproved of this means of evading the consequences of ambitious folly. The brothers achieved it, nevertheless, and the lottery raised them over £218,500.

In a rare pamphlet which the brothers issued the following year, and entitled *Particulars composing the Prizes in the Adelphi Lottery*, they see fit to eat humble pie, while naïvely explaining that all they wish is to have their money back, but no profit. The pamphlet states: "as the Messrs. Adam engaged in this undertaking, more from an enthusiasm of their own art than from a view of profit; at the same time being eager to point out a way to public utility, though even at an extraordinary expense; they will be perfectly satisfied if they should only draw, from this lottery, the money laid out by them on a work which, they readily confess, they have

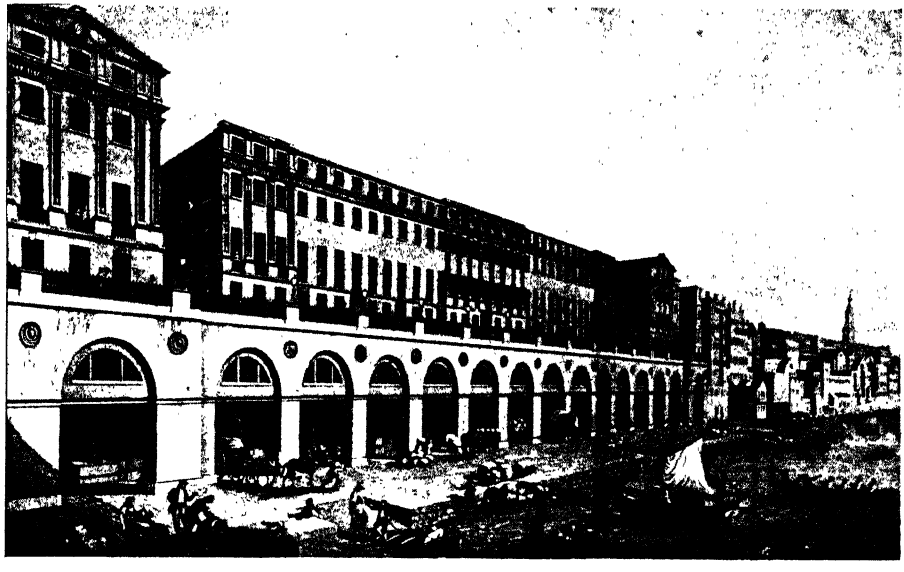
found to be too great for their private fortunes. . . ." They evidently have nothing to feel ashamed about. On the contrary they are proud to boast that their houses are "remarkably strong and substantial and finished in the most elegant and complete measure, much beyond the common stile of London houses". They are in fact offering to the public a bargain and the public should appreciate its good fortune, occasioned, whimsically enough, by the double-dealing of the government which let them, the brothers, down over the vaults. This undaunted attitude shows the brothers' instinct for good business. And so the pamphlet continues to outline the up-to-date amenities of the Adelphi property: "For besides the use of fire engines . . . there is a water-tower erected by the Messrs. Adam . . . and the pipes are so constructed, that upon a minute's notice, three engines, constantly supplied with water, can be played upon any house in the buildings." In spite of their assumption of bravado, there is no doubt that the Adelphi fiasco occasioned much unfortunate publicity, which rightly or wrongly left a nasty flavour behind. Worse still, it interrupted the even and hitherto mounting successes of the family firm and lost them confidence. References in Robert's letters to clients reflect his disturbance over the whole proceeding. As early as 1770 he writes to Sir Edward Knatchbull that he has "been so engaged in the Affairs of the Embankment of Durham Yard that I have never got time to write to you upon the subject of our business", and two years later that he was prevented visiting Hatch "not from any real Cause, but from the apprehension that if the City had followed out their plan of prosecution, we might have been Sufferers for being out of Town at that time, and this year made us sort of Prisoners in London all the Summer".

From 1770 onwards Robert Adam had still twenty-two years to run. His astonishing energy and versatility were by no means impaired. In this year he made plans for laying out the Bathwick estate for his friend Mr. Pulteney, of which the beautiful Pulteney Bridge over the Avon at Bath was alone executed by him. Indeed henceforward the catholicity of his conceptions is his most remarkable asset. With isolated exceptions, such as Newby Hall (1772–80), for the virtuoso Mr. Weddell, in Yorkshire, Mamhead (1774) in Devon (both adaptations of pre-existing houses), and Dr. Turton's small villa at Brasted (1784) in Kent, Robert designed and built no more country houses in England. As to Lord Temple's great palace at Stowe, here we have a rare case of the architect consenting to prepare plans and designs which were carried out by another without his supervision. In 1771 Adam submitted designs for the garden elevation. Signor Borra more or less followed Adam's elevation without absolutely observing it, whereas the interior work was almost certainly carried out by Italians. The only other parallel case in England is the far earlier West Wycombe Park, where Sir Francis Dashwood himself made his own modifications from a general outline supplied by Adam.[1]

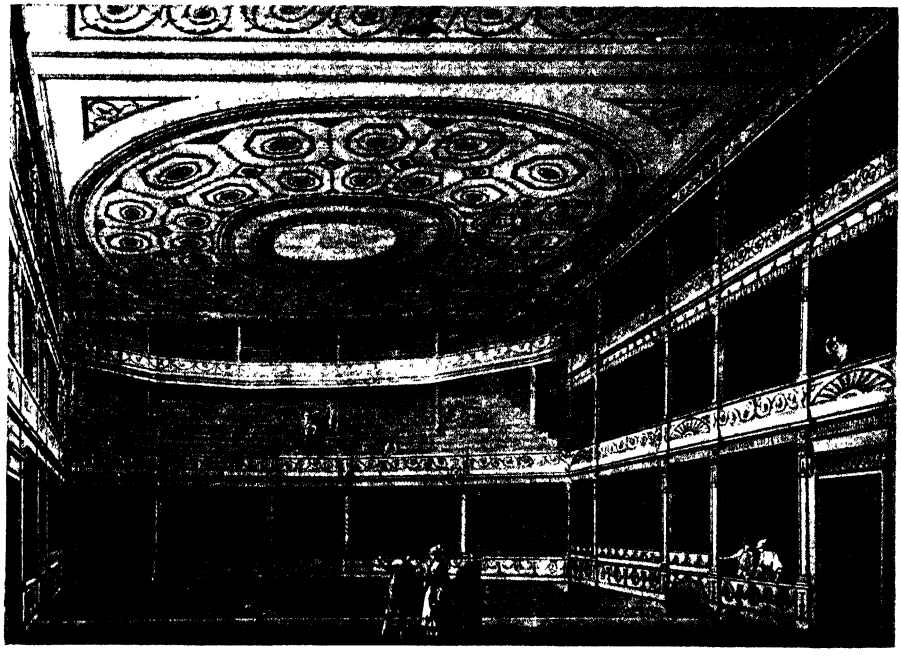
[1] Adam provided several plans for houses in Ireland, where he never apparently went himself.

To the country house category of building in Scotland belong only Culzean Castle (1777) (72), that astonishing achievement in the castellar style, Mellerstain (1770–8), and Newliston (1789). In fact whereas during the latter half of his life his commissions in England tended to decrease, he returned to his own country for other activities than the building of country houses. The apparent reasons for this seeming change in policy are twofold. The first is due less to the Adelphi crisis than to the dawning of serious rivals in the south, preeminently the star of the young James Wyatt, whose meteoric success with his Pantheon in Oxford Street (24) in 1772 whirled him to preposterous firmaments of social acclaim. Wyatt was a far more serious rival than the older Chambers and James Stuart, for youthful genius is always a greater attraction than conventional and established talent. The second is due to the reduced demand for country houses in the palatial manner, as a sequence to Lord North's disastrous administration, which dated from the beginning of this decade. The Boston Tea Party, to be followed by the Congress of Philadelphia, where the colonists resolutely denied the right of the home Parliament to tax them, and the great Chatham's belated attempt at conciliation, ended in the declaration of the War of American Independence in 1776. This event, following so soon upon the suicide of the hero Clive, shook the confidence of Great Britain in the continuance, so long taken for granted, of a stable imperialism and unassailable hereditary wealth. The ensuing years were to be fraught with successive disturbances at home and disasters overseas. The Roman Catholic Relief Bill was followed by the Gordon Riots; governments changed rapidly; Hastings was impeached; the King became insane. The French allied with the colonists in the Americas; the Armed Neutrality was formed against England; Britain lost command of the seas; Cornwallis was defeated, and the French seized the West Indies. And although events righted themselves by the middle of the next decade, confidence was not to be wholly restored. As late as 1786 we have Gavin Hamilton writing from Rome to Lord Shelburne, "At present there is not one purchaser in England and money is scarce".

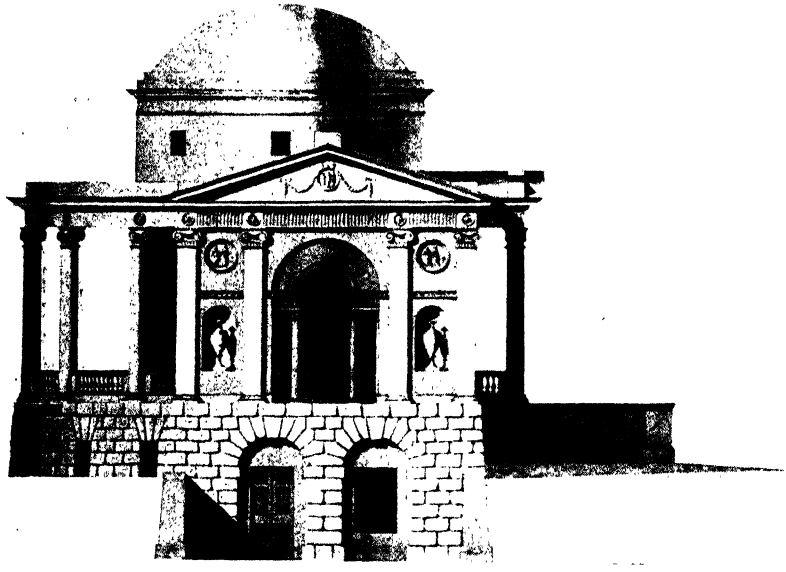
So we discover that Adam's activities, whether impelled by social or economic vagaries, were diverted into other than country house channels. Country house commissions, as we have seen, never entirely left him, and he continued often over many years to complete houses begun by him in the sixties. There are several instances of old clients, satisfied by the uniformly high quality of his workmanship, remaining faithful to him. At Osterley, for example, he continued spasmodically at work until 1780. At Croome he was designing an entrance gateway in 1791. But in England, as in Scotland, the seventies saw him producing town houses of the highest ingenuity of plan and standard of decoration. One of the earliest of these is Chandos House (1770), the most important of the surviving houses round Mansfield Street, which are nearly all his. It was followed by that tour-de-force in town house architecture, 20 St. James's Square (1772) (119), for Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn; Old Derby House



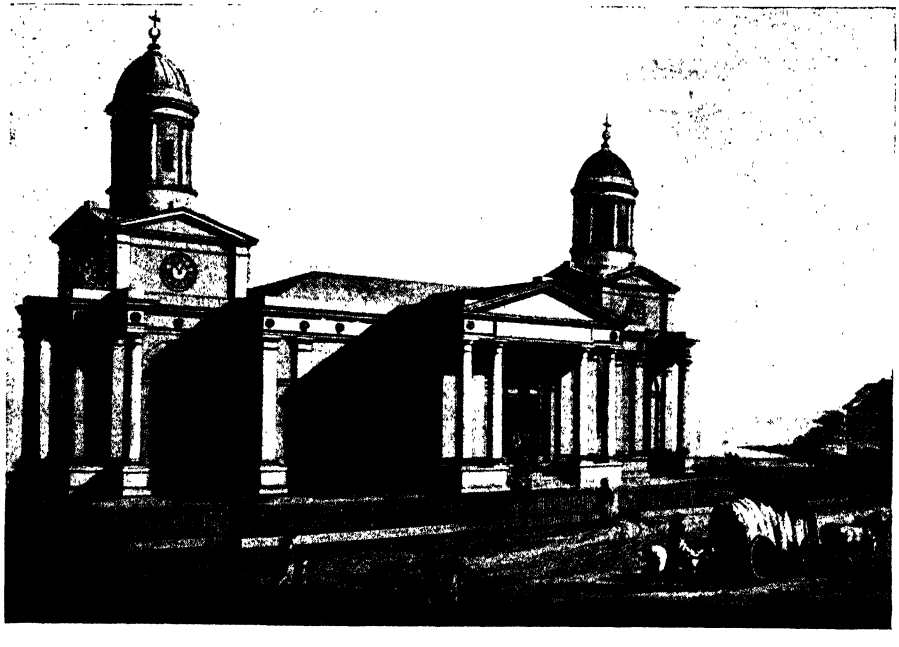
40 The Adelphi, Thames Embankment. Built by the Adam brothers and named after them (1771). Reproduced from the plate in the *Works*



41 Drury Lane Theatre auditorium. Designed by Robert and James Adam for David Garrick (1776). Reproduced from the plate in the *Works*



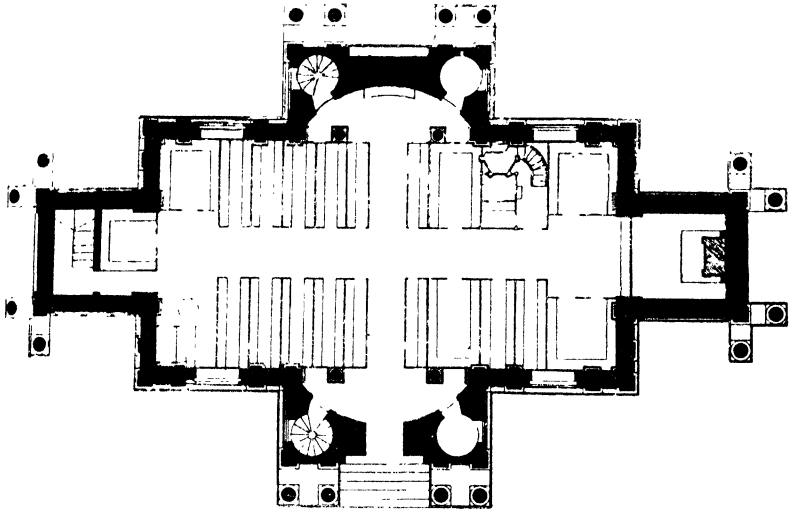
42 Elevation of the west end of the Salt Water Bath at Mistley, Essex, by Robert Adam (1774)



43 The Church (1776) at Mistley Spa, of which the twin towers now remain. Reproduced from the plate in the *Works*

(1773) in Grosvenor Square, now long destroyed and possibly the greatest achievement of them all; and Home House (1775–7) (108), in Portman Square, a flight of self-assertion against its neighbours by James Wyatt, which it totally eclipsed. In this area of London the brothers planned considerable development projects, and in 1773 James was responsible for Portland Place, which, like so much else, was fated not to be carried out in accordance with the grandeur of the designs. This scheme for a street of palaces was sadly thwarted by the outbreak of the American War.

One of the most interesting examples of Robert Adam's versatility was his experiment at Mistley (43), of which, alas, scarcely anything survives intact. Mistley, near Manningtree, in Essex, lies at the mouth of the River Stour in a delightful backwater of which Harwich and



Plan of Mistley Church

Felixstowe form the protective jaws and guard its secluded approaches from the North Sea. Formerly a fashionable spa for the waters, sailing, and every manner of marine recreation, all that we remark to-day as we fly through it in our high-powered motors are the remnants of a classical church built by Adam. The body of the church has quite gone, but the twin towers remain, neglected, aloof, detached. Of red brick, stuccoed over, their disengaged stone columns and sharply projecting entablatures convey that "movement" which Adam so persistently meant to emphasise. Each tower flaunts a stone turret crowned with a lead cupola. In the mid-eighteenth century Mistley belonged to that smart, social adventurer, of a type that keeps recurring throughout British politics, the Rt. Honble. Richard Rigby, M.P., grandson of a linen draper and quondam Paymaster-

General of the Forces. He made Mistley a centre of magnificent hospitality, which was injoyed by scores of his social acquaintances who took good care not to inquire too closely into the source of their host's riches and their own lavish entertainment. Adam was called upon to impart "elegance" to the modest "neat" residence that Rigby's grandfather had built for his retirement, but to-day nothing of Mistley Hall remains except some stable buildings. Instead the railway line to Harwich runs directly over the site of the mansion and intersects the park, and only one of the white-brick pepper-box lodges, now in the last stages of dereliction, marks the entrance where the carriage horses of the great and gay once thrashed their tails preparatory to the final gallopade up the drive. Still one may trace vestiges of Robert Adam's hand in the red-brick bridge, formerly an ornament in the park, but now conducting the public highway, in the red-brick inn provided for the valetudinarian fashionables and in the round basin in front of it, upon which an absurd swan proudly swims and spouts beneficial water through its beak. The Mistley conception of an Adam watering-place, complete with squire's hall, lodges, church, inn, swan pool, bathing pavilion, fountains, and maze, clustered round a quay to which yachts and fishing smacks were moored and where painted barges unloaded their wares at the granaries, must once have been an enchantment and a delight.[1]

Other and greater projects were conceived by Adam at the end of his life, but they were all doomed to be either totally abortive or hopelessly crippled. From the plans and drawings for them that survive we are able to determine that, far from diminishing, Robert Adam's creative powers seemed to expand with his age. Unfortunately the very nature of his schemes was so ambitious that they were never fulfilled, and like Wren's projects for the rebuilding of London, the memory of what might have been is left to vindicate the man's genius. In particular we have in mind Robert Adam's Cambridge University scheme (1784) and his Edinburgh University scheme (1788). Whereas the former came to nothing at all, the latter was only partially carried out in the form contemplated by its author. Lack of funds, the indifference of its supporters, and finally death intervened. The projects will be referred to in their own place, but this reference to them claims to show how up to the last Robert Adam was haunted by a cumulative urge to produce one work on the monumental scale. The tragedy of his life is that, unlike Wren with his St. Paul's Cathedral, Adam was destined never to achieve it.

So we have reviewed three periods of Robert Adam's working career. *First*, the early period after his return from Italy in 1758 until 1770 and the Adelphi setback. This is the period of advancing successes, exemplified by rabid country-house building. It coincides with his more

[1] David Garrick, during a visit to Rigby's house in 1777, conveyed his pleasure in Mistley in the following passage of a letter to his dear Hannah More: "while I am writing this in my dressing-room, I see no less than fifty vessels under sail, and one, half an hour ago, saluted us with thirteen guns".

robust architectural style, when the background influences of his George II upbringing had not entirely receded into an abandoned past. *Second*, the middle period of rivalry and a direction towards town-house building, lasting until, roughly speaking, 1780. It coincides with Robert Adam's decorative and too often fussy style. *Third*, until his death in 1792, the period of unfulfilment, when he reverted to his monumental ambitions, away from interior decoration, concentrating once more upon exterior effects.

During Robert's middle period the year 1778 was marked by further litigation for the family firm in the *Liardet* versus *Johnson* trial, in which the brothers were involved. In 1765 a Mr. David Wark of Haddington patented a stucco-duro composition that he had invented. Then in 1773, Liardet, a Swiss clergyman, patented an improved composition of his own. Shortly, both patents were purchased by the Adams, who introduced into the market their manufacture, which they called "Adam's new invented patent stucco", and obtained an Act of Parliament—Robert was still an M.P.—vesting in the patentees the exclusive right to make and vend. Thus the firm achieved their purpose of being able to prosecute anyone selling a composition resembling Liardet's. In actual fact for years past a variety of compositions, one closely resembling another, had been circulating round the markets and would do so again. Without an undue lapse of time, a certain Johnson took upon himself the right to improve, or so he claimed, upon a previous composition either to the Adam, Liardet, or even Wark varieties. Johnson obtained a patent for his supposed invention and started his own market. The Adams, who had spent large sums in buying their two patents, promptly went to law. The judge who conducted the case happened most unfortunately to be the fellow Scot, friend and client of the Adams, Lord Mansfield. He pronounced in favour of the Adams, and Johnson was told he must not "meddle in improvements". By this pronouncement considerable jealousy and ill-feeling were stimulated in the architectural profession, which objected that the Messrs. Adams' patent should, like Aaron's rod, be privileged to swallow up all other enterprises. In view of the past history of stucco-duro compositions, the critics had some justification on their side and still another stick with which to beat the brothers. The case aroused a good deal of publicity, and two pamphlets were widely circulated, entitled *Observations on Two Trials at Law*, and a *Reply* thereto, carefully calculated to draw mischievous comment upon the business methods of the Adams.

If the *Liardet* versus *Johnson* case helped to damage once again the business methods of the Adam firm in the eyes of architects and prospective clients alike, the ubiquitous and often indiscriminate use by Robert of Liardet's composition in the ensuing years in place of the older, more substantial gesso is a far more serious, because lasting, indictment of his building methods. There is no doubt that in his later decorative work we often detect a hurried, mass-produced effect, and this is particularly the case with the less discerning of the Adam imitators. Adam found the

patent substitute far easier for the application of inset picture frames, wall panels, swags, and ceiling patterns generally. The composition was more pliable and set more quickly, and had the ultimate effect of lending itself to a too facile production of decorative motifs.

In his last years we hear even less of Robert's private life than in his earlier years. We only know from his notes and jottings that he was constantly on the move, feverishly journeying winter and summer across rough roads all over England and up and down to Scotland. His obituary notice in *The Gentleman's Magazine* states that at the time of his death he had in hand as many as eight public works and no less than twenty-five private buildings, mainly in Scotland. These demands must have imposed a strain upon a man of over sixty years of age. Boswell about this time gives an oblique personal reference to an architect, that must surely be Robert Adam, as one who "in spite of his professional engagements lived at home quietly with his sisters". Indeed the family circle all these years had never been disrupted.

On 20th October, 1791, we hear of the first meeting of the Architects Club at the Thatched House Tavern, at which Wyatt, George Dance, Holland, and S. P. Cockerell were assembled. Ensuing meetings were then arranged to take place on the first Thursday of every month at 5 p.m. for dinner. To be one of the original members the founders had the grace to invite Robert Adam. Contrary to Soane's grumble to Farington, that it would not last because of the rivalries of its members, the club did in fact prosper, and its importance is measured by its devolving untimately into the Royal Institute of British Architects.

On 3rd March, 1792, Robert Adam died suddenly at his home, 13 Albemarle Street, from the bursting of a blood vessel in his stomach. On 10th March he was buried in the south transept of Westminster Abbey, in the Poet's Corner. Only a plain and much worn slab marks the place of burial. There is no other monument. Though the funeral, unlike Garrick's, was private, the pall-bearers were the Duke of Buccleugh, the Earl of Coventry, the Earl of Lauderdale, Lord Stormont, Lord Frederick Campbell, and Mr. Pulteney. Few and obscure were Adam's obituaries. One refers to the "natural suavity of his manners, joined to the excellence of his moral character". His cousin, Principal Robertson, in a letter to Professor Dalzel, wrote: "I have lived long and much with many of the most distinguished men in my own times, but for genius, for worth, and for agreeable manners, I know none whom I should rank above the friend we have lost." Adam too had lived long and much amongst his distinguished compeers, but the extraordinary thing is that the man who was intimate with men like Garrick, Reynolds, and Johnson, who was on epistolary terms with some of the great letter-writers of the age, namely Hannah More, Elizabeth Montagu, and Horace Walpole, somehow failed to evoke more than the barest interest in his personal life and society.

In June of the same year died John Adam, the eldest of the brothers and the laird of Blair Adam. Two years later, James, the faithful partner

of Robert's life and most devoted disciple of all his architectural principles, followed them to the grave. William, the survivor of the four, lasted until 1822, when he died, apparently in penury. For in 1818 and in 1821 there were sales at 13 Albemarle Street of all Robert's and James's pictures, books, furniture, porcelain, and antiques. Nor were Robert's famous drawings exempted from a later sale. They, numbering nearly 9,000 in all, were recovered in 1833 by Sir John Soane for the sum of £200 and bequeathed by him to the Museum which he founded for the enduring benefit of posterity.


"London: A Flight of Scotchmen"
From an eighteenth-century print in the Victoria and Albert Museum

# III

## THE ROMAN-GREEK CONTROVERSY

IN order fully to appreciate the trends of English architecture throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, it is surely necessary to review the Roman-Greek controversy that for several decades past had riven intellectual Europe. Sides were passionately taken by misguided continental partisans, zealous in the cause of archaeological and aesthetic truths, without anyone being at all sure that his cause was infallible. It was left to a few dispassionate and wise individuals whose interests were creative rather than academic to profit from the arguments of each party and to adopt the best principles from both. Robert Adam's cold, calculating commercial instincts, together with his developed artistic sense, allowed him to be one of these wise men.

The two great opposing figures in the controversy were Giambattista Piranesi and the Abbé Winklemann. Round each of these protagonists of the Roman and the Grecian principles a host of subsidiary elements revolved and collided. The eighteenth century had opened up wide and untilled fields for archaeological research. The Roman tradition of the arts and, in particular, architecture, had been given a renewed impetus by the discoveries of Herculaneum in 1719 and of Pompeii in 1748. Piranesi, we have already stated, began life as an artist and had first made a name for himself with the publication of his dramatic and romantic sketches in 1743. His love for his native peninsula was intense and limited. In 1748 he first published *Le Antiquità Romane*, a collection of topographical views of old Rome exclusively. They were followed by his *Carceri* in 1750, consisting of enigmatic scenes of the nether-world in a frankly Dantesque and romantic manner. The remarkable drawings of the *Carceri* reveal that Piranesi was above all things a great artist with immense power to convey the awful message of his sombre genius. A second issue of *Le Antiquità Romane* in 1756 did more than extend the topographical interest of the first and developed the study of Roman antiquities generally. The vast collection of plates in this volume was meant to vindicate to the world of art the overwhelming universality of Roman greatness. The note it sounded was loud, defiant, and challenging.

Four years previously, however, a certain Frenchman, le Comte de Caylus, had issued a magnificently bound and illustrated work with the sonorous title *Recueil d'Antiquités Egyptiennes, Étrusques, Grecques et Romaines* in which, with some misgiving, he tentatively maintained the superiority of Greek archaeological remains over Roman. The Comte de

Caylus was totally unaware of the hurricane he was unleashing. This was in 1752, and we do not know whether his book had come to the knowledge of Piranesi or not. The inoffensive volume was followed six years later by the count's compatriot, J. D. Le Roy, publishing *Les Ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce*. Piranesi, slow to anger—and in those days it took time before a publication in one country was brought to circulation in another—roused himself to a suspicion that his beloved Roman remains were being slighted. It is doubtful how far Piranesi then understood the historical dependence of the Roman civilisation upon its forerunner. In fact—and we mention it to show that the rumblings of a distant disturbance were not confined to the Mediterranean heavens exclusively —the Englishman Allan Ramsay had preceded Le Roy in an essay entitled *A Dialogue on Taste*, in which he championed, primarily the Gothic and secondly (a curious relative sequence) the Greek against the Roman tradition. But this essay, emanating from the barbaric north, had escaped the notice, certainly the attentions, of the great Roman protagonist.

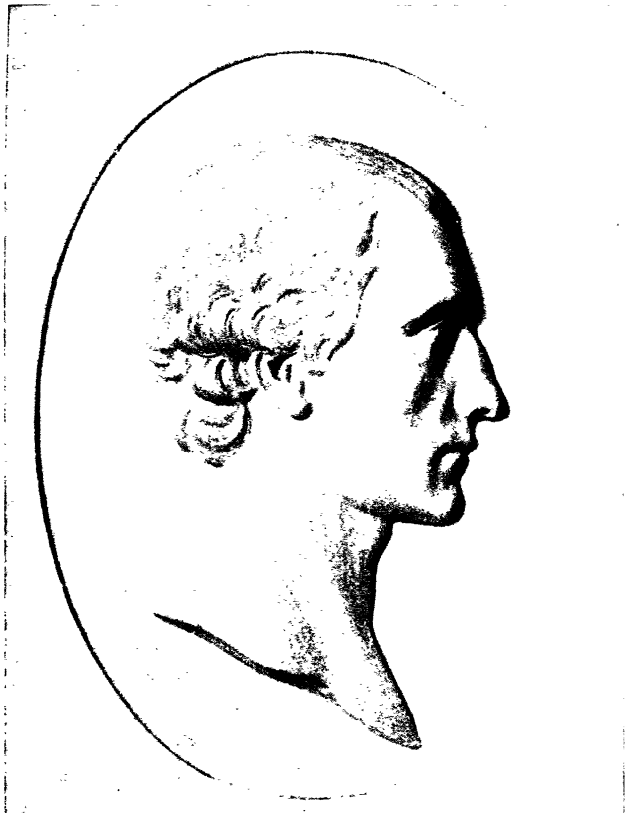
Without an undue show of irritation Piranesi, by way of answer to Le Roy and possibly de Caylus, produces in 1761 his first professedly controversial work, *Della Magnificenza ed Architettura de' Romani*, in which he vindicates the Roman style of architecture generally, and the Etruscan particularly, against the Grecian, basing his opposition on the ornateness of the latter. No doubt he felt confident that this dogmatic pronouncement would set a final seal upon further argument. The effect was the very opposite to that intended. Three years later Pierre-Jean Mariette replied to Piranesi by a letter in the *Gazette Littéraire de l'Europe* (thus bringing the issue before the whole civilised world) contradicting Piranesi's unscholarly imputations and declaring that Greek art, on the contrary, was simple and not ornate at all. Piranesi in a perfect frenzy at being publicly defied thereupon retaliates with his famous *Parere su l'Architettura* (1765).

At our distance from the scene we realise the ridiculous nature of the competitive issue. This time Piranesi rigidly adheres to his blind championship of the Roman against the Grecian, but not, we notice, on quite the same grounds. He has shifted off the simplicity argument (indeed it was untenable) and even hints that the Etruscan may, after all, not be so simple as he had at first claimed, but is for all that the superior style. In other words, Piranesi has betrayed considerable signs of wavering and weakness, so that his opponents might well have dismissed him as a crusty archaeologist whose theories were founded on prejudice and did not count one way or another. But that was not the way with eighteenth-century pugilists the world over, who enjoyed a prolonged skirmishing and frequently preferred jolly hard hitting above and below the belt to methods of finesse. On the other hand, Piranesi ridiculed the Palladians for their indiscriminate and pedantic adherence to the rules of the Orders, their reliance upon reason at the expense of genius, and, most surprisingly of all, for their cult of simplicity. Quite apart from the several extravagances and

absurdities to which he unwisely gave utterance in this work, Piranesi demonstrates his new concern with architecture as an advance upon his hitherto restricted interest in archaeology. The publication, in its attacks upon Palladianism, marks a definite transition—and herein lies its great value—from the exclusively academic approach to art to a more enlightened appreciation of the imagination and genius that begets it. Almost for the first time in art study we get an objective criticism of quality, however unsteady and biased the language that clothes it. A clear sign of grace is the onslaught the book makes upon the rigid copyists and law-abiders in the architectural profession.

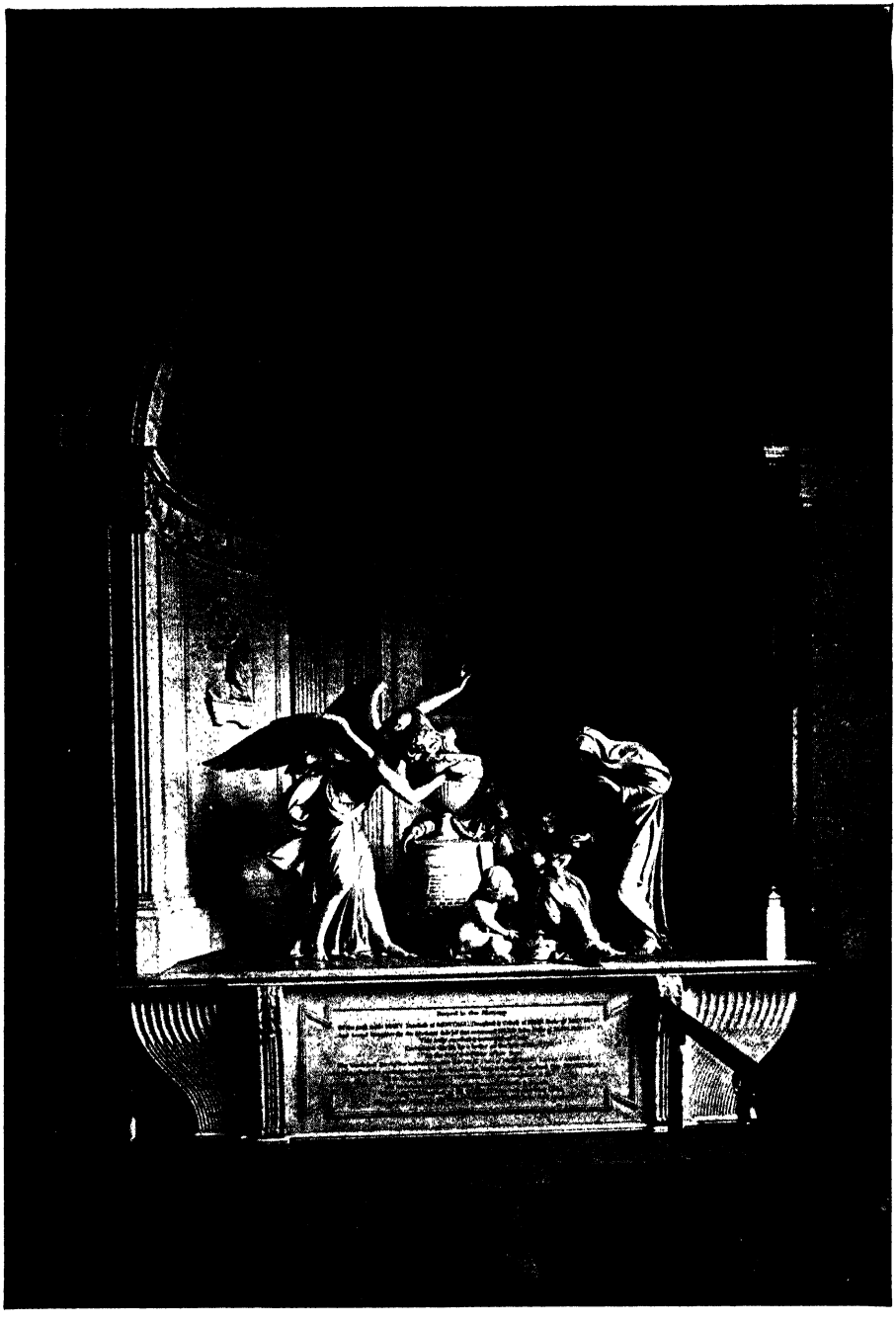
To what we may now ask was due this volte-face of Piranesi from the simplicity issue, the tacit withdrawal of his previous pontifical condemnation of the Grecian manner of building? The answer is that in the meantime—that is to say since the publication of Piranesi's *Della Magnificenza* and before that of his *Parere*—another luminary had arisen well above the horizon, whose beams were swiftly suffusing the whole face of European scholarship. Winckelmann had appeared and pronounced in favour of the Greek in no uncertain terms. Even Piranesi realised that he could not ignore or confute him. This accounts for his rather lame apology in the *Parere* and for his complete withdrawal of anti-Greek prejudice in his subsequent *Diverse Maniere* (1769), where, divorced from his doctrinaire theories, Piranesi advocates an unrestricted eclecticism in contemporary architecture.

The Abbé Winckelmann (45) is one of the most extraordinary characters in art history. An exhaustive psychological study could profitably be made of the contending machinations of his Byronic mind, torn between extravagant sublunary cupidity and undeviating aesthetic loyalties, between the flesh-cum-devil in utter nakedness and the chaste allurements of sublime spiritual truths. Son of a German cobbler, all his life he was dogged by poverty. His two ambitions, so indicative of his dual mind, to amass money (for he was not overscrupulous) and to get to Greece, he never achieved. He began as tutor to a minor nobleman's son, by name Lamprecht, upon whom he lavished the love as of David for Jonathan. This first of a series of unorthodox relationships was marred by Winckelmann's papist sympathies, which the Lutheran pupil could not swallow. He then became librarian to Count Henry von Bünau. In 1754 he was converted to the Roman Catholic faith, after lashing himself with torments of indecision, the more remarkable since he never arrived at any religious convictions and resolutely refused to submit to the physical inconveniences and discomforts of Holy Orders even in those clerically lax days. This was a pity in so far as his overriding interests were concerned, for a soft sinecure in the comfortable arms of Mother Church would have provided that safe background which he always needed and against which he might have pursued his absorbing art studies unembarrassed by pecuniary cares. But it was part of his contradictory make-up to reject opportunities whenever they arose. His



44 Ivory Plaque of Robert Adam in his twenties: formerly at Blair Adam

45 Engraving of the Abbé Winckelmann after a portrait by Angelica Kauffmann (1767)



46 Monument in Warkton Church, Northamptonshire, to the 3rd Duchess of Montagu. Executed by P. M. Van Gelder after Robert Adam's design (1771)

capacity for work was, however, immense, and we must remember that Winckelmann's great achievement was his original researches in the hitherto unexplored fields upon which he precipitated himself. In 1755 he published his first work, entitled *Thoughts upon the Imitation of Greek Works of Art in Painting and Sculpture*. The labour he underwent in providing his material and thesis was remarkable. The book stressed the superiority of the ancients and particularly of the Greeks, whose mantle had fallen upon Raphael amongst the moderns, whereas the baroquists and above all Bernini he relegated to the lower ranks of trivial artificers. The value of this book and of Winckelmann's succeeding works lies in the fact that he was the first scholar to touch upon the science of aesthetics, according to the laws of which he endeavoured to assess the great artistic achievements of past civilisations. He departed, in fact, from the casual and desultory methods of merely admiring the picturesque quality of ancient remains, as his immediate predecessors had done. In this respect Winckelmann and Piranesi were finally to meet on the same wicket.

In this year Winckelmann succeeded in getting himself to Rome, which ever afterwards was to be the axis of his intellectual life. Here he was lucky to enjoy the patronage of Cardinal Passionei and the close friendship of Raphael Mengs. Mengs (who had taught Benjamin West) was the friend and protector of cultured foreigners, including Richard Wilson and James ("Athenian") Stuart, whom he declared to be the only English artists of superior genius that he had come across. It is therefore most probable that Winckelmann had met Stuart that year in Rome on his return from Greece, but it is interesting to realise from our chronological data that Stuart's and for that matter Robert Wood's Grecian enthusiasm could not have emanated directly from the great hellenist himself. If Stuart owed his enthusiasm to another inspiration than his own, it must have been to that of the Comte de Caylus, whose *Recueil d'Antiquités* had first appeared in 1752. Now in 1756 Robert Adam's tour took him to Rome, where he is almost bound to have met Winckelmann, although unfortunately we have no evidence to prove it. Adam was, of course, at this time an ardent admirer of Piranesi, soon to become the champion of the Roman cause, and it is just possible that this connection, as well as Winckelmann's avowed contempt for the English, prevented a close intimacy. Winckelmann was particularly censorious of the English milord class of amateurs, who, in their turn, were contemptuous of the poor and, as yet, undistinguished German scholar, with his odd, rough manners and condescending airs. Robert Adam, like his brother James after him, pursued his travels in a luxurious style that may have identified him in Winckelmann's eyes with the rest of the empty-headed, swaggering aristocracy from Britain who invaded the streets and drawing-rooms of Rome with their loud and affected voices. On the other hand, James Adam, who was in Rome later where he purchased the Albani collection for George III, must surely have come into direct contact with Winckelmann, who was then living with the cardinal and in charge of his library and

works of art. The appointment had taken place in 1758, the year of Robert's return to England.

Winckelmann had by this time assumed the title of Abbé—it seems for convenience and because of the sonority of the title. As the result of a short expedition to Naples, Baiae, Caserta, and Paestum, his researches were embodied in his *Study of Works of Art* and several lesser essays throughout the same year, just before his preparation of the catalogue of Baron Philip von Stosch's collections and before, in fact, he took up residence with Cardinal Albani. In 1760 appeared his *Observations upon the Architecture of the Ancients*. By now his reputation in Rome stood very high and we hear of pilgrimages being made to him by the Duc de Rochefoucauld, William Hamilton, and even John Wilkes. The appeal of the latter unprincipled man of the world to the great scholar and recluse is interesting, but not at all out of accord with Winckelmann's many-faceted character. One of the attractions, no doubt, lay in Wilkes's pseudo-democratic pretensions, which political circumstances at home had thrust upon this stormy petrel, who, in the words of one contemporary observer, really "wanted to be a fine gentleman and man of taste, which he could never be, for God and nature had been against him".

Winckelmann's personal conduct at this middle period of his life was most perplexing and extraordinary. He developed, or at least feigned, a quite unabbatial passion for Margaret Guazzi, the beautiful wife of his friend Mengs. He gives a curiously frank picture of the liaison and of the sentiments that impelled him to pursue it, telling how he would lie naked in bed with her for hours at a time in order to master his natural sensuality. Far more convincing is his coincidental relation with the beautiful Baron Friedrich Reinhold von Berg, to whom he wrote of his "indescribable attraction to you, occasioned not by face and form alone . . . Your conformation allowed me to infer that which I wished to find", and so forth; while to the bewilderment and embarrassment of the Vatican, he caused a portrait to be painted of a handsome castrato, to whom he boasted addressing fervid words of love.

In 1764 he wrote his *History of Ancient Art*, in which he expresses his abhorrence of the baroque and advocates a kind of sentimental romanticism. The publication of this book had a wide circulation and established Winckelmann as, without question, the greatest living interpreter of classical art. It was this *History of Ancient Art* that had so decisively influenced Piranesi to abandon as hopeless his too rigid Roman theses and to modify his views upon Greek art in his *Parere su l'Architettura*. Winckelmann's work was translated the following year into English by Fuseli, and marks probably the first occasion of his influence reaching this country. Fuseli, to his credit, was all his life conscious of the philosophy of Winckelmann in spite of a natural antipathy to the man, which was shared to a degree of total exclusion by other artist-scholars, like James Barry and Reynolds, who never once so much as alludes to him in the *Discourses*.

Winckelmann's last work was his *Ancient Monuments* (1767), followed

by a fourth visit to Naples, this time in the company of John Wilkes, with whom he climbed Vesuvius during an eruption. Next year he decided that it was time to revisit his native country, but no sooner had he got there than he was overcome with homesickness for Italy. He straightway returned, and while waiting at Trieste got into conversation in the hotel with a stranger called Francis Archangeli. While his back was turned Archangeli threw a noose round Winckelmann's neck and stabbed him to death—all for the sake of two gold and two silver medallions which he had seen upon his person.

We have dealt rather fully with Winckelmann's remarkable and contorted personality because the effects of his researches and his teaching were to the eighteenth century revolutionary, and to this day are still the basis of all historical art criticism, to the extent that the chronological epochs in the evolution of classical art, which we take for granted, are of his choosing and determination. His immediate influence in Europe was to bring about a healthy reaction against the baroque (from the extravagances of which we in England never suffered) and to establish the full measure of Greek art, hitherto unexplored and unknown, in relation to the subsidiary Roman, which until his time was alone esteemed. Winckelmann's achievements were astounding when we consider that most of his research was entirely original, that he never went to Greece and was obliged to formulate his theories upon Greek sculpture from indifferent casts and copies in the Vatican or the private and royal collections to which he gained access. Nevertheless in spite of these disadvantages he managed to comprehend the serenity and repose of Greek art, and upon his followers he impressed these qualities, even if he infused into them his own subjective theories. And here we touch upon Winckelmann's natural weakness. His excessive sensitivity and unrestrainable emotions led him to believe more in men's chance opinions than in book-learning and the dictates of his own reason. His extreme partiality for the Greeks, with whom he identified his own strongly sensuous nature, made him pronounce that their race, climate, and customs had enabled them to be supreme artists to the disadvantage of the ancient Romans, for whom he had not the same personal sympathy. Winckelmann was, above all, the first of the aesthetes, and until his advent men had not understood the fundamental principles by which to assess the qualities of works of art generally.

We must not, however, overlook the fact that the cause of a vaguely-defined romantic Hellenism had of course been flaunted long before Winckelmann's days, just as it was to be after them. Protagonists of this abstract idealism had trumpeted its claims in England as well as on the continent. As early as 1735 we find James Thomson, of the *Seasons*, composing the following apostrophe:

> Hail nature's utmost boast! Unrivalled Greece!
> My fairest reign! where every power benign
> Conspired to blow the flower of human kind,
> And lavish all that genius can inspire.

The sentiments somewhat loosely expressed by Thomson of Hellenic idealism, presumably of an exclusive literary significance, are little altered by Shelley when, over eighty years later, he ejaculated:

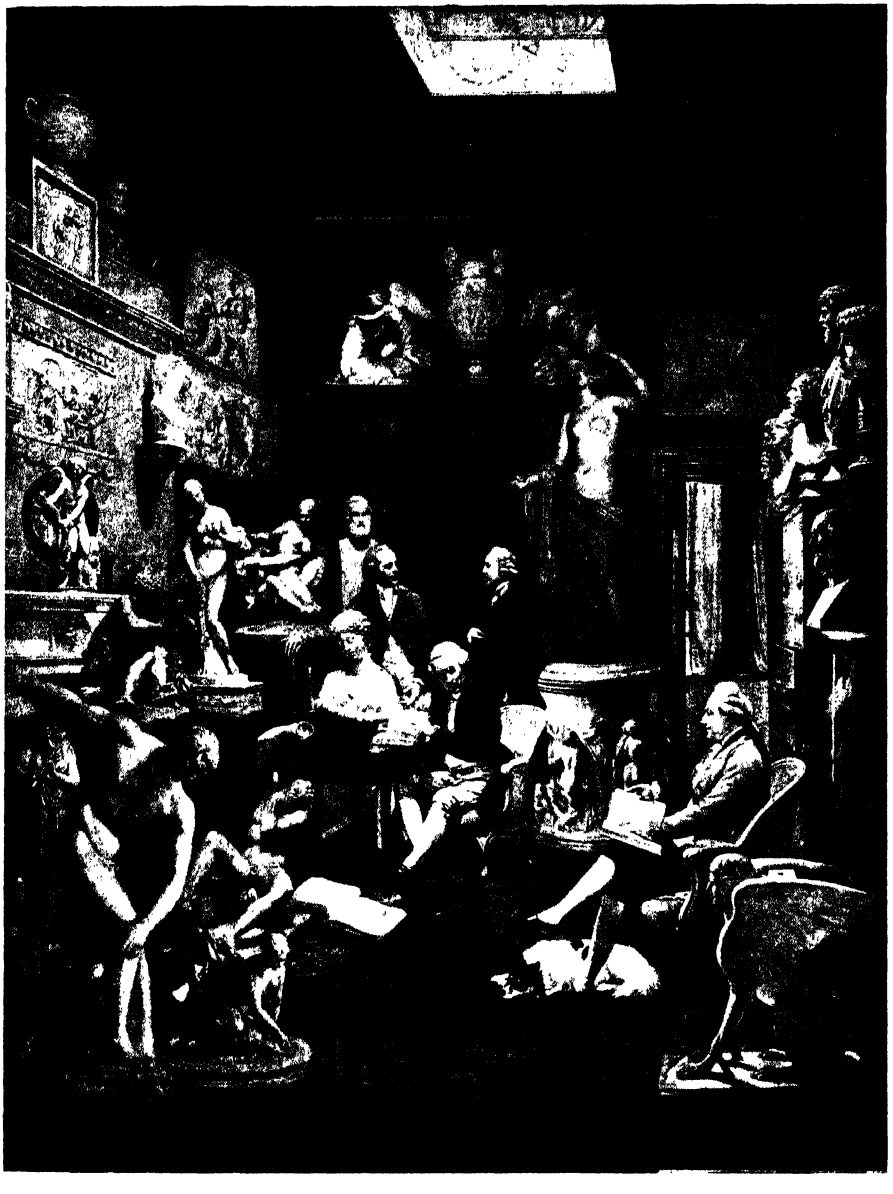
> Another Athens shall arise,
> And to remoter time
> Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
> The splendour of its prime;
> And leave, if nought so bright may live,
> All earth can take or heaven can give.

or indeed by Byron, who of the three poets had alone actually visited Greece:

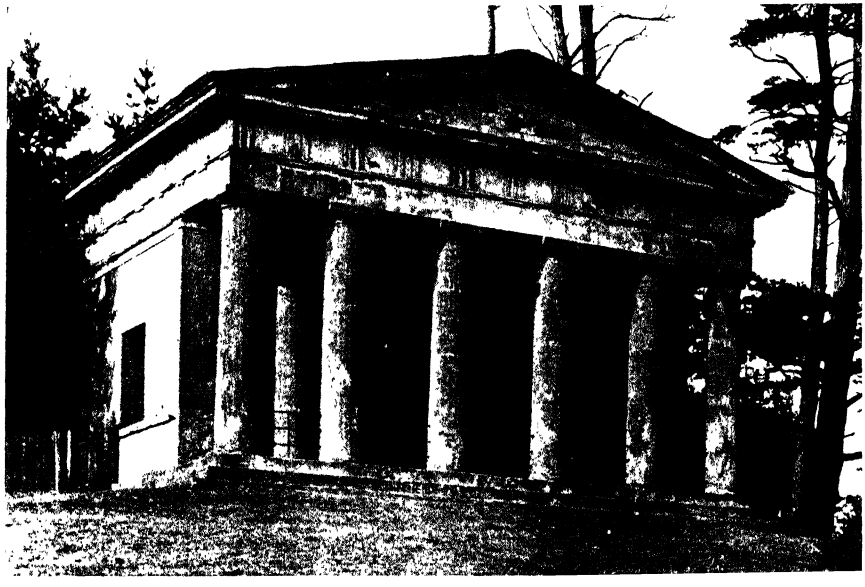
> Cold is the heart, fair Greece! that looks on thee
> Nor feels as lovers o'er the dust they loved;
> Dull is the eye that will not weep to see
> Thy walls defaced . . .

As the eighteenth century progressed Greece became identified by advanced radical thinkers with the cause of liberty, political and moral, as well as literary and artistic. It coincided with that reaction, culminating in the French Revolution, against the pictorial and the baroque, which had come to be associated with a tyrannous and decadent aristocracy. It is best found expressed in Barthélémy's *Voyage du Jeune Anarchasis* (1789), which forcibly advocates a love of things Greek and the cause of freedom of expression, and worst in Greuze's insipid yet didactic portraits of young virgins, symbolic of the New Order, clasping doves, the messengers of an egalitarian peace, to their bourgeois bosoms. But to return to the earlier re-discovery of Greek art and all that it foolishly or wisely implied, we find that in Great Britain the Dilettanti Society—founded in 1732—set as its first purpose the encouragement and patronage of Greek excavation and research. The fruits of the Society's activities were soon to be displayed in the great private collections throughout the kingdom, notably at Houghton, Petworth, Shugborough, and Stourhead and in the Towneley Galleries. The classic illustration of the mania for collecting toward the end of the century Greek and Roman works of art is the famous Zoffany picture of Charles Towneley surrounded in Queen Anne's Gate by busts and casts, cameos, intaglios, coins, and treasures of every description—provided they are antique (47).

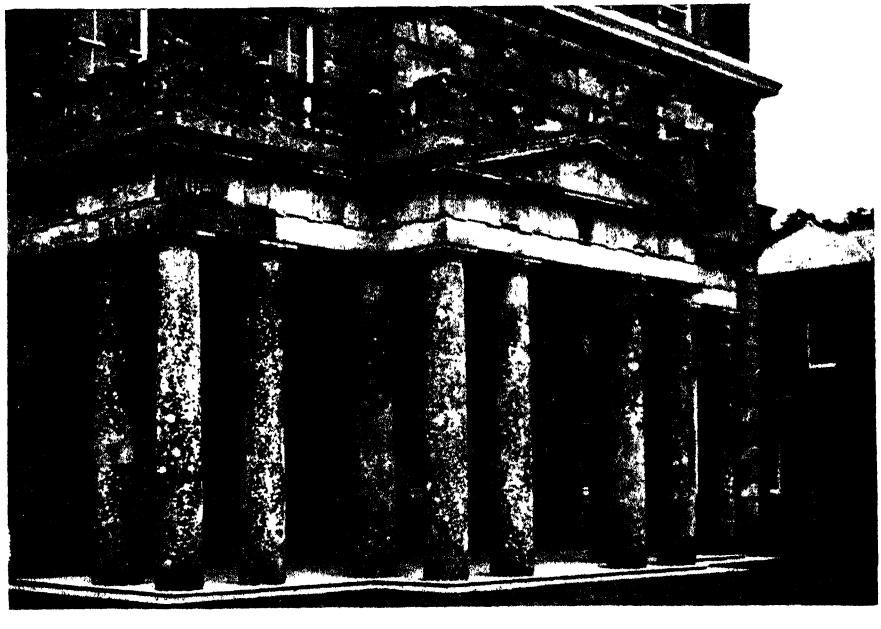
Thanks to the enterprise of the Dilettanti Society of noble amateurs, England did not lag behind the continental zeal for a Greek revival. By 1753 Robert Wood published a large volume entitled *The Ruins of Palmyra*. This was a splendidly produced record of measured drawings and the researches, undertaken, at the Society's expense, by a trio of enthusiasts, Bouverie, James Dawkins, and Wood, who wrote the descriptions. It was the first archaeological publication in England along the de Caylus lines, and was eagerly bought and digested by students and preceded Winckelmann's important *Thoughts upon Imitation of Greek Works*, which was actually to put the ancients "on the map", by two years. It was followed



47 Charles Towneley and his friends, surrounded by his collections in Queen Anne's Gate. From the picture by John Zoffany



48 Hagley Park: the Doric Temple, by James Stuart (1758), in the neo-Grecian style (*Country Life* photograph)



49 Trafalgar, Wiltshire: the portico by Nicholas Revett (1766), under the Grecian influence

in 1757 by a second archaeological record of another expedition made by the same friends, namely *The Ruins of Baalbec*. This production came well up to the standard of the first. To the regret of the survivors, Bouverie had died during the voyage, and the melancholy news was imparted by Wood, again the spokesman: "If anything could make us forget that Mr. Bouverie was dead," he wrote, "it was that Mr. Dawkins was living", a sentiment that was doubtless shared by Mr. Dawkins himself.

At about the time that the expedition to Palmyra was just over two other English Grecophil travellers left Rome for the Peloponnesus. They were James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, bound upon the expedition that was to give rise to the even more renowned *Antiquities of Athens*. The expedition had been commissioned and financed by the Dilettanti. The two men had previously met Wood's party in Rome, where the latter very magnanimously surrendered to them any prior claims they felt they may have had upon Athens and the Greek peninsula. Stuart and Revett journeyed by way of Pola in Istria and Zante to Corinth, in 1751, and so on to Athens. They did not return to England until 1755.

The two men, both professed connoisseurs of painting and not previously architects, had already spent over ten years in Rome, and so could boast of some study and knowledge of Roman remains. This fact gave immense authority to their *Antiquities of Athens*, when the first volume finally came out in 1762, and to the supererogatory claims made by them of Greek superiority over Roman architecture. In actual fact the only permanent importance of the book lies not in the authors' preference for Greek over Roman architecture—their opinions are purely arbitrary and not scholarly—but in the bare record it furnishes of certain buildings which in their day were more intact than they are in our own. The indirectly important effect of the book in hastening the decline of Palladianism and advancing the neo-Greek doctrines of building depended upon quite sophistical reasons.[1] In their Preface the authors blandly assume that "as Greece was the great mistress of the arts, and Rome, in this respect, no more than her disciple, it may be presumed, all the most admired buildings which adorned that imperial city were but imitations of Greek originals". By the same process of argument a Crucifixion scene by Cimabue must, artistically, surpass a similar subject by Raphael, in that Cimabue thought of the idea first. And, again, they lightly remark: "Rome never produced many extraordinary artists of her own." These sorts of deduction were of course just what public opinion in England, predisposed in favour of the new discovery, Greece, tired of Palladianism, and thirsting for a change in doctrine, was only too ready to swallow at the moment.

The *Antiquities of Athens* shows none of the scholarship of Winckelmann, who, incidentally, dismissed the book as trivial and as no advance

[1] Joseph Gwilt, writing in 1825, goes so far as to state: "The academies of the arts in most of the enlightened nations of Europe were suddenly enriched by their interesting and invaluable discoveries."

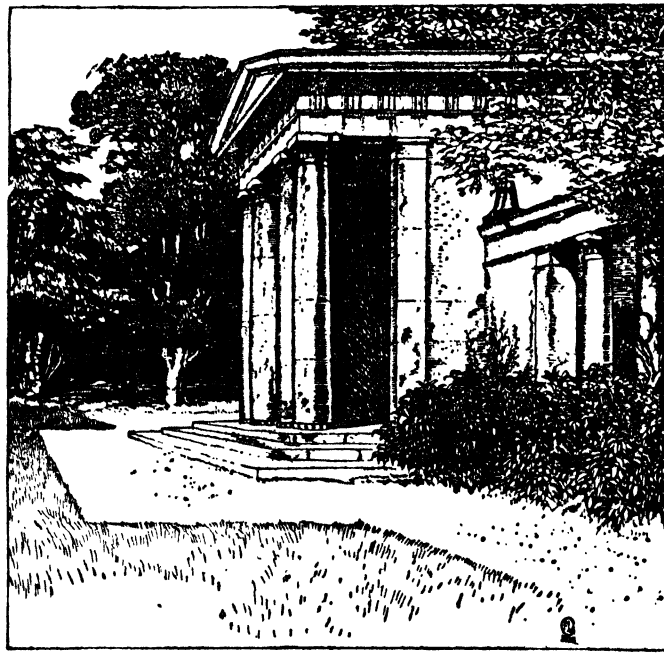
upon the discoveries of Le Roy. But Le Roy was a Frenchman and could not therefore command in England the same authority as Stuart and Revett, any more than the distant carping of the anglophobe Wincklemann could be expected to have the slightest effect upon independent English opinion. Sir William Chambers, that pillar of prejudice, did his very best to damp down the interest which the book evoked by a growl that betrayed his serious sense of its implications. "It hath afforded occasion of Laughter", he wrote archaicly, yet uneasily, "to every intelligent architect to see with what Pomp the Grecian antiquities have lately been ushered into the World and what encomiums have been lavished upon things that in Reality deserve little or no Notice." This damp squip coming from the official architect of the day had only a moderately explosive effect. On the other hand, there is no doubt that Stuart and Revett's disclosures did help to direct the new trends of the national architecture, now in process of casting off an outworn and adopting a new guise. The interest they aroused in art generally was beneficial, and to the *Antiquities* art lovers owed the first public gallery of sculpture and architectural fragments, which the Duke of Richmond, a member of the Dilettanti Society, opened at his house in Whitehall soon after their return.

The fact remains that James or "Athenian" Stuart, as he became universally known (Revett played a comparatively subordinate role), has been accredited with the first neo-Grecian buildings in this country. Some account of them and of the man himself is perhaps not out of place here. James Stuart, the son of a Scottish mariner, was born in 1713 and thus just belonged to an older generation than Robert Adam's. He began life not as an architect but as a painter of fans, and soon earned the encomiums of Mengs in Rome as an artist of merit and the reputation for connoisseurship in works of art. On his return to England Stuart evidently carried on with painting for a time, the large allegorical canvas in the tapestry room ceiling at Hagley being by his hand. Yet for all his enthusiasms Stuart was not a great artist nor had he the slightest creative instinct. He lacked skill and he never digested his taste for the Grecian sufficiently to arrive at a suitable English interpretation of it. Consequently the neo-Grecian style of building in England started with a raw and imperfect impetus. Stuart merely reproduced measurement by measurement on English soil what he had admired in the Grecian peninsula. His first building that we know of is the Doric Temple at Hagley (1758) (48) in imitation of the Temple of Theseus at Athens, and this has the distinction of being the first purely neo-Grecian specimen in England. As such it has considerable academic and historic importance, if little artistic merit. Before 1761 Stuart was working upon Holdernesse House, Park Lane, and upon Spencer House in London for Lord Spencer, where the Painted Room is notably his. Already we hear rumours of the unsatisfactory conduct of the architect. In 1765 Lord Spencer complains angrily to Lord Villiers of Stuart's dilatoriness and of his inability to complete any piece of work upon which he has embarked. By this date he

had managed to finish his work at the Infirmary and the Chapel at Greenwich Hospital. Lichfield House in St. James's Square, to be completed in the nineties by James and Samuel Wyatt and decorated by Biagio Rebecca, and Shugborough in Staffordshire, both for Lord Lichfield, occupied him until 1766. Two years later he was working at Wentworth Woodhouse for Lord Rockingham. By the seventies his commissions seem to have dwindled, and, considering the increasing depravity of his habits, his neglect is not altogether surprising. We hear of him working at Prospect House, Wimpole, in 1775, Belvedere House at Erith, and finally at Portman House for Elizabeth Montagu, to whom he had introduced Wedgwood to provide painted Etruscan porcelain. By now Stuart had deteriorated into a drunken sot. In 1780 Mrs. Montagu's letters tell of intolerable delays caused by his drunkenness and of his appalling lies and general unreliability. "I have found out that in dealing with Mr. Stuart great caution is necessary", she warns one correspondent; and again, "Since he began my house he has been for a fortnight together in the most drunken condition with these fellows"—who were his own workmen. J. T. Smith in his *Life of Nollekens* confirms this weakness in a sketch he gives of Stuart, "a heavy looking man and his face declared him to be fond of what is called friendly society", and he furthermore recalls one instance of Stuart's alleged extreme ill-conduct towards the sculptor. In spite of these shortcomings, Stuart was of a generally benevolent disposition and a man of an open and well-informed mind, with whom the more ascetic and scrupulous Scot, Robert Adam, always remained on the best of terms, and to whom he constantly referred matters of academic principle.

Nicholas Revett never commanded the same prestige as did Stuart after their return to England in 1755. His part in the production of the *Antiquities of Athens* was confined to the architectural measurements and drawings almost exclusively. Like Stuart, he too practised architecture of a desultory sort in the purely Grecian manner, and his few known works consist of a church at Ayot St. Lawrence, the church and some temples at West Wycombe for Sir Francis Dashwood, and the portico, wings, and a ceiling or two at Standlynch (now Trafalgar) in Wiltshire. The church at Ayot St. Lawrence cannot, in spite of its ingenuity and alien provenance, be considered a success. It is stark, cold, and foreign to its surroundings, in fact admittedly unsympathetic to its ostensible purpose as a christian conventicle in a small and humble country parish. Quite frankly it was meant to be enjoyed as an ornamental temple of a nobleman's park in a focal view from the mansion, and this idyllic paganism is indeed its evident distinction. The church at West Wycombe, built on to an older tower, is scarcely less frigid, but more serene. It too was contrived primarily as a landscape ornament, and is a highly successful feature in one of the loveliest park layouts in the home counties. Sir Francis Dashwood was a prominent member of the Dilettanti Society, a man of culture and great discernment. He employed Revett to built the west portico to his house (96). Revett's adjunct is in itself an object of remarkable nobility and

grace, but the architect so obviously cared little for its relation to the main building that it conveys the disturbing impression of an afterthought and gives the rest of the house, which it dominates, an oddly asymmetrical appearance. The Temple of the Four Winds in the garden must likewise surely be Revett's, for it is practically an identical reproduction of the Temple of the Winds illustrated in the *Antiquities*, and the only garden building of Sir Francis that is not of Roman derivation. The portico at



Ayot St. Lawrence Church (1778)

Trafalgar, with its clustered columns fluted at the caps and base, is probably the best thing that Revett actually executed.

A tentative Grecian partiality was then accruing when Robert Adam launched upon his career in 1758. Stuart and Revett between them had introduced a markedly novel and attractive thread across the confusing tapestry of mid-eighteenth century architectural formula. In certain quarters neo-Grecianism was fashionable; it had its devoted partisans and it ran a wavering but lasting course until the beginnings of the nineteenth century, when the immense popularity of the Elgin Marbles gave it a further fillip. Then it truly burgeoned into its own in the more developed simplicity of Soane and his school. Not until the second and third decades, which witnessed Decimus Burton's Athenaeum Club, William

Wilkin's National Gallery, and the Inwoods' astounding church at St. Pancras, in unashamed imitation of the Erechtheion at Athens, did Shelley's claim that "We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts" seem established. The spiritual descendants of Athenian Stuart can unmistakably be traced through Soane and Burton; but, as we have already remarked, there was a distinct pause in the Grecian evolution after the first uncertain impetus given it by the *Athenian Antiquities* and the uneven and spasmodic crop of temples which its authors conceived and brought laboriously into being. Stuart and Revett had none of the fibre and initiative of which great leaders of a movement are made, nor were they equal to competing with the tougher champion of a different school of thought. Robert Adam was too eclectic and too creative to allow his sweeping genius to be distracted by what amounted to an *ignis fatuus*, of no matter how remote a derivation. Only after his day, when the catholic style which he had introduced had run its lengthy course, did the neo-Grecian spark burst into ephemeral flame. Only then do we find Sir John Soane daring to preface his fifth Lecture with words which reverse Adam's eclecticism and sum up the new convictions in his reference to the "noble art, as perfected by the Greeks *and sometimes successfully imitated by the Romans*".

We have seen how Sir William Chambers, who stood for officialdom and those comfortable prejudices enshrined in the bosom of his royal master, had violently reacted against dissemination of Stuart and Revett's novel theses. Yet Chambers, for all his shortcomings, which were chiefly temperamental (he was consumed by jealousy), was too intellectual to be merely a diehard. Basically conventional, it is true, and not so big a man as to cherish deep artistic convictions (as did Adam)—for the Romanism Chambers affected was little more to him than the architect's stock-in-trade—he was inclined to go off at curiously unorthodox tangents. These digressions from the straight and narrow path of his architectural training are what make Chambers so likeable and interesting a builder. They redeem him, fortunately, from dullness. They elevate him to a far higher plane of artistry than that of either Stuart or Revett, who were far more orthodox, far less eclectic. Chambers had returned to England from the east in the same year as Stuart—1755—his head brimming with oriental and Chinese froth. This innocuous substance was, as froth must be, of ephemeral endurance; but the early publication of his *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils* and the essay at pagoda building in Kew Gardens show an intelligent and inquiring mind. And, indeed, all his life Chambers kept himself minutely informed of the progress and tendencies of the arts in other countries as well as his own and in some measure he always allowed a trace of them to peep out from behind the decorous masks of his own buildings. He would frequently dart off on a rapid visit to Paris and the continent just to keep in touch with the notions and theories of leading foreign artists, which he would cautiously digest and assimilate on his return. For instance, Mr.

Sacheverell Sitwell detects in his exquisite little Marino at Clontarf near Dublin the distinct decorative influence of Gabriel and the cabinets of Marie Antoinette in the Petit Trianon (145) and the palace of Versailles. But fundamentally, of course, Chambers was a Roman and a Palladian. He was honestly in favour of the Roman grandeur of building and convinced that the Greek style was only a primitive and undeveloped phase of the Roman. So he did not cease to inveigh against the *gusto Greco* which he despised. He consequently and inevitably laid himself open to the charge of being a reactionary, which in truth he was not, because he would assail fashionable tastes when he thought them frivolous and ill-judged. He exposed himself to ridicule by sudden lapses of temper, as when he gave vent to a wild personal tirade against Lancelot Brown, and by sweeping generalisations that he could not hope to substantiate, as when he declared with too much vehemence that the whole of the Parthenon was not so "considerable as St. Martins-in-the-Fields".

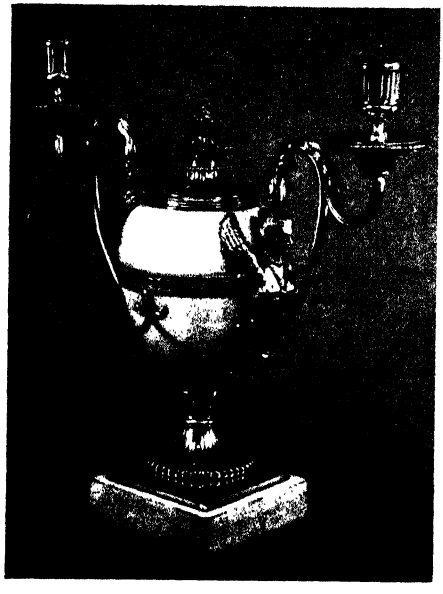
In fine, English neo-classical architects of importance, with the exceptions of Stuart and Chambers (who incidentally, as a devoted disciple all his life of Piranesi, continued to abide by his master's doctrines long after Piranesi had seceded from them) did not, generally speaking, adopt continental attitudes of partisanship throughout the later half of the eighteenth century. Nor, throughout this period, does their work show any very strong discrimination between the Roman and Greek traditions. It was left to the nineteenth-century architects to divide the field into checkers of black and white. This late eighteenth-century disregard for purism is significant of the robust unconcern felt by the English architects for the doctrinaire theories of a Piranesi or a Winckelmann. There are, of course, isolated examples of buildings in the purely Roman style, in sharp contrast to the purely Ionian reproductions of James Stuart or Revett, such as Robert Taylor's Ely House, in Dover Street (20), or George Dance's Gallery at Lansdowne House (102). But the great majority of late Georgian architects, including Taylor, generally assimilated the styles of both. The chief cause of this was undoubtedly the example of Robert Adam's impartial eclecticism, the wise attitude adopted by him over the Roman-Greek controversy, and the enormous influence his style exerted upon his contemporaries. The result was the fulfilment, over a whole era, of the greatest national expression in the history of British architecture. In proof of Adam's pervasive influence we need only consult some of the indictments uttered by his detractors in the next era. As an example we have the foolish and biassed Joseph Gwilt referring in his *Encyclopedia of Architecture* in 1842 to Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities* as follows: "The chasteness and purity which the two last-named architects had, with some success, endeavoured to introduce into the buildings of England, and in which their zeal had enlisted many artists, had to contend against the opposite and vicious taste of Robert Adam, *a fashionable architect whose eye had been ruined by the corruption of the worst periods of Roman art.*"

The words in italics show how lamentably Gwilt misunderstood the position. It was Stuart and Revett who were the fashionable architects and whose myopic eyes had failed to focus upon more than one pedantic issue. Robert Adam, far from being corrupted by the worst period of any single style, had the eyes and sense to assimilate the best doctrines of several. The impartiality of Adam over the battle of the styles is most noteworthy. Far from depreciating the services of Athenian Stuart, he goes out of his way in the *Works of Architecture* to praise him for his "unusual elegance and taste" in introducing the true measure of the antique. In just the same generous spirit had he accorded high praise, in his Spalatro volume, to Wood's *Ruins of Palmyra*. It is this factor that constitutes the message Adam imparted to his generation and which to his mind transcended party politics. It was his and his brother James's boast that they had infused the true spirit of the ancients into their works. The buildings of the ancients, they had written then, "serve as models which we should imitate, and as standards by which we ought to judge". So convinced were they of the superiority of the ancients that they dared to lay down that "the most admired efforts of modern [*i.e.* Christian] Architecture, are far inferior to their superb works, either in grandeur or in elegance [art]". But Robert was more than a mere archaeologist and plagiarist, just as he was more than a theorist like Piranesi.

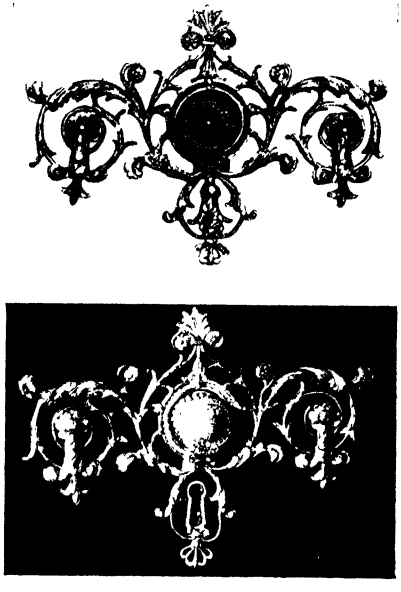
In Rome Robert Adam had been the friend and possibly the pupil of Piranesi, but unlike Chambers, he was not an undeviating disciple of the dogmatic Italian. When Piranesi in his *Parere su l'Architettura* indulged in extravagant abstract flights, Adam did not accompany him at all; in witness we have his strong condemnation of the Tuscan Order, which Piranesi had long proclaimed the highest form of building. "It is", says Robert Adam in the *Works*, "in fact, no more than a bad and imperfect Doric", and he goes on to dissipate the orthodoxy of the Palladians by writing of the Composite, a purely Roman Order, as a "very disagreeable and awkward mixture of the Corinthian and Ionic, without either grace or beauty". Where, however, he is in complete accord with Piranesi is when the latter in the *Parere* attacks the copyists and the law-abiders, and here Robert has the Palladians again in mind: "Rules often cramp the genius and circumscribe the idea of the master." This too was the attitude of Clérisseau, who cries: "Apprenons des Anciens à soumettre les rêgles même au genie. Effaçons cette empreinte de servitude et d'imitation qui déparent nos productions." It had been Piranesi who sounded the first clarion call for originality and unrestricted development of the individual genius. It was through Robert Adam that his influence reached the English cognoscenti, whereas Wincklemann's influence in this country, in spite of Fuseli's translation, remained ineffectual—and furnishes yet another reason why the neo-Greek introduction was so tardy.

In spite, however, of Robert Adam's impartiality, in spite of his jibes at the Palladians, the Greek influence is little evident in Adam's exteriors. Mr. Arthur Bolton infers that this surface absence of Greek detail upon

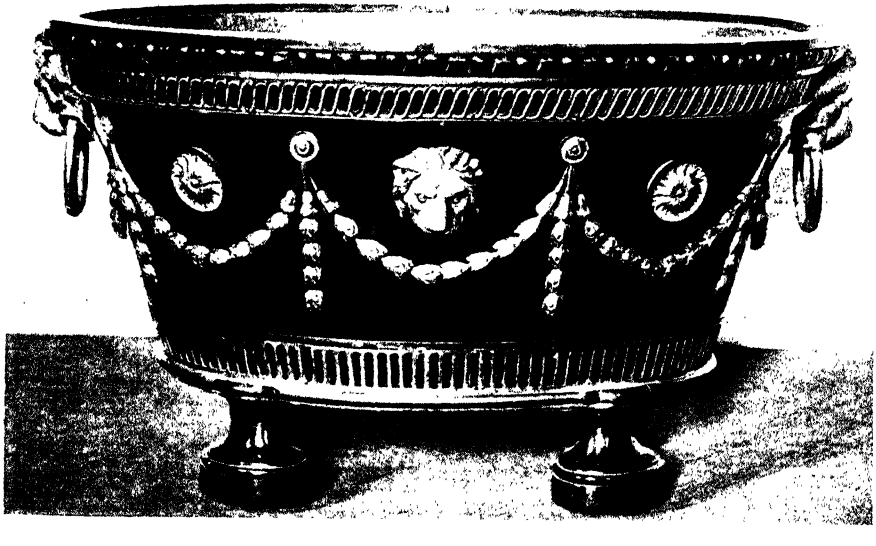
his façades is one reason why Adam was never appreciated to the same extent in Scotland and above all Edinburgh, the modern Athens, as he was in the south, and it is a curious fact that Grecianism took firmer hold in the Scottish cities, and particularly in Glasgow, than anywhere else in the British Isles. We can see from a careful study of Adam's designs for buildings that he honestly assimilated both the Roman and, to a minor extent, the Greek in such a way that out of them was evolved his own peculiar and highly individual style. The Roman influence is unquestionably paramount in his constructional work. The palace at Split we know gave unconscious inspiration to Luton Hoo, Syon, Kedleston, the river terrace of the Adelphi, and the British Coffee House in Cockspur Street (surely an adaptation of the Porta Aurea); it gave effect to much of the structural anatomy of the rooms at Syon and Osterley. But of the ornamental detail that clothed his interiors with such rich and rare delights we shall have more to say later.



50 Candelabra, designed probably by Adam, the ormolu mountings the work of Matthew Boulton



51, 52 Door furniture from Lansdowne House



53 Wine cooler from Kenwood. Designed by Robert Adam

54 Robert Adam's design for the south front of Stowe, Buckinghamshire (1771) from the drawing in the Soane Museum. The actual front was carried out by Signor Borra.

55 Teatro Olympico, Vicenza, by Andrea Palladio (but unfinished at his death, 1580)

# IV

## THE NEO-CLASSICAL OUTCOME

IN the autumn of 1760, under the succinct heading "Vicenza", James Adam jotted down: "To see the different buildings of Palladio with which this city abounds, and of which I am no admirer." Now James Adam's *Journal of a Tour in Italy* is no more than a fragment, but such is the scarcity of writing by the Adam brothers, it is a very cherished document indeed. When first published in the early nineteenth century it was erroneously ascribed to Robert, who we now know had returned from his Italian tour as long ago as January 1758. It was James who went to Italy in 1760 and was back in England in 1764. As soon as the mistake was discovered there was much disappointment among the partisans of Robert, who felt themselves cheated of some useful additional material upon the elusive personality of their hero. But their concern was in reality unnecessary, for the biographical material the journal reveals is slight, and James, who was an extremely receptive artist and who participated with his more illustrious brother in nearly all his business ventures and was to be joint author with him of the *Works*, dissented in no particulars from Robert's theories and principles. We may then safely assume that James's impressions likewise would have been those of the elder brother.

The observation just quoted from James's journal is expressive of the Adams' startling reaction against the Palladian school of building which for the past forty years had prevailed in England. Had it been written just four years later, after the publication of Stuart's and Revett's *Athenian Antiquities* and during the first wave of the Grecian vogue, it would have sounded less unorthodox. As it happened, the only innovation as yet seriously to offset the Palladian influence by 1760 had been the style of Robert Adam himself.

Every word of James Adam's journal is precious, because we may suppose the journal to have been meant for his own and possibly his family's perusal only, as an unrehearsed record of what he really felt about the things he saw and the ideas he formulated during his educational tour. He continues under the Vicenza heading as follows: "His [Palladio's] private houses are ill-adjusted both in their plans and elevations, as is also the Theatre Olympic" (55), the seating of which he sharply criticises as uncomfortable and ill-arranged for seeing the stage, as indeed it is. "The alleys in perspective are perfectly childish." The practical James failed entirely to appreciate the point of this most exquisite toy stage, which on account of its diminutive scale (out of all proportion to the normal size of its auditorium) had to exaggerate its perspectives in order to meet the

deficiency of depth in the alleys. These are, of course, no more serious in daylight than are those flat picture-postcard views when taken out of their stereoscope, but which deceive delightfully and successfully in the dim candlelight of unreality. The perspectives to which he takes such exception are, incidentally, not by Palladio, but were added later by Vicenzo Scamozzi, and this is a point of which he was unaware.

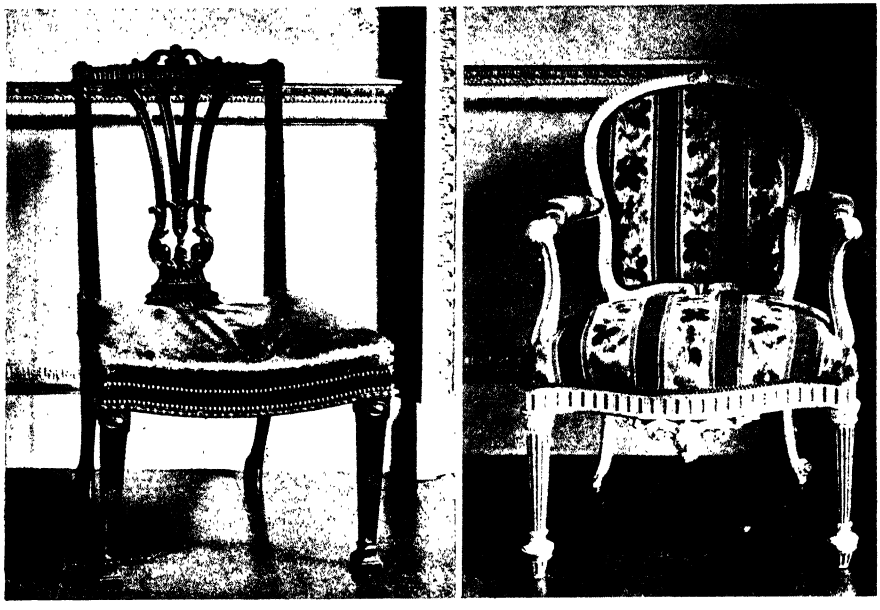
On the other hand, James's objection to the ill-adjustment of Palladio's planning of his private houses is an early forecast of the brothers' boast, made a decade later, that they had evolved a distinct improvement in the planning of their domestic buildings to suit the more refined needs and living conditions of the age they lived in. "The Hotel de Ville", he goes on, "is abominably *maigre* in every respect." Now *maigre* is the last word we should be disposed to apply to the generous proportions of the Basilica Palladiana at Vicenza (57), where the distinctive feature of the building is the succession of wide Venetian openings—from which source, in fact, Robert Adam himself must have derived his own design for the wings of the south front at Stowe (54) and for his semi-circular orangery at Osterley. The Basilica is, moreover, a technical triumph of convincing make-believe over stringent conditions, for the apparently ample width of the arcade bays was actually determined by the close Gothic piers of the fifteenth-century fabric which they cover. The one unfortunate feature of the Basilica is the preposterous semi-circular lead roof, which emerges like some vast sea monster above Palladio's parapet, and for which he was not responsible. It is interesting to know that Palladio himself was eminently satisfied with his achievement, since he claimed, with customary self-confidence, that it was "to be reckoned amongst the noblest and most beautiful buildings created since the time of the ancients".

James ceases to castigate for an interval: "What pleased me most of all Palladio's works was his Villa Capra or Rotunda" (56). With a sigh of relief we read that this over-fastidious Scottish student enjoyed something—but not, alas! for long: "The plan is pretty; but the fronts, the round room within, and indeed all the particular parts of it, are but very poorly adjusted. However, there is somewhat to make a good thing of, which is more than can be said for most of Palladio's buildings." This criticism was no doubt intended as an animadversion upon James's Burlingtonian predecessors, who had slavishly erected on English soil several almost exact replicas of the Villa Capra, the most notable of which is Colen Campbell's Mereworth Castle in Kent. It is none the less odd that whereas James approves as "pretty" the planning, he should dismiss as poor the elevation and the adjustment of the individual rooms, which to our way of judging are the villa's most praiseworthy points.

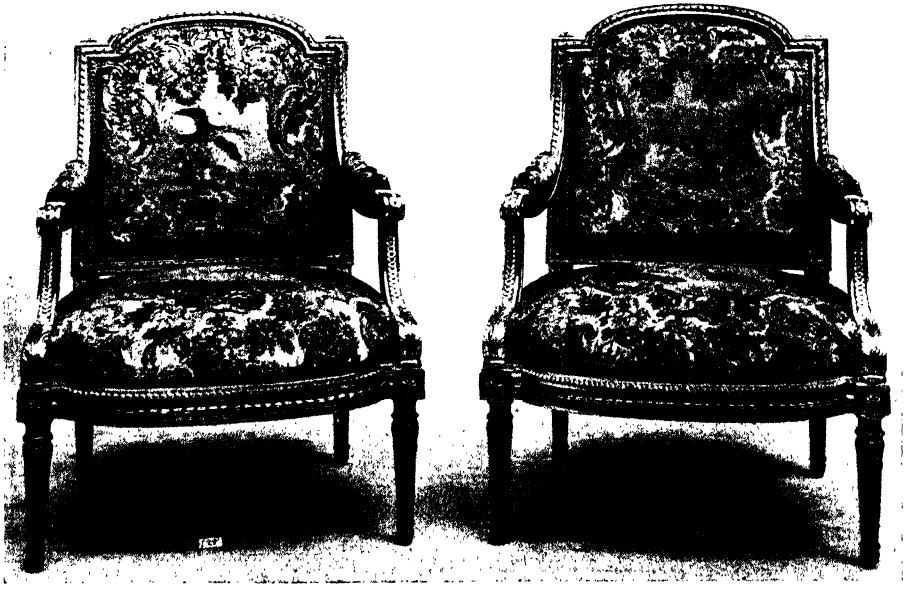
After this disparagement of Palladio we hear no more of him. In January of the following year, namely 1761, James is at the Villa Castello. Now here he observes with enthusiasm "many of the rooms painted in the grotesque taste, and with spirit and invention. One I remember is adorned with columns, and through the spaces or inter-columniations is

56 Villa Capra, or Rotonda, Vicenza, the prototype of Chiswick House, Mereworth Castle, etc. Architect, Andrea Palladio

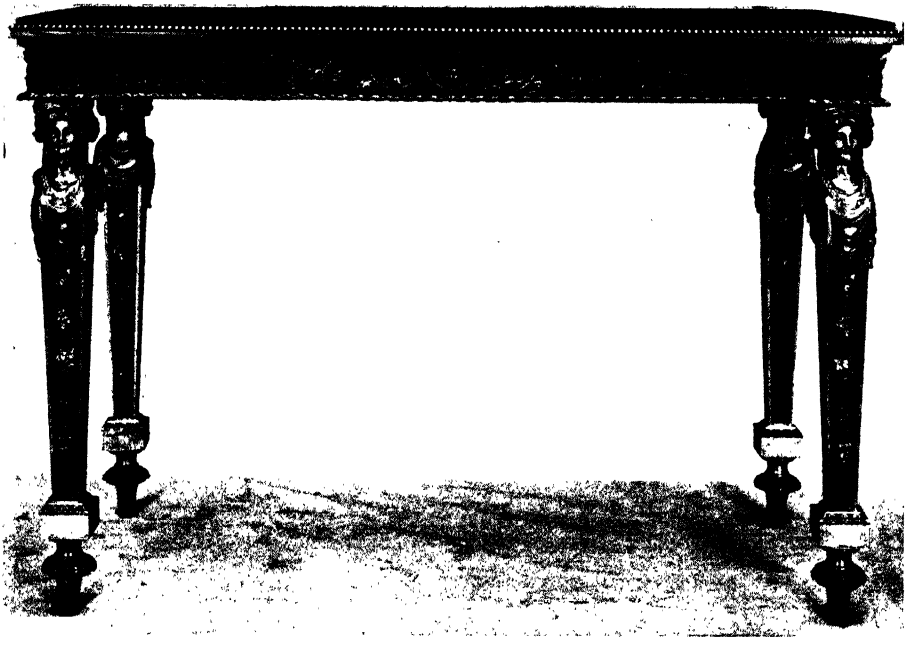
57 Basilica Palladiana or Palazzo della Ragione, Vicenza. Architect, Andrea Palladio, 1550



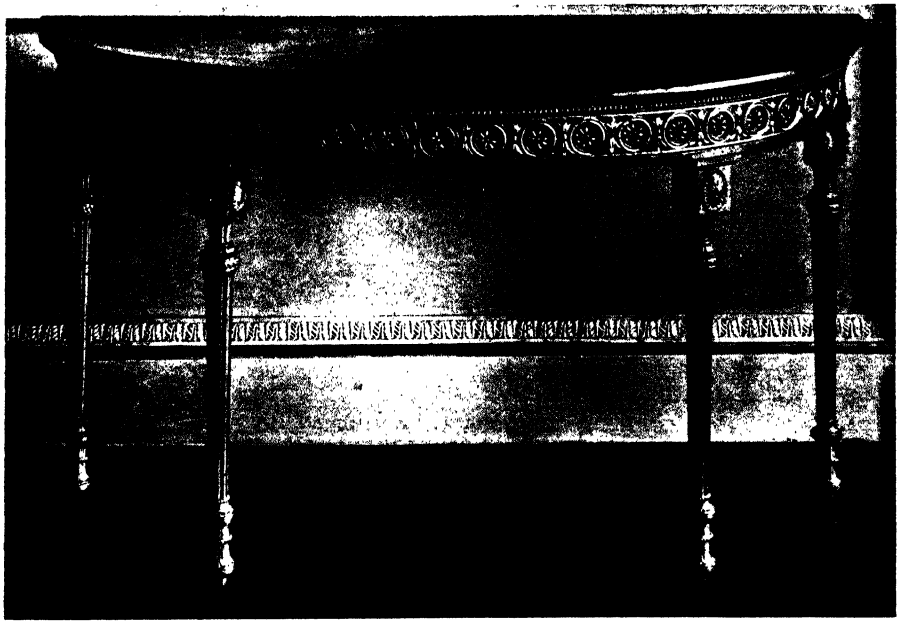
58, 59 A single and upholstered armchair from Harewood House, designed by Robert Adam and made by Thomas Chippendale *circa* 1765



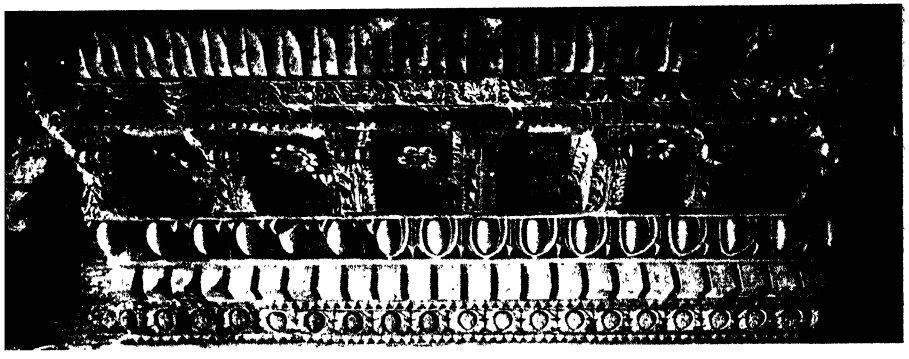
60 Pair of Louis Seize armchairs, designed by Jacob, *circa* 1775



61 Louis Seize table, attributed to A. Weisweiller and P. Gouthière, *circa* 1772



62 Table at Harewood House, designed by Robert Adam, *circa* 1766



63 Cornice from the Temple of Vespasian, Rome (A.D. 94)

64 Villa Madama, Rome, 1516–22, decorated by Raphael and Giovanni da Udine

presented one continuous landscape, only interrupted by the columns which look like one continued opening. The ceilings of several of the rooms are done in imitation of treillage work, with vines twisting round them, which does vastly well in the country." This passage marked James's first meeting with, or at least his first recorded notice of, grotesque work. In the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence some time later he found the grotesque ornaments so superb that he employed a young painter to copy most of them for him. His one regret was that the ceiling of the great hall, though fifty feet in length, was flat, which he considered "a great defect", and it is notable that in nearly all their rooms of any great length the Adams coved their ceilings.

It seems as though, having come upon what strongly appealed to him in style of interior decoration, James must retrace the very source of this Renaissance work, for in September he is visiting Pompeii "where they are now digging". "I saw a room which seemed to have been painted with arabesques, and had a very pretty mosaic pavement with a Medusa's head in the centre." Carefully he examined the catacombs at Pompeii, which he found "vast and roomy, but have nothing of elegance". At Cumae, a little later, he surveyed some "ancient sepulchres, where the stuccos are remaining vastly entire: they are of excellent workmanship, and of the lowest relief I ever beheld". This fact struck him particularly, and it was of course to be one of the brothers' main objectives to provide low coloured plaster relief, in direct contrast to the bold white sculptural relief upon ceilings and walls of the Burlingtonians' houses. At Baiae again he saw the Temple of Apollo and Nero's Baths, where "in several of these rooms there still remain stucco ceilings of various forms and of elegant workmanship".

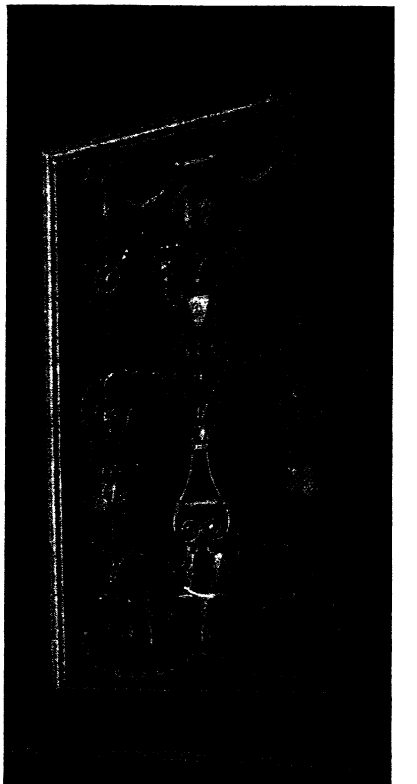
This is all the information that James vouchsafes us upon a study that had so much influence upon his and his brother's interior decorative work for the ensuing quarter of a century. From time to time he makes the briefest references to cinquecento artists who worked in this manner, among them Giulio Romano, who had previously inspired so many French artists of the grotesque in the seventeenth century. James tells us he made Cunego engrave for him four of Romano's paintings in the Pitti Palace at Florence. At Bologna he was enraptured with pictures by Guido Reni, as were all eighteenth-century cognoscenti, and, of course, with Raphael, whose "St. Cecilia expresses an enthusiasm that snatches one to heaven". He does not, however, tell us that he visited the Villa Madama at Rome (64), with its faithful imitation of the Etruscan and Graeco-Roman classical work from the Roman catacombs by Giovanni da Udine in his stucco and painted decorations. If he had not seen them, Robert [1] had done so, for his elongated octagonal caissons upon the flat ceiling of the gallery at Croome are clearly inspired by the decoration in the Villa Madama, as are his semi-domes with their Renaissance lacunars

[1] Amongst the drawings in the Soane Museum are several of the Villa Madama in Robert Adam's own hand.

at Syon. Udine's Villa di Papa Giulio at Rome, with its painted panel scenes, of which so much of Angelica Kauffmann's work is pure imitation, is a building that Robert must have studied with closest attention. Udine, who was a contemporary of Palladio and died in 1564, had, like Raphael before him, derived his style from intensive study of the famous Baths of Titus and the catacombs of the Imperial period, in particular the barrel-vaulted Tombe dei Valeri, Platorini, and Pancrazi, where the finest examples of Roman stucco work survived. The Baths of Titus had been discovered at this time, whereas, of course, the remains of Pompeii were still unknown. Vasari tells us that Filippo Lippi had actually been the first Renaissance artist to carry out decorations in grotesque from the antique, as early as the end of the fifteenth century. Pinturicchio and Perugino followed suit. But Raphael's painted grotesques and playful arabesques in the loggia of the Vatican, executed between 1517 and 1519, are usually reckoned the best-known examples of cinquecento work in this character. Da Udine first painted at the loggia under Raphael, who before his death in 1520 had actually started to decorate the Villa Madama, which began to be built for the then Cardinal Giulio de Medici in 1516 and was not finished until 1522. Here we come across those conventional decorative devices, and in particular the plaster griffins of Giovanni da Udine's designs with which we in England are very familiar upon Adam's friezes and walls—the galaxy of trophy panels (irreverently described by Sir Max Beerbohm as so many overcrowded umbrella stands) that were reproduced in the Louis XIII Salle du Trône at Fontainebleau, and which Adam reproduced in his turn in his halls at Syon, Osterley, and Kedleston. The ceiling of the garden loggia at the Villa Madama has its almost identical counterparts in a number of Adam's more fussy designs of his middle period, the 1770s, notably the Greek crosses forming those central themes at Home House, 20 St. James's Square, and elsewhere.

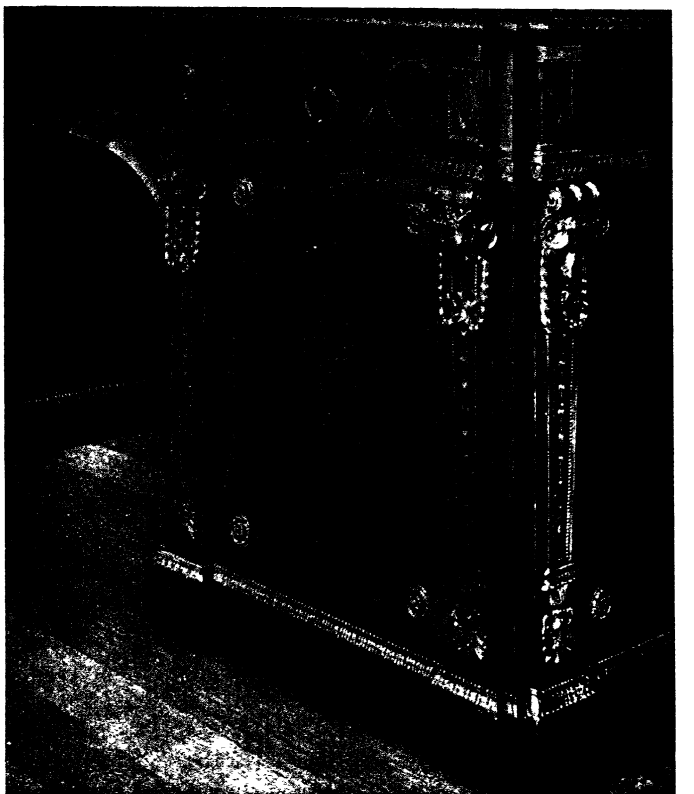
It is apparent, then, that the brothers derived the mode of grotesque and arabesque decoration, which we in this country firmly associate with their name, from first-hand study of Raphael's loggia at the Vatican (and we can safely assume from da Udine's Villa Madama as well) and then of the fountain-head itself, the original Roman catacombs, whence the cinquecento artists derived their own manner. They furthermore had an advantage over the Renaissance artists in the study of the remains at Pompeii. But we must not overlook the fact that the Adams were not the first to reproduce grotesques and arabesques in England. No less a person, surprisingly enough, than the Burlingtonian William Kent had preceded them by half a century. Kent's ceiling of painted grotesques in the Presence Chamber at Kensington Palace was directly inspired by Raphael's loggia, as were several of his ceilings at Houghton in the late 1720s and in the smoking-room at Rousham in 1753 (65). These few isolated examples of grotesque work, which Kent was never to develop, have always seemed so entirely contradictory of the Palladian principles of mass and solidity and are so different to the majority of Kent's heavy

65 Ceiling of the painted room at Rousham, Oxfordshire Grotesque work of William Kent, 1753 (*Country Life* photograph)



66 Wall panel in Music Room, 20 St. James's Square, London

67 Louis XVI upright secrétaire, the marquetry signed by J. B. Foulet. Probably made by Joubert in 1773



68 Detail of writing table at Harewood House, designed by Robert Adam and made by Chippendale's firm, *circa* 1770

compartmented ceilings and mural designs in the Inigo Jones tradition, that they have been overlooked and their significance ignored. They were, however, known to the Adams, who in the *Works* praise Kent for first introducing grotesque paintings, while they take to task the Burlingtonians generally, Colen Campbell in particular and even Gibbs (who belonged to another school, though a contemporary) for the ponderous effect of their heavy painted scenes, that were painfully inconvenient to behold. "Great compositions", they claimed, "should be placed so as to be viewed with ease."

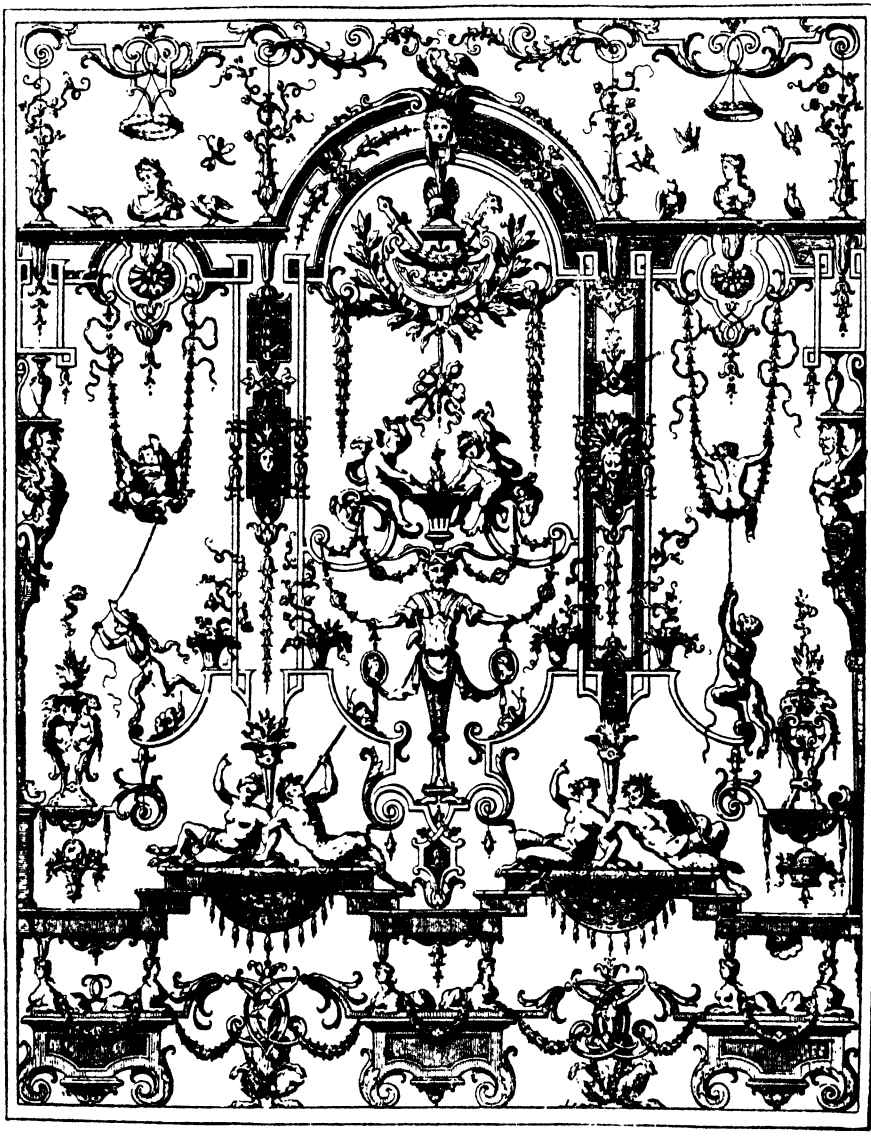
These painted or stucco classical grotesques or arabesques are likewise characteristic elements of Louis XVI decoration in France, but there is no longer any doubt, as Mr. Fiske Kimball has pointed out, that Robert's revival of them antedated their revival in France in the mid-1770s by about fifteen years. It has too long been commonly supposed that Adam had, on the contrary, derived his classical style of decorative design from France, in spite of the fact that there is no record that he ever went to France after 1754 (then witnessing the full bloom of the rococo period in that country) on his way to Italy. He returned in the autumn of 1757 by the Rhine, and it is improbable that after his arrival in England in January 1758 he ever had time to spare from his exacting commissions at home for a stay of any length at Paris. Although so little is known of the personal side of Robert's life, from his innumerable dated drawings it is not difficult to make out a compact chronology of his working life.

We have mentioned that grotesques had, of course, been common in France long before Louis XVI's reign. They first appear in Louis XIII's reign, painted on the door panels of the Salle du Trône at Fontainebleau by Italian artists after the style of Giulio Romano, whom James Adam was to admire at Florence, and also in plaster upon friezes. According to Vasari, Primaticcio did the first stucco work ever executed in France and also the first frescoes. By the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, that is to say during the last part of Louis XIV's reign, grotesques are profusely used by Jean Bérain in his famous designs for decorative pilasters, until replaced by the rococo [1] fantasies of Watteau, the mascaron, shell, and feather carvings of Nicholas Pineau, and the extravagances of Meissonier of the Régence. Jean Bérain, the elder, had been designer to the Chamber and Cabinet of the king, and he died in 1711. He had designed scenery and costumes for court balls and masques, just as Inigo Jones had done for the English court nearly a hundred years previously. Bérain's grotesques show signs, towards the end of his life, of falling away from their classical prototypes and verging upon the rococo licence that was to characterise the ensuing reign of Louis XV.

The "Adam" grotesques were certainly in greatest prevalence during

[1] According to Mr. Fiske Kimball (*The Creation of the Rococo*, 1943) the rococo was initiated by Pierre Lepautre and developed by Vassé, Oppenord, Meissonier, and Pineau.

Robert's middle or decorative period, but he had introduced them long before that. We find them in the dining-room at Shardeloes (1759–61),



Design for a Panel, by Jean Bérain

in the drawing-room at Bowood (1763), in the music room at Harewood (1765), the ante-room and drawing-room at Lansdowne House (1765–8),

the eating-room at Osterley (1767). Nowhere in France, on the other hand, were they to be seen before the publication of the first volume of the *Works* in 1773. The very earliest French classical decorations of the sort appear at Bagatelle in 1777. Then, two to three years later, they reappear in the library of Marie Antoinette, which was executed during 1779 and 1780, the Méridienne in 1781, the Cabinet Doré in 1783, and in the boudoir at Fontainebleau the same year. The Paris salon designed by Clérisseau, the friend and draftsman of both Adam brothers, for Grimod de la Reynière, was even described as a novelty in 1782. The apartments of the king at Versailles were not carried out until 1788–89, in fact just after the outbreak of the Revolution.

The first Adam designs for furniture of which any authentic records exist are those for the Queen's House, now Buckingham Palace, in 1761, although we may fairly safely deduce that as soon as he began seriously to practise as an architect Robert provided furniture, just as Kent had done before him, as constituents of one integral decorative theme for his apartments. There is every evidence apart from recorded proof that he designed furniture for the chief rooms at Shardeloes. Adam redecorated parts of the Queen's House, providing doorways and chimneypieces, and his large bed for Queen Charlotte, now at Hampton Court (69), with anthemion acroteria crowning the four corner-posts, dates from this period. This bed as well as the superb suite designed by him about 1766 for Sir Lawrence Dundas at Moor Park, and carried out by Samuel Norman, "upholsterer" of Soho Square, are purely classical and indeed architectural in style. The suite of sofas, chairs, firescreens, and scroll stools was upholstered in the French manner, in tapestry from the Gobelin works woven to match the Neilson-Boucher tapestry wall hangings (36) that accompanied them. The Dundas suite on a grey background, instead of the more usual rose du Barry tone of Adam's later tapestry sets, belongs unquestionably to one of his earliest essays in this highly finished manner. To-day this important suite of tapestry furniture is preserved and exhibited in the Philadelphia Museum of the United States, having unfortunately been sold out of this country in 1934.

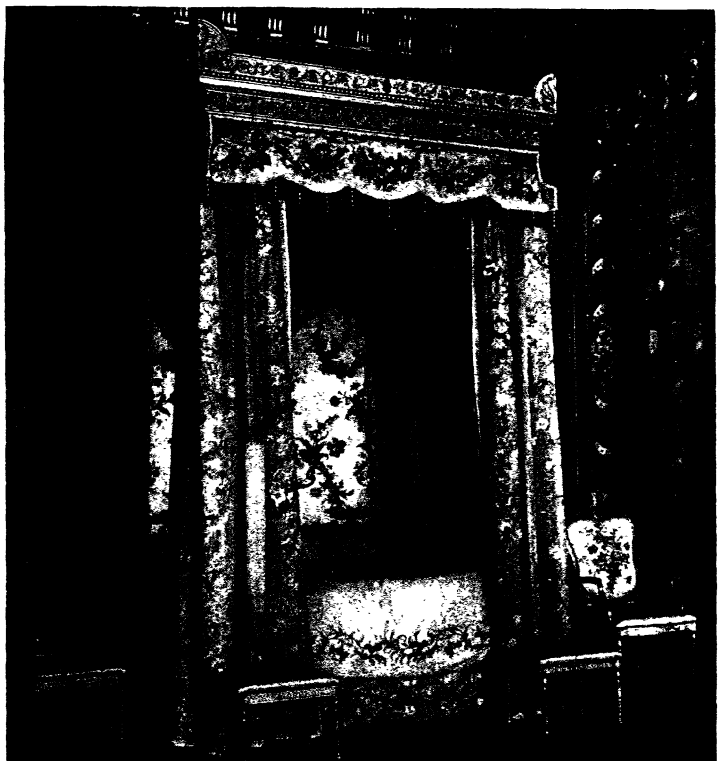
In furniture of the neo-classical style Adam undoubtedly gave England a priority over France and the rest of Europe, and the style's abrupt revival here was practically coincident with the return of Robert from Italy. Adam's revolution in furniture design was precipitate enough when we consider that throughout the 1750s and early 1760s both the heavy George II type of furniture and the French, Gothic, Chinese, or rococo designs of de Cuvilles, Blondel, and Meissonier (which Chippendale had only lately begun to imitate and popularise in England) were still in vogue. It was only in 1754 that Thomas Chippendale had first published *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director*, wherein he advertised a series of sumptuous plates of designs for tables, chairs, bookcases, and furniture of every description, of which their chief appeal was that they reflected the French rococo taste. Much has been written about Chippendale as

an early exponent in England of the rococo, and until quite lately he was held to be personally responsible for all the best furniture of the mid-eighteenth century, just as in the same loose way Robert Adam was deemed the author of any unusually distinguished building of his period.

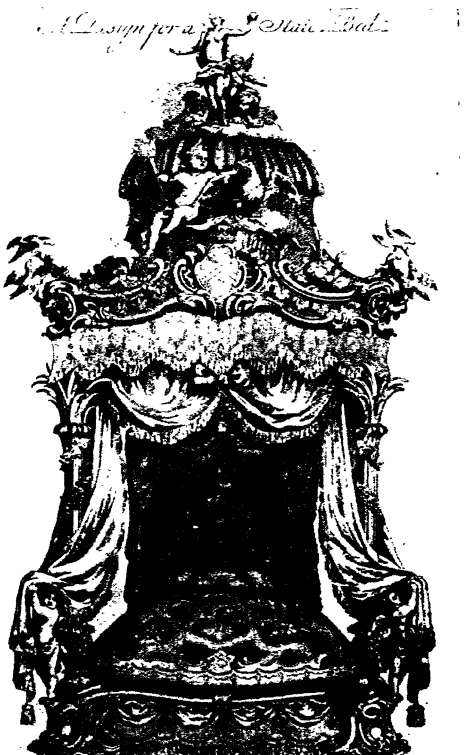
These careless claims have very properly been disproved by experts, who furthermore have established that the designs for the majority of Chippendale's plates in the *Director* may be attributed to Mathias Lock, the true pioneer of the rocaille in England, his partner Copland, and other lesser known designers. The fact is that Chippendale was preeminently a man with a keen sense of advertisement, who succeeded in monopolising publicity to what his firm could manufacture, rather than a creative artist. During the 'fifties especially French furnishings were the fashion and a glance at Chippendale's plates (70) shows the strong and inadequately digested influence upon English wares of, for example, Meissonier's rocaille wood-carving for pier glasses, sconces, candelabra, and console tables. Many of Chippendale's advertisement plates are too ridiculously extravagant and unpractical for their designs ever to have been carried out. Until Robert Adam turned the tide in favour of classical design, the rococo style certainly prevailed in the imaginations of furniture buyers, if it did not in fact so thoroughly dictate the English market as may at first sight of the *Director* appear to have been the case.

Miss Jourdain and Mr. Edwards in their important *Georgian Cabinet Makers* show that the fame of Chippendale should rest rather upon his firm's production of post-*Director* style furniture in the late 1760s, that is to say of his neo-classical style furniture, which they assert rivalled in design and quality the very best products of the great French *ébenistes*. There seems to us little doubt that the subsequently very high achievements reached by Chippendale were due to the scholarship and creative ability of Robert Adam, who was the first to provide designs in this style and who employed Chippendale's workshops to carry them out.

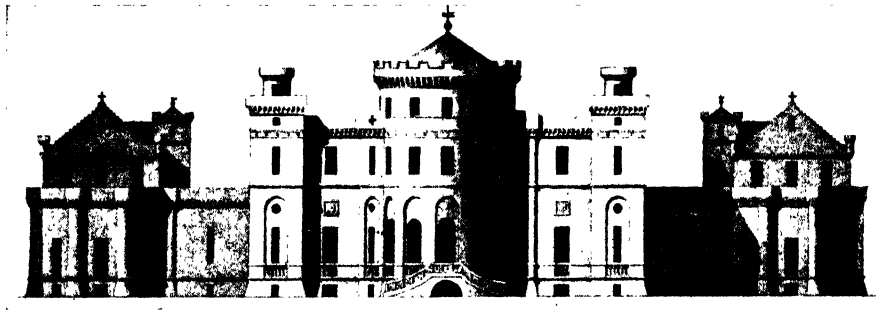
Adam seems to have lost no time in deciding upon the classical outcome of furniture design, just as he quickly established the new trend of architectural composition which bears his name. At Shardeloes he designed a very early pair of looking-glasses and console tables, of geometrical outlines, with fluted legs, rosettes, and festoons of bell-flower husks, the full complement of those familiar devices which were to become the well-known hallmarks of the Adam family firm. Gone and utterly banished are the scrolling curvatures, the dripping rocaille stalactites of the Louis XV and Chippendale *Director* style. The new Adam style is already fully formed, and in his designs dated 1765 for wall glasses at Lansdowne House there is very little development upon the earlier Shardeloes experiments. For the long gallery and drawing-room at Syon Adam's furniture was designed and executed between 1765 and 1769. At Nostell are lyre-backed chairs for which Robert's bills were paid in 1768, and which years later became the mode in France. Not until 1770, when the first English engraved plates of such designs were available, did straight



69 Bed designed for Queen Charlotte by Robert Adam, 1761



70 Design for a bed in the French rococo taste from T. Chippendale's *Director*, 1754



71 Unexecuted design by Robert Adam, in the castle style, for The Oaks, Surrey

72 Culzean Castle (begun 1770), Ayrshire, showing Adam's castle style (*Country Life* photograph)

fluted legs and those other essentially Adam appanages which we still prefer to term Louis Seize begin to make a tardy appearance across the Channel. Almost the first is the famous commode of ebony, stamped "J. Dubois", made for Marie Antoinette and known as the "Coffre du Mariage de la Dauphine", from a design by Bellanger, who had previously been in England. This exquisite work of art, decorated throughout with panels of Japanese lacquer framed in mounts of gilt bronze, is nevertheless a transitional piece, since the figures of sea-nymphs bearing cushions on their heads to support the marble top can hardly be described as purely classical. In 1771 J. H. Riesener made the little card table now at the Petit Trianon, which is generally considered the first affirmation of a change of style soon to be called Louis Seize, and here again the foliage scrolls in ormolu upon the apron are of a rococo character that Adam would not have countenanced at Shardeloes. The oval backs and straight legs to chairs adopted by Adam in his Moor Park suite for Sir Lawrence Dundas in 1766 were scarcely followed in France by 1789.

What, in fact, was the precise relationship between Robert Adam and Chippendale and, for that matter, the other cabinet-makers of this time? Very few documents exist to enlighten us. There survive a mere handful of bills from Chippendale to identify actual pieces from his firm known to exist to-day. In fact, such accounts survive only at Nostell, Harewood, and Mersham-le-Hatch, three houses all, as it happened, built and decorated about the same date by Robert Adam. There exist elsewhere, however, several pieces of furniture of high quality closely resembling plates in the *Director*, and their manufacture may therefore in all likelihood be ascribed to the firm of Chippendale and Haig, but not necessarily to the design of Thomas Chippendale himself. On the other hand, the best indication of Robert Adam's prolific authorship of furniture design lies in the hundreds of his drawings in the Soane Museum collection. Here we learn for a fact that he personally designed quantities of furniture in addition to wall and ceiling decorations. Just as he employed Joseph Rose to execute his stucco designs or Zucchi his painted panels, so we may presume he employed Chippendale to implement his decorative and furnishing schemes. Among the Mansfield documents relating to Kenwood are fairly definite substantiations of this sort of arrangement. There is a paper headed "Mémoire de Mr. Zucchi pour des Tableaux peints pour Son Excellence My Lord Mansfield", listing in curious broken French Zucchi's commissions and his accounts, such as "La lunette de 1 pied et 6 po de haut sur 3 pd et 4 po de large, representant La Justice qui Embrasse La Paix, le Commerce et la Navigation et l'Agriculture a 4 Ghinée chaque", for which item he charges sixteen guineas. All the subjects he is careful to emphasise are "tirée de l'antiqué" and very probably the designs for them were sketched out by the architect himself. In any case the bill is marked at the bottom "Examined by Robt. Adam" —a customary course before it could be presented to the client for payment. There are also papers showing work done at Kenwood by Chippendale

on a very similar basis. One reads: "I promise to deliver in about Two Months from this Date to Mr. Adam Architect The Following French plate glass" and gives below their cost in detail. It is signed "P. Thos. Chippendale" and endorsed "Robt. Adam". Another "Received from Lord Mansfield by a Draft upon Messrs. Hoare & Co. the sum of £170.0.0. to be paid to Thos. Chippendale on account of an agreement enter'd into by him with Robert Adam Esqr.". It was Adam who quite obviously employed Chippendale at Kenwood, just as he employed Zucchi and, no doubt, the plasterer, bricklayer, and the plumber to carry out his instructions according to his sole direction. There exist, moreover, detailed designs from Robert's hand for furniture at Kenwood, and the finished work of, for example, the pier glasses of the great room shows no divergence whatsoever from the engravings of them published in the *Works*. And we have it on Chippendale's own authority that he manufactured these very glasses, which Adam designed.

At Harewood, oddly enough, where detailed accounts of Chippendale survive, Robert Adam's designs for the furniture are missing, and Mr. Bolton deduced that they were sent to Chippendale and never returned by him after execution. This is very probably what did happen, for there is no question that Adam designed the Chippendale furniture which belongs to its allotted place in the state rooms at Harewood, according to the architect's invariable practice. Chippendale was deplorably dilatory and unbusiness-like, as the Kenwood precautionary undertaking which we have just quoted would suggest and as letters from Sir Edward Knatchbull to Robert Adam indicate. Sir Edward, in fact, makes it quite plain to Adam that he holds him, as architect and author of the furniture designs, responsible for the shortcomings of his employee the cabinet-maker. It is easy enough to imagine how Sir Edward's complaining letters about Chippendale must have vexed Adam, who was nothing if not precise and prompt in his dealings with his clients.

At Mersham we have among the documents preserved there perhaps the most revealing data about the sort of work which the firm of Chippendale and Haig carried out. Besides furniture they provided wall hangings and all the upholstery for the downstairs rooms and bedrooms, proving the firm to have been as much decorators as cabinet-makers. All manner of household utensils were likewise supplied by them, down to carpet brooms and feather brushes. They even decorated the bedroom walls with engravings set in borders to imitate frames, and for all this work detailed accounts and bills between the years 1767 and 1778 survive.

# V

## THE ADAM PRINCIPLES

So far we have endeavoured to sketch a picture of the conflicting theories of architecture prevailing at the time of Robert Adam's advent upon the British scene and of the practices carried on by his immediate predecessors. Already we have had a glimpse of the way these influences were exerted upon the young Scotsman himself. This chapter means to show rather more constructively how Robert Adam positively assimilated them in order to bring about his own very distinctive style of decorative architecture.

First, we have already postulated that of these conflicting influences the Roman is predominant in his constructions, that is to say in planning, design, and mass generally. Secondly, the Italian cinquecento influence (derived from the ancient Romans by the Italian artists of the Renaissance) is reproduced in Adam's decorative work, and this peculiar Adam adaptation was, contrary to the generally accepted opinion, transmitted to the continental and chiefly French artists of what is termed the Louis Seize school, and not *vice versa*. Thirdly, the newly revived Greek influence may be less clearly detected, but is still apparent in much of his decorative detail.

Besides these three influences, the Palladian inherited through his father, William Adam, and his generation is still strongly in evidence, notwithstanding Robert's protestations to the contrary. Moreover, he was distinctly attracted to, if barely affected by, the Romanesque and medieval,[1] although never a very serious student of the Gothic influence, in spite of spasmodic dalliance with the style at Alnwick, Culzean (72), and Strawberry Hill (113), as we shall see. Always there is a sympathetic inclination towards the picturesque (as evinced by Robert's lasting aptitude for drawing and sketching), and this quality runs like a shining thread throughout all his work, however severely classical. Only the rococo influence was utterly eschewed by him, and is rarely suffered to appear in any of his designs.

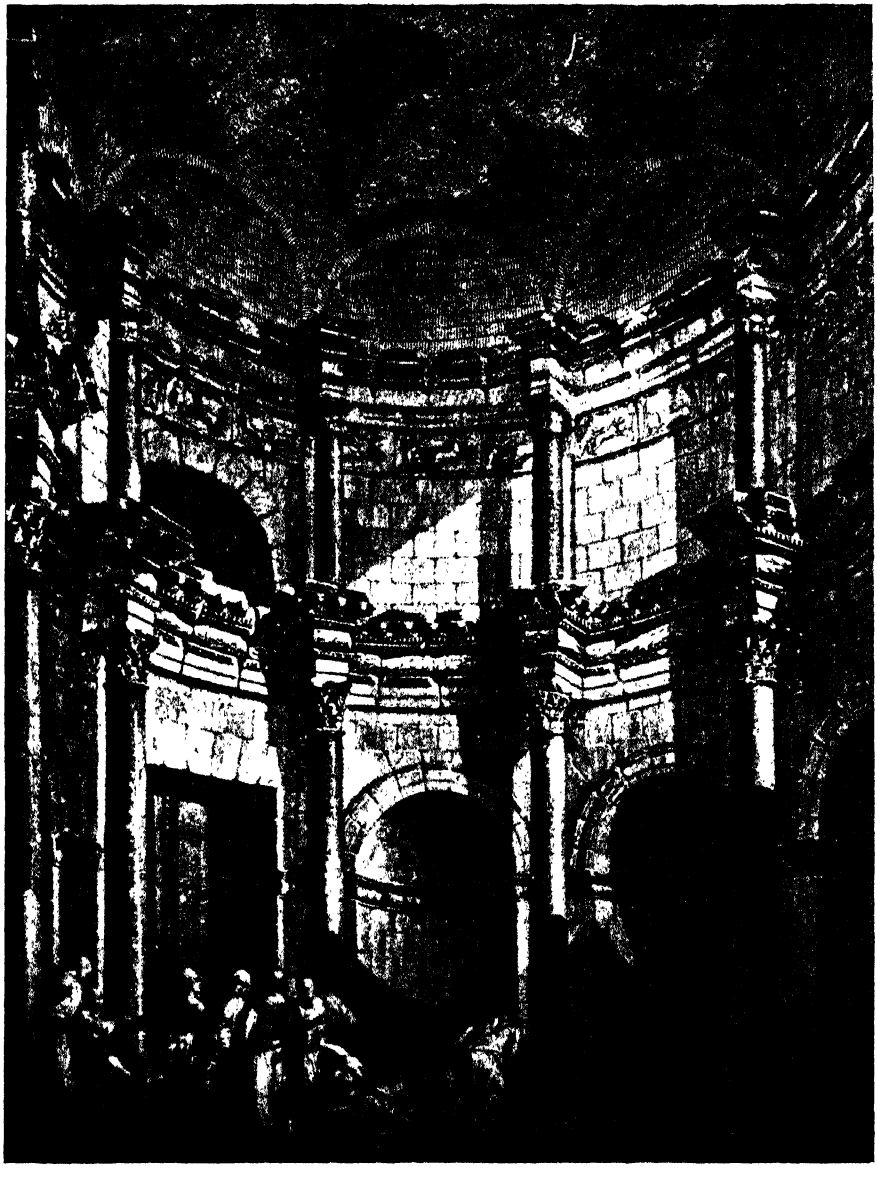
In 1764 was published the *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia*, by Robert Adam, F.R.S., F.S.A., Architect to the King and to the Queen. The book incorporated the first encyclical of Britain's most popular architect of the day, who had now been in practice for several years with an immense patronage. As such it was eagerly awaited by patrons and critics alike. Robert Adam had therefore to make

[1] A noteworthy factor is the great number of medieval designs by Adam never apparently carried out by him.

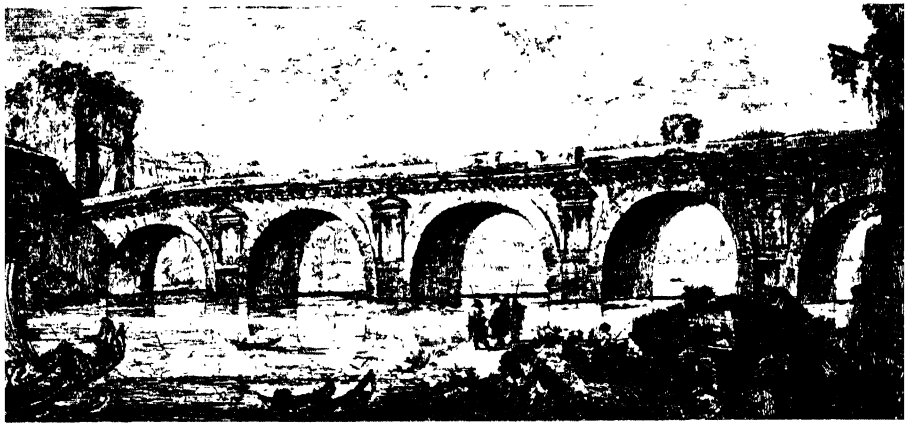
something of a splash, and to enunciate, as was expected of him, his own principles of the architectural science. This he did according to the fashionable disguise of the times. The book, it is true, incidentally fulfilled the need for a sort of advertisement of the Adam family firm. The bulk of it comprises a collection of carefully produced plates, and the short script is in the nature of a treatise upon Robert's ideas of planning and design as distinct from decoration. This further aspect of his work is to be treated in the subsequently published *Works of Architecture*. In the *Ruins*, however, Adam makes it quite plain that the great palace of Diocletian forms the source of his ideas upon domestic building, and he modestly claims that it is the first private dwelling-house of the Romans to have been illustrated and described. Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell has been content to regard the *Ruins* merely in the light of a sort of Newdigate poem, on the too hasty assumption that the architect seized upon the Spalatro remains as the most convenient advertisement hoarding ready to hand on which to paste up his professional prescriptions. He dismisses the book in favour of the later *Works*, wherein he makes for the more important influence upon Adam's building principles of the cinquecento studies and of the researches into the antique stucco decoration of the Romans and their use of colour. But this is to suppose that Adam is only important as a decorative artist and not as a constructional architect, which we should dispute, and means that the Roman building influence need not be considered seriously.

The dedication of the *Ruins at Spalatro* to George III reveals Adam's cunning desire to inspire the young king, already known to be an architectural enthusiast, with a proper patronage of this branch of the arts, which he believes to be the one expression for which the English have most aptitude. Adam dares, in fact, to foresee the dawn of a new era in the vernacular architecture, and he looks, somewhat vainly as it turned out, to royal enlightenment in this direction. He therefore solicits the king's attention to his drawings and designs of "the favourite Residence of a great Emperor, who, by his munificence and example, revived the Study of Architecture, and excited the Masters of that Art to emulate in their Works the Elegance and Purity of a better Age". Diocletian, who reigned from A.D. 284 to 304, abdicated in that year, and having spent the remainder of his life at Split, died there in 313. "Architecture", Adam continues, "in a particular Manner depends upon the Patronage of the Great. At this happy Period, when Great Britain enjoys in peace the Reputation and Power she acquired by Arms, your Majesty's singular Attention to the Arts of Elegance promises an Age of Perfection." The hint was strong enough not to escape some notice, even if as regards himself it bore little favourable fruit.

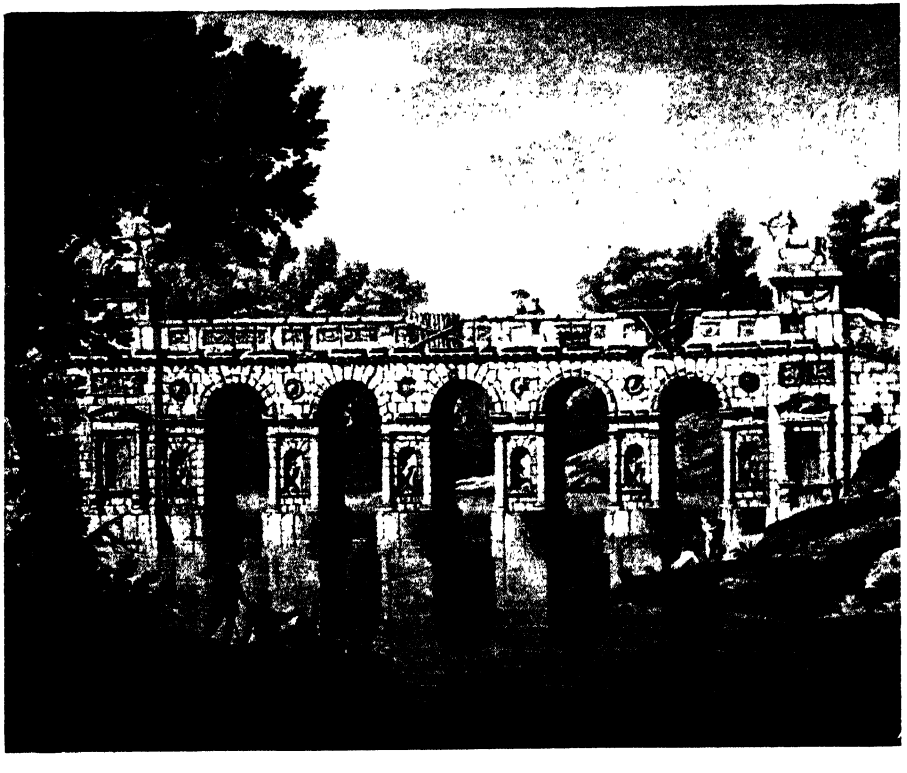
In his Introduction to the book Robert expresses his conviction that Diocletian "had revived a taste in Architecture superior to that of his own times and had formed architects capable of imitating, with no inconsiderable success, the stile and manner of a purer age". This sentence conveys



73 The Temple of Jupiter. From *The Ruins of the Emperor Diocletian's Palace at Spalatro*



74 Engraving by Piranesi of the Ponte di Rimini. From *Vedute di Roma*



75 Design by Robert Adam of a "Bridge in imitation of the Aqueducts of the Ancients proposed to be built over the Lake at Bowood Park" (1768)

clearly enough his conviction that his contemporaries could, under his own leadership, prove capable of extricating the art from the slough of unoriginal pedantry into which he believed it had fallen through Burlingtonian methods. There then follow the series of sixty-one plates of this colossal monument of the Roman Augustan age, executed for the most part by Clérisseau and Zucchi, with detailed descriptions of each by himself. Nothing is omitted to record the author's admiration for this vast dwelling, 698 feet long by 592 feet broad, covering a total area of 9½ acres, so disposed to avoid the most inclement winds of the Adriatic, yet affording the best views of the sea, and fed by fresh waters brought by special aqueduct. But the interesting point is that Adam in his unbounded admiration is not blindly adulatory of the emperor's palace. He criticises, for example, Diocletian's architect of the principal gateway, the Porta Aurea, the lower niches on each side of which, he points out, encroach too much, as does the arch over it, upon the superior order of the whole so as to detract from the form and beauty of the building. Again, he finds fault with the stairs to the Temple of Jupiter, which in his opinion seem very defective for being too closely cramped between the large central pedestals on either side. His observance of unusual detail throughout is remarkable. For instance, he comments upon the singular effect of one internal angular modillion on the cornice of the Temple of Esculapius and he does "not remember to have met with any other instance of it in the works of the Ancients". Nothing is too minute to escape his notice. A careful reading of the descriptions shows whence Robert Adam derived his theories for the planning of his domestic buildings on a monumental scale, like Syon and Kedleston.

In 1773 appeared Volume I of the *Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam*, Volume II following in 1779, and Volume III posthumously in 1822. It is the first volume that is of special importance, in that it contains a Preface which, short as it is, gives a far deeper insight into the architectural tenets and principles expounded by the brothers than any other of their surviving writings. There is little doubt, as Mr. Bolton has pointed out, that this Preface really owes its authorship to Robert and not to James. This is pretty well proved, apart from the very familiar Gibbonian turn of phrase quite peculiar to Robert's pen, by the important letter he wrote to Lord Kames as long ago as 31st March, 1763, when James was still on tour in Italy, in which exactly the same fundamentals are trotted out although in a somewhat less formal manner. The *Works* rather than the *Ruins* was admittedly published primarily as an advertisement of the firm at a critical time for the family. Adam buildings were by now no novelty, new glittering stars were rushing into the architectural firmament, and the Adelphi troubles had threatened the brothers with a serious eclipse. The book, as we have already stated, concerned itself with the decorative rather than the constructional functions of the architects, and of course the seventies were the most fertile decade of their decorative achievements. The *Works* was meant to puff these achievements

by illustrating what Robert considered to be his finest creations; and, lastly, they recapitulate the theories and principles that he had evolved during his architectural career. It is these theories and principles that interest us to-day.

The Adams' excuse for presenting the volume to their clients and the general public is that their designs are novel. "We have not trod", they boast, "in the paths of others, nor derived aid from their labours." This may be consciously true in so far as all great art, necessarily being traditional in its evolution, can advance a step ahead without its authors incurring the charge of plagiarism. The Adams' claim, though not recognised by all their contemporaries and rivals, like Sir William Chambers and James Wyatt, was generally admitted by their successors. Sir John Soane, for instance, whose scholarship is unimpeachable, but who personally followed in the footsteps of Athenian Stuart and was no Roman, recorded in a lecture in 1813 posterity's debt to Robert Adam for his complete reform of English furniture design and interior decoration.

The next paragraph of the brothers' Preface explains what the authors had in mind. It states categorically and with some show of hurt feeling as well as pride that they have met with so much imitation as "to have brought about, in this country, a kind of revolution in the whole system of this useful and elegant art". They claim that it is high time the public gave them credit for this revolution, of which they are proud to be the sole responsible instigators. We must remember that only the previous year Wyatt's Pantheon in Oxford Street (24) was completed and opened, to receive a tumultuous and hysterical acclaim. The fickle public had been enraptured with this latest novelty without stopping to discern that, had it not been for the Adams, the building would never have taken the decorative form it did. Other anonymous houses and street buildings were beginning to grow up in the distinctively Adam manner. The houses in Stratford Place were, for example, built in 1772 in a purely imitative form; John Crunden's Boodles Club in St. James's Street, completed two years later, was already in course of erection; and Leverton's Bedford Square houses were shortly to appear, as did his Woodhall Park in 1778.

The brothers, furthermore, claim to have evolved during the past few years a remarkable improvement in the conveniences of planning and the interior arrangements of domestic buildings to suit the increasing requirements of comfort in modern life. As a result of their ingenuity, "Architecture", they say, "has already become more elegant and more interesting. The parade, the convenience, and social pleasures of life, being better understood, are more strictly attended to in the arrangement and disposition of apartments." This reference to a recent outcome of their activities is interesting, for it implies the genuine artists' healthy distaste for immature work. Indeed, in the *Works* they make no reference to nor are there any illustrations of Robert's early houses, like Hatchlands and Shardeloes, with which by now they were presumably dissatisfied. One may clearly surmise that by this time Robert would be ashamed of the

interior treatment of Hatchlands on account of its, to him, too heavy, semi-constructional decorative motifs and deep plaster reliefs smacking of those George II days, from the last shackles of which he boasted escape. Low relief treatment, devoid of constructional significance, had by now won his favour. Instead, the book illustrates a selection of those country houses which are to-day numbered among his masterpieces, like Syon and Kenwood, and town houses, such as Sir Watkin William Wynn's and Lord Derby's. The Preface, in addition, makes the claim—and this is one of the most striking of all Robert's theories—that the brothers have reintroduced a greater "movement" into their exteriors.

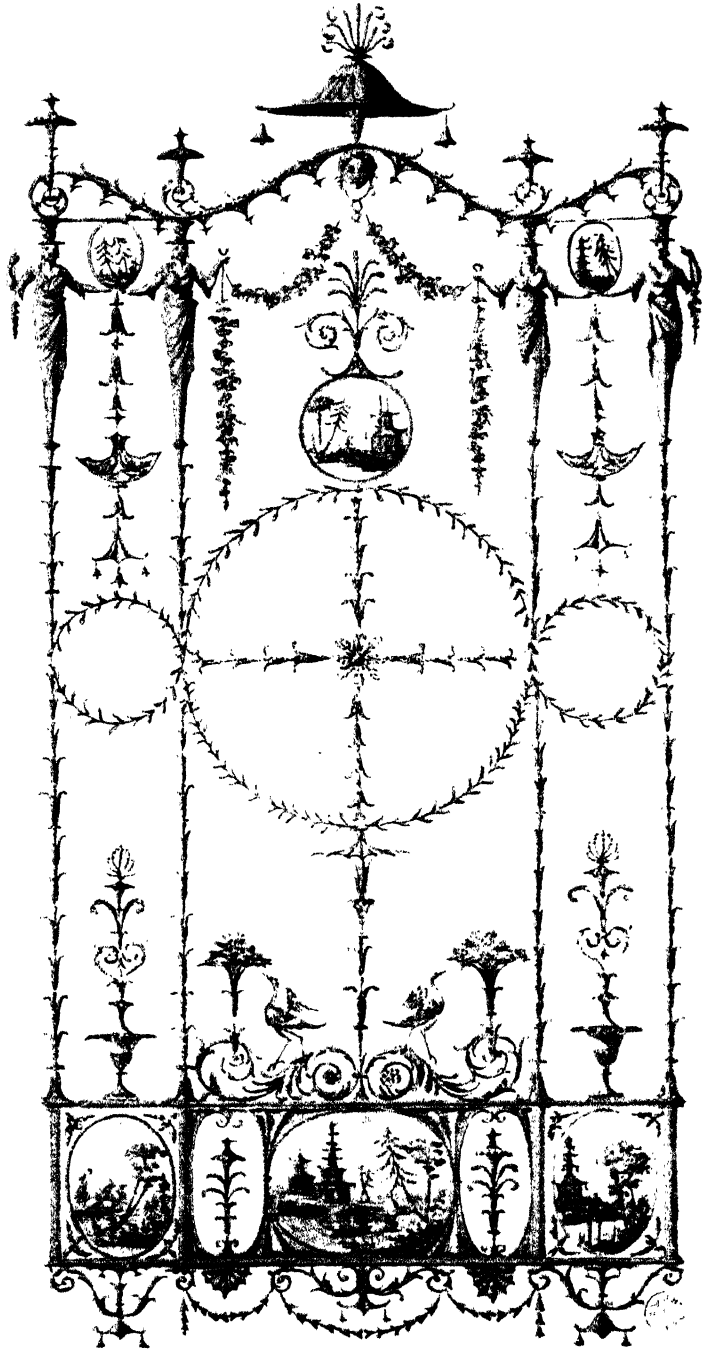
In Robert's own words, this is what he means by "movement". "Movement is meant to express the rise and fall, the advance and recess with other diversity of form, in the different parts of a building, so as to add greatly to the picturesque of the composition. For the rising and falling, advancing and receding, with the convexity and concavity, and other forms of the great parts, have the same effects in architecture, that hill and dale, foreground and distance, swelling and sinking, have in landscape. That is they serve to produce an agreeable and diversified contour, that groups and contrasts like a picture, and creates a variety of light and shade, which gives great spirit, beauty, and effect to the composition." Nothing seems to us in all his writings to give clearer indication that Robert Adam is first and foremost an artist than this passage. It alone boldly expresses the advance he intended to make away from the dry rigidity of the English Palladian school. It proves him a keen student of landscape, which by his day was beginning to be emphasised in a more natural manner by the tenets of Capability Brown. Adam attaches a new importance to surrounding natural contours in relation to building, a relationship of which the Burlingtonians were quite unaware, in spite of William Kent's tentative and uncertain essays at landscape layout and his famous dictum that "nature abhors a straight line". To do Kent justice he stands head and shoulders above his fellow Burlingtonians in this particular estimate, which, however, he did not see related to architectural forms. Adam's persistent reliance upon the partnership with landscape in the creation of an architectural work of art may perhaps be a weakness simply because of the comparative impermanency of natural features, however humanly controlled. Nevertheless it should make us all the more cautious in pronouncing judgment upon his surviving buildings, especially his country houses, few if any of which can be seen by us to-day in the complete setting that he was so careful to provide for them.

From his many landscape sketches in the nostalgic spirit of Claude and Salvator Rosa we discover that Adam was an artist with the pen of considerable talent (25, 26). They are, moreover, of academic interest in anticipating the romanticism of the early nineteenth century, as epitomised by Sir Walter Scott, which was to develop into the uncontrolled, haphazard disorder of the Victorian Gothicists. This romantic element is evident

in all Robert Adam's landscape and purely architectural sketches, most of them drawings in black and white, sometimes washes in bistre, Indian ink or soot water, and always in low tone. His aptitude for sketching he indulged throughout his whole life, and it afforded an outlet to his extremely nervous and creative temperament. The sketches were purely recreational, for Adam never exhibited them and we do not know that he attached the least merit to them. They were most prolific during the very few interregnums marked by crises in his business career or slack intervals caused by post-war depression, as was the case after the British defeats of 1780. The landscape sketches habitually include a semi-ruinous castle of medieval type perched on an abrupt hill, with a strong beam of sunlight focused upon the central feature. If the subjects were exclusively architectural, a Brobdingnagian catacomb was a favourite setting (26), the vaulted ceiling riven by vast weed-filled fissures, and somewhere in the foreground a rustic thatched cottage of recent date, with a homely puff of smoke from its chimney, sprung up as it were in impudent defiance of so much monumental endurance. A contrast between the ephemeral frivolity of modern man and the eternal classicism of the ancients is unfailingly stressed by Adam in these doodling fancies, of which their constant but unconscious conventionality is most significant and important in a study of his principles.

Another favourite device was a ruinous, classical bridge, frequently with a whole section of rude wooden paling replacing a broken stone balustrade. This subject was directly inspired by Piranesi's topographical engravings, freely illustrated in his *Vedute di Roma*, of existing bridges of the Tiber in the semi-derelict condition of that time (74). Since so many of these Piranesian scenes are reproduced upon the large decorative canvases of Zucchi and others, inset upon the walls of his staterooms at Osterley, Kedleston, and elsewhere, it is probable that Adam had himself first roughed out his own ideas of the composition for the artists to carry out and complete.

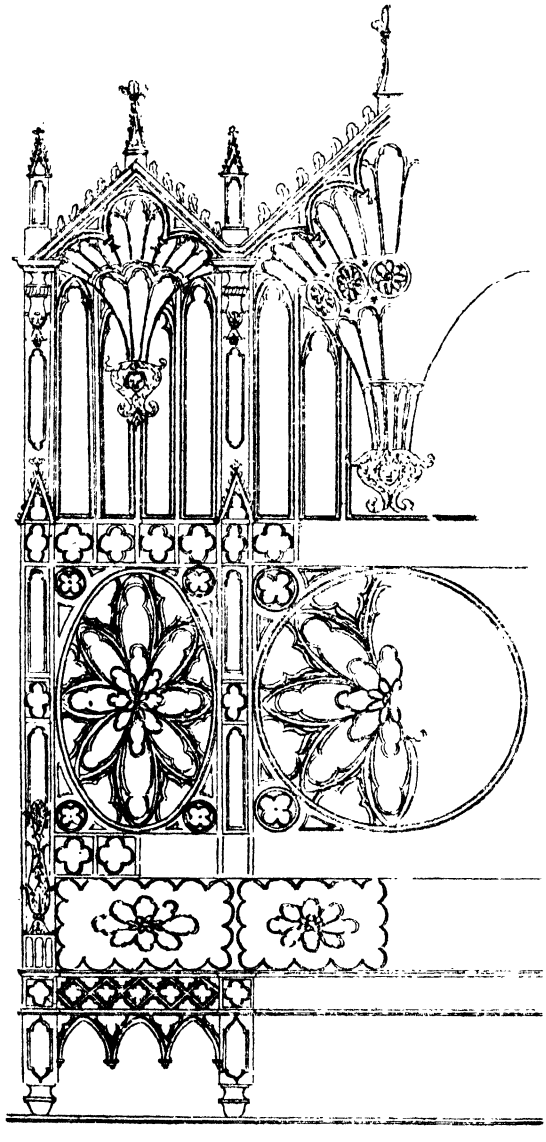
These purely imaginative sketches of medieval flavour have, in Professor Geoffrey Webb's judgment, considerable bearing upon the romantic massing and the picturesque grouping of even the most strictly classical of Robert Adam's buildings. Professor Webb points out the startling dramatic effects Adam intentionally liked to provide, and he instances his grand portico at Osterley (95). Here Adam notably achieved what had been expressed by that tiresome work "sharawaggi", for which there seems to be no alternative terminology. The grand portico at Osterley, actually more Grecian than Roman, completes the bridge between the scarlet Tudor towers at the two angles of the façade, which Adam purposely kept in order that they should lend a romantic effect to his classical reconstruction. The whole emphasis is dexterously thrown, of course, upon Adam's new classical central motif by a careful disposition of the conflicting styles. Other examples that Professor Webb mentions of startling effects derived by extreme handling are the deeply shadowed screen



76 Design in colour by Robert Adam for a looking-glass. From the portfolio of the architect's drawings in the Soane Museum

of columns at Luton (now, alas! gone) and the one connecting the Vanbrugh wings at Compton Verney (94). Still further examples can be cited, notably in designs for Culzean and Lauder Castles, to specify the application of Robert's romantic notions gleaned from the medieval (72).

The medieval influence upon Robert Adam's style was derived rather from an interest in castle architecture than in Gothic, and is comparable with the inspiration that Anthony Salvin, that much misunderstood nineteenth-century architect, derived from his studies of medieval fortifications. It is worth while noting that William Adam, the father, had presented Robert in his youth with a ruined castle at Dowhill, close to the Blair Adam estate in Kinross-shire, which may well predict his son's early interest in this particular form of building. In other respects Robert Adam was remarkably unconcerned with the Gothic revival of his age, and it is significant that Mr. Bolton in his great book on the Adam brothers refers to this side-issue in Robert's work as his "Castle style" rather than as his "Gothic" manner of building. On the other hand, he was, as we should expect, by no means totally unaffected by the Gothic influence and in the course of his career he necessarily came into contact with its leading exponents.



Design for an Interior at Alnwick Castle

There is very little left from which to judge his experiments in this style, and still less that reflects credit upon him. All that survive of his Gothic interiors (swept away in the early nineteenth century) at Alnwick Castle are several designs for them in the Soane collection. These are strangely feeble and unconvincing and more meretricious than anything perpetrated by Walpole at Strawberry Hill. They were only carried out, we are told, at the express whim of the Duchess of Northumberland, whereas the Duke did not favour them at all. From Lowther Adam wrote in 1766 that he was preparing for "the arduous task of placing a castle upon this principality", but the scheme apparently came to nothing. A more interesting elevation exists for a Grimm's fairy-like structure at Lauder Castle, flanked by four identical pavilions of semi-classical, semi-castellar character, connected by far-flung retaining walls pierced with bow slit apertures. This scheme likewise was never carried out but there still exists in York Place, Edinburgh, a street façade to a manse closely resembling those of the Lauder pavilions and consisting of a central feature within a relieving arch (incidentally in the Palladian tradition) flanked by two slightly projecting angle turrets, a crenellated parapet crowning the whole.

It cannot be said that this Gothic street experiment is a success, but the Gothic St. George's church [1] adjoining the manse was of singular interest in being unique to Robert Adam, and in incorporating a perplexing classical portico on its front. Unfortunately this rare example of Adam church architecture disappeared only a few years ago. At Culzean in Ayrshire (72) Robert began in 1770 upon the enormous house that still survives. Here, however, he was tempted to reproduce external castle effects in the traditional Scots baronial style, and the result, because of the castle's extremely romantic situation upon an abrupt cliff overlooking the sea, is impressive in bulk and outline, if unsure and hackneyed in detail. The interior, on the contrary, is altogether classical, and comprises some of his very finest apartments, notably the oval staircase hall with its beautiful Ionic columns superimposed upon the Corinthian of the lower landing.

There are authentic records that Adam designed for Horace Walpole in 1766 a ceiling resembling a Gothic rose window for the round drawing-room at Strawberry Hill (113), and furthermore two alternative chimney-pieces based upon Edward the Confessor's tomb in Westminster Abbey. The one consists of a wide trefoiled head flanked by twisted and reeded columns; the other of a similar head but with lozenges and circles on the frieze. Both the ceiling and one of the chimneypieces were carried out and the drawings of them are to be seen in the Soane Museum. The alternative chimneypiece, not executed, was to have been inlaid with scagliola, which affords an interesting sideline, since the introduction of scagliola work into England has always been imputed to Wyatt at the Pantheon in 1772. It seems probable that its introduction was really

[1] It is true that Adam did designs for a Gothic church at Croome, but it appears that the building was finally entrusted to Brown or Miller.

effected by the Adams previously; for certainly James, writing in his Journal at Florence in 1760, comments upon its use in Italy and foresees it as a novelty in England. He jots down: "The scagliola is curious, and could be made to answer different purposes; for instance, for columns resembling different marbles, for tables resembling mosaic work, and for most elegant floors for baths and low apartments, or for linings to any place damp, etc.; and likewise for imitating different marbles in cabinet work, and such like things." It has never been established that Robert Adam and Horace Walpole were intimate, and the casual reference in Mrs. Lybbe Powys's diary to the two men travelling together and being seen dining at the inn at Amesbury one August evening in 1776 is open to serious question.[1] But for all this and making allowances for the squibs Walpole delighted to fire off at Adam's decorative "harlequinades" and "pompoms", it is surely unlikely that their common interests and reputations did not frequently bring them together over a long period in London society.

There is no need to trace here the ancestry of the eighteenth-century neo-Gothic movement.[2] Walpole first acquired Strawberry Hill in 1747, but we know that Sanderson Miller was that same year engaged in building for Lord Lyttleton a sham ruin at Hagley, and had before that begun upon his own sham castle at Edgehill. As early as 1744 he had built the thatched cottage on his Radway estate, so that even Walpole, Bentley, and their proprietory school of Goths were forced to acknowledge Miller the father manufacturer of the "true rust of the Barons' wars". In so far as the Gothic taste exercised a powerful and unhappy sway over many of his contemporaries, like Miller, Keene, and the Wyatts, Robert Adam was extremely little affected by it. His catholicity of interests led him to make a few desultory experiments in the manner, as we have seen. His papers in the Soane Collection likewise prove that he made a few deplorable designs in the Romanesque manner. But he never, in spite of his innate romanticism, gave the applied study to medieval detail that he did to Roman and Grecian. The Gothic was merely one manifestation of his pictorial romanticism and was no more than a sideline. With Soane, Robert Adam might well have said: "The Gothic Architecture, however happily adopted to religious purposes, is little calculated for the common habits of life."

To return to the curious pictorial interpretation called "movement"—with its close association of landscape foreground and background with the building itself and the interplay of light and shade, convexity and concavity in the assembly of component masses, causing variety—Robert Adam is fairly explicit in his references to it. In the *Works* he gives us

[1] Mr. R. W. Ketton-Cremer, the biographer of Horace Walpole, assures me that the day-to-day movements of Horace Walpole are concisely documented; and that, for domestic reasons, it is practically impossible that Walpole could have been on tour in Wiltshire during this particular month.

[2] See *The Gothic Revival*, by Sir Kenneth Clark, 1928.

examples of three buildings that amply illustrate his meaning of it. These are St. Peter's at Rome (81), the present Institut or Collège des Quatre Nations opposite the Louvre in Paris, and his own south front of Kedleston, near Derby, of which, it so happens, he is boasting too soon. He says: "The effect of the height and convexity of the dome of St. Peter's, contrasted with the lower square front, and the concavity of its court, is a striking instance of this sort of composition. The college and church of des quatre nations at Paris, is, though small, another of the same kind; and with us, we really do not recollect any example of so much movement and contrast, as in the south front of Kedleston House in Derbyshire"—which, of course, was never completed except in Robert Adam's own mind, for the flanking wings that were to provide the contrasting concavity of the design could not be executed owing to Lord Scarsdale overspending himself beforehand. He concludes his treatise on "movement" by giving his opinion that its greatest exponent among the moderns—and he does not specifically confine his opinion to this country—was Sir John Vanbrugh, whom he ranks before Inigo Jones and Wren. Certainly to no other British architect does Robert Adam ever pay so unequivocal a tribute, and when we recall that Adam is generally considered to represent the quintessence of lightness, verging upon occasional insipidity, whereas the other has been criticised, ever since Pope's epitaph,[1] for irredeemable heaviness and gauchness, the following passage gives us cause to measure the just objectivity of Adam's judgments. "We cannot, however, allow ourselves to close this note," the Preface states, "without doing justice to the memory of a great man, whose reputation as an architect has long been carried down the stream by a torrent of undistinguishing prejudice and abuse. Sir John Vanbrugh's genius was of the first class; and in point of movement, novelty, and ingenuity, his works have not been exceeded by anything in modern times. We should certainly have quoted Blenheim and Castle Howard (80) as great examples of these perfections, in preference to any work of our own, or of any other modern architect; but unluckily for the reputation of this excellent artist, his taste kept no pace with his genius and his works are so crowded with barbarisms and absurdities, and so borne down by their own preposterous weight, that none but the discerning can separate their merits from their defects. In the hands of the ingenious artist, who knows how to polish and refine and bring them into use, we have always regarded his productions as rough jewels of inestimable value."

The passage does not contain unqualified praise, for this would not have accorded with Robert's strong critical faculty. Having bravely shot an arrow at Vanbrugh's passionate detractors, who would include the great majority of Adam's generation, both architects and the beau monde alike, and trounced their "undistinguishing prejudice" in denying the man's mighty genius, it is curious to note him falling over the tripwire as

[1] Lie heavy on him, earth, for he
Laid many a heavy load on thee.

regards Vanbrugh's defective "taste". For by "taste" Adam means Vanbrugh's style, which was of course essentially the baroque, with which he never showed any conscious sympathy whatever, and the "barbarisms and absurdities" that bore down by their preposterous weight were the emphatic cornices, the overladen friezes, the broken pediments, and supernumerary adornments essential to that style, all of which to Adam's mind were so offensively unclassical. Exactly the same criticisms were levelled at him by Adam's Burlingtonian predecessors (they dismissed Vanbrugh altogether as something quite outside the pale of orthodoxy) whom Adam was to mock because of their pedantic adherence to rules. The final sentence of the passage just quoted was Adam's disingenuously diffident way of identifying his own name with "the ingenious artist", and in Compton Verney we have the only known case of Vanbrugh's rough jewels having been polished by Robert's refining hand.

But great credit is due to Robert Adam's generous acknowledgment of Vanbrugh's exceptional importance and to his courageous recognition of those two monuments of art Blenheim and Castle Howard. How vainly may we wish that Jupiter Carlyle had only recorded in his journal some memory of Robert Adam's observations that summer day in 1758 when the party visited Blenheim and we are told quite succinctly that "James admired the movement". At least one of Robert's contemporaries was also able to estimate Vanbrugh's true worth. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his 13th Discourse, delivered in 1786, speaks of him as "a poet as well as an architect", who exerted "a greater display of imagination than we shall find perhaps in any other", and he refers to those same qualities in him that especially appealed to Adam. For he goes on to say, "He understood light and shadow and had great skill in composition. To support his principal object, he produced his second and third groups or masses; he perfectly understood in his art what is the most difficult in ours, the conduct of the background, by which the design and invention is set off to the greatest advantage. What the background is in painting, in architecture is the real ground on which the building is erected; and no architect took greater care than he that his work should not appear crude and hard; that is, it did not abruptly start out of the ground without expectation or preparation. This is a tribute which a painter owes to an architect who composed like a painter. . . ."

It is remarkable how Reynolds seized upon the same gift for "movement" in Vanbrugh as did Adam. Reynolds's tribute is equally just, and his comparison of Vanbrugh's methods of composition with those of a great painter has obvious interest. Yet one wonders a little whether Reynolds had not overlooked the chronological fact that the landscape background and setting of, at any rate, both Blenheim and Castle Howard date from after Vanbrugh's day, and as he saw them owed no more than their bare contours to the architect's selection. A further indirect tribute to Vanbrugh's superlative sense of "movement", as the Adams interpreted this quality, was expressed by no less a person than James Wyatt, who was

otherwise no great admirer. Farington in his *Diary* records a fascinating discussion upon Vanbrugh with Wyatt at the height of the latter's career. Wyatt was forced to admit that Blenheim from its great size, the projection of its porticos and colonnades "had great effect and strength of light and shade", although he qualified this concession by adding that a stone quarry of equal size would have a similar effect. He acknowledged, however, that he never passed the road through Woodstock without halting at the great gateway to Blenheim and "being exceedingly struck with the general effect, and had often stood to consider to what cause it could be owing", without being able to satisfy himself. It was not the building nor the grounds nor the woods nor the water (which were of course Brown's), "yet the whole makes a forcible impression".

The truth is of course that this mysterious "movement" which Vanbrugh achieved so signally, and which his followers admired so jealously, was quite simply a baroque quality. Vanbrugh was the only advanced baroque architect England produced. The Burlingtonians saw to that. His successful "movement" was therefore the outcome of an abandonment to the baroque spirit which both Adam and Wyatt held in such mortal dread. The secret of Vanbrugh's genius, then, lies in the apparently limitless fertility of his inventions, co-ordinated by a monumental sense of entirety in composition. One feels that Vanbrugh's titanic mind was driven by an armoured corps of demons, impelling the vast machine at breakneck speed to pile Pelion upon Ossa. Reynolds understood the strength of Vanbrugh's driving force when he wrote: "To speak then of Vanbrugh in the language of a painter, he had originality of invention", which can only be accompanied by power if it is to find expression. This sentiment was echoed a generation later by Soane, who spoke of the versatility of his talents and power of invention, the delicate Grecian even going so far as to call him the Shakespeare of architects. But whereas Reynolds was, after all, a painter and Soane only a lesser architect, Adam, though far from blind to Vanbrugh's limitations, as we have remarked, was most fully qualified to measure his real stature in the ranks of vernacular architects. There is something a little poignant in Adam's generous praise, untinged with resentment. He must have felt that Vanbrugh had achieved on the monumental scale what had so far been denied to himself for lack of opportunity. Perhaps he still was confident that his own time would come. At any rate he could not help admiring and enjoying the vigour and exuberance of this baroque architect, whose carefree disregard of every principle should have been anathema to his own coldly classical standards. Vanbrugh in fact was anathema to his contemporaries, the Burlingtonians, whose every rule he infringed, and Adam in his turn was professedly in reaction against their unyielding pedantry. To the Burlingtonians Vanbrugh was what the recalcitrant and hopelessly heretical son is to Holy Mother Church; to Robert Adam what the unprincipled yet charming bad boy, who becomes a wild and undeserved favourite at school, is to the boy who has adhered to the paths of learning and virtue

and has the mortification to realise that his schoolfellows, notwithstanding, infinitely prefer the other's society. He no doubt suspected that Vanbrugh had a little unfairly attained his effects more through accident and the charm of personality than was strictly in accordance with the deserts of erudition. But he had the charity not to say so.

In the *Works* the brothers had blamed the too strict adherence to the rules of the Orders by their predecessors, the Burlingtonians. They launched a disquisition into how observance of the Orders should be interpreted, and how and where latitude and deviation from them was permissible. It was as though in literature Gerard Manley Hopkins were to dogmatise about variation, within limits, of the Shakespeare sonnet. The brothers' disquisition fairly echoes the theories advanced ten years previously by Robert in his important letter to Lord Kames, when James was still on tour in Italy, and the existence of this letter gives grounds for our assuming that the authorship of the *Works* was mainly the elder brother's. The letter, as one would expect, deals less with technicalities than the disquisition in the Preface, and is, at this distance of time, more attractive and more valuable in consequence.

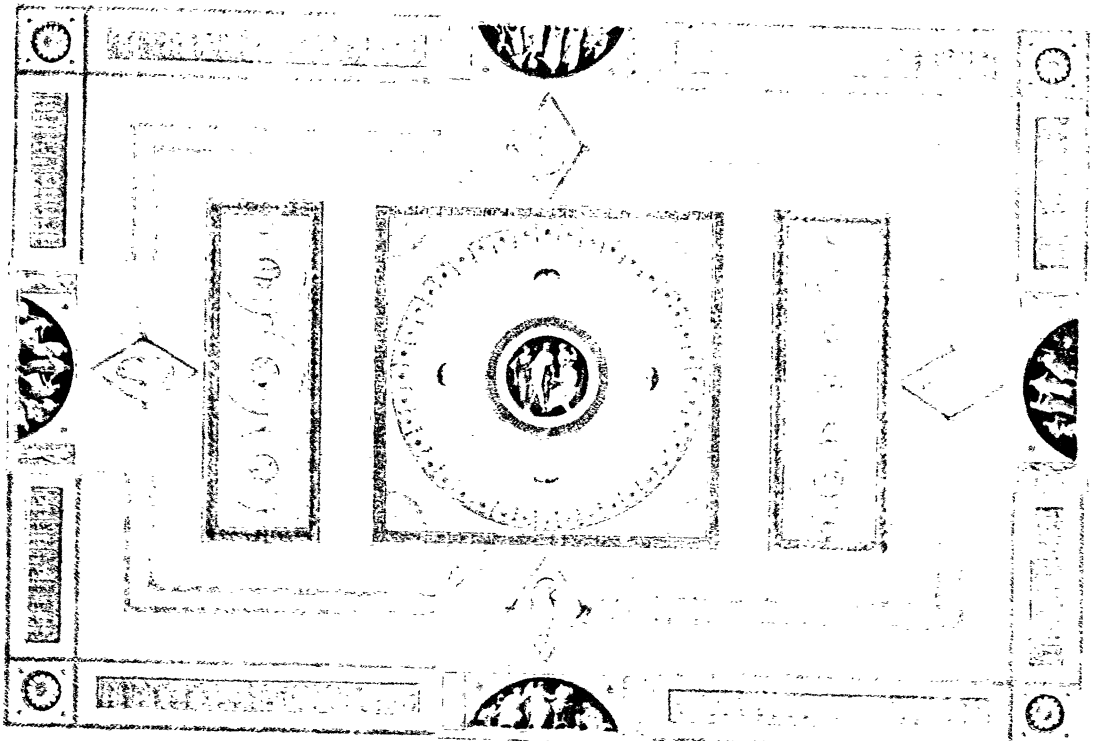
That Henry Home, Lord Kames, a Scottish judge, should be the recipient of Robert's long professional confidences shows the seriousness in which the amateur held architectural doctrines during the golden century of British building. He was a very much older man than his correspondent, having been born as long ago as 1696. Home, who belonged to the class of lesser country gentry, took his seat on the judicial bench as Lord Kames in 1752 and held if for thirty years until his death. With a great knowledge of law and passion for the traditions of British justice went a keen love of and interest in philosophy, the arts, and antiquities. Kames, who was above all things a genuine eccentric, long perplexed literary people, who never could quite decide how genuine was his learning or whether in fact he was not something of a charlatan. Of his *Elements of Criticism*, a book that impressed the multitude, Goldsmith observed darkly that "It was easier to write that book than to read it". In fact, so cleverly was the language of it couched that intellectuals were in doubt whether it made sense or nonsense. Boswell, dissertating upon his countrymen's wide learning against the assaults of Dr. Johnson one day in Edinburgh, clinched his defence with the boast, "But, sir, we have Lord Kames", to which the Doctor rudely retorted, "You *have* Lord Kames. Keep him, ha, ha, ha." But whatever his shortcomings in the eyes of the sophisticated English, Kames was a typical product of the Scottish Renaissance. In the social circles of Glasgow and Edinburgh he was repected and deeply beloved on account of his extreme vigour of mind and hearty good-nature. Mrs. Montagu, the London bluestocking, was certainly devoted to him. In 1778 she wrote: "His Lordship is fourscore and three years of life, of age twenty-five. His memory now is equal to anyone I ever knew, and his vivacity superior."

His good nature was known to disconcert at times his equals and

invariably his inferiors, owing to its unrestrained frankness. His coarse, primitive, and irrelevant humour would always find a vent even on the most solemn public occasions. When at the age of eighty-six the old Lord of Justiciary was taking for the last time an affectionate leave of his brethren, having with emotion shaken them each by the hand, he called out at the door, "Fare ye a' weel, ye bitches."

Such was the character to whom Robert Adam had poured out his mind upon the sanctity of the Five Orders. Of the Doric Order, the Preface to the *Works* stressed the necessity for spacing members of the capitals so as to provide greater height than was prescribed by Palladio and consequently more grace. To Lord Kames Robert had counselled the use of this Order to convey an impression of simplicity and solidity. When applied to exteriors he advised against fluting of the columns and ornamentation of the entablature, precautions he had eminently observed in his Admiralty Screen, in the Mausoleum at Bowood, and the Conservatory at Croome, all three buildings being remarkable for their Roman strength and severity. In his own interiors he has ventured to alter some parts of this Order, especially where he adds enrichments to it: "These alterations most people have allowed to be much for the better; but I have always been very cautious in this way; and it is a dangerous licence, and may do much harm, in the hands of rash innovators, or mere retailers in the art, who have neither eyes nor judgment." The examples of his halls at Lansdown House (102) and at Croome will bear this out, and Robert Adam particularly favoured this Order for entrance halls. In this respect he preserved a link with his predecessors, for Lord Burlington at Chiswick was the first to use the Doric for his piano nobile and incidentally to introduce the true Roman coffering that is the concomitant of it. This form of coffering Adam frequently adopted in several of the alcoves or exedrae of his Doric rooms, and occasionally for entire ceilings as in the saloon at Kedleston and the red drawing-room at Syon.

About the Ionic Order the *Works* is fairly discursive. The Corinthian capital, the brothers state, "does not in our opinion admit of more dignity and magnificence than a rich Ionic with its volutes square in the front—Angular Volutes, as in the Temples of Concord and Manly Fortune at Rome, and in the Temples of Erectheus at Athens, have always appeared to us less solid, less grave, and less graceful". How full of considered weight are these experienced words. They deplore the injudicious adoption of angular volutes by Michael Angelo, Scamozzi, and other moderns. Only upon the portico of the Villa at Brasted, which he built in 1784 for King George's physician, Dr. Turton, does Robert seem to have lapsed into this heterodox manner, and this was for a specific purpose. The small villa was designed to be seen at the end of a long vista of trees and this *trompe-l'oeil* or deliberate deception was meant to convey an impression of greater size by spreading the angles outwards. The volute of the Grecian Ionic seemed to the brothers too wide and heavy and that of the Roman too slight. "We have therefore generally taken a mean



77 Coloured design by Robert Adam of a ceiling for Sir Abraham Hume at Wormleybury, Hertfordshire. From the original in the Soane Museum

between them, which we think has a happy effect." They have also adopted the Grecian manner of forming the volute with a double fillet, so as to produce more light and shadow, in preference to the Roman, the effects of which in this sunless clime are only too seldom experienced. The porticos at Osterley and Kenwood afford examples of this treatment, and at the latter place particularly the clear profile of the capital is enormously enhanced. Other technical devices they recommend from the Greek in order to strengthen the dignity and grace of the capital.

To Lord Kames Robert had advised the use of the Ionic only for "gay and slight buildings", since the meagreness of its capital does not sufficiently attract attention. "I have always thought," he wrote, "this Order destined for the insides of houses and temples; but the universal practice to the contrary in all countries, shows how much I stand single in this opinion." Robert was, in fact, to depart from this opinion, for later he employed the Ionic in a great number of his exteriors.

Of the Corinthian Order the authors in the *Works* give highest praise to the superior beauty of its capital. "All its sides are regular, and the concavity of its abacus contrasts in a beautiful manner with the convexity of the vase." This is strikingly true, and is another instance of the authors' delight in all variations of "movement" induced by a nice contrast in forms. They then advise against an unfortunate habit of swelling the middle of the vase and bending it inwards at the bottom, a trick to which the early Georgians and even Wren were frequently addicted. They attribute this mispractice to the defective drawings of Desgodetz, whom they in their astonishingly observant and meticulous way have not seldom proved inaccurate in his reproductions of the antique. Indeed in his Italian Journal James noted that he and his party found that their preliminary measurements of the Amphitheatre at Verona differed from those of Desgodetz, and so they proceeded to complete their own minutely and with Adamatic thoroughness. But it is in his letter to Lord Kames that Robert waxes extraordinarily biblical in his praise of the Corinthian Order, to the beauties of which he is particularly sensitive. It requires so much delicacy of handling and richness in every part that he cautions the inexperienced builder to neglect the Order altogether. He first traces the history of the Corinthian through the Greek from the Egyptian derivation. "If your lordship will look into Norden's *Antiquities of Egypt*", he exhorts Kames, "you will see the capitals I refer to. I own that there appears an absurdity in supporting any weight by a combined cluster of light foliage: But if you suppose a column to represent a tree, I shall suppose a palm tree, which grows of a pretty equal thickness, and of which the branches grow near the top, and that part of the top of this tree is cut off, and the branches or leaves left: you will find that tree able to support a weight, and these branches by no means impairing its strength, nor in any danger of being broken off; they will bend down their heads with the beam or entablature that lies upon them and connects them together, as those of the Corinthian capital do, but the main weight will still

rest for its support upon the upright stem. This I take to be the true origin of the Corinthian Order. . . . As to the proportions of the column", he concludes, "we might suppose these to be taken from the proportions of the human figure; and the leaves at the top to correspond to the hair. The introduction of Caryatides and Terms amongst the Greeks, gives at least a degree of plausibility to this conjecture."

As to the Composite and Tuscan, he "would omit entirely the two mongrel Orders". But occasionally he has been known to use the former: and its use upon the centre of the Diocletian wing at Bowood may account in some measure for the singularly unsatisfactory piquancy we detect in that very pretentious building.

The authors of the *Works* next inveigh against the tabernacle frame round windows, doors, and pictures, except in large apartments, and the exception must be intended to excuse Robert's use of this, to our eyes, highly dignified surround in his great hall at Syon. The lack of such surrounds upon Adam elevations, where their windows tend more and more to become stark voids, especially in the street elevations, gives them a peculiarly severe simplicity and makes a distinct break from the Burlingtonian use of cill and pediment. This accent of severity was, of course, followed by nearly all early nineteenth-century builders and accounts for the subsequent disfavour into which it fell with the florid-loving Victorians, who could see nothing but a melancholy paucity of invention in rows and rows of featureless brick walls along London streets. So we find the young Disraeli in his early novels constantly decrying them. The brothers at the same time deprecate the massive entablatures used by their predecessors without due regard to the three essential component parts, architrave, frieze, and cornice, and they claim to have abandoned these corrupt practices in their buildings. They are not so foolish as to find fault with entablatures correctly handled with imagination, but so many were abused by ignorant misapplication of degraded detail or by the omission of the cardinal components. Nothing do they consider "more sterile and disgustful, than to see for ever the dull repetition of Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian entablatures, in their usual proportions, reigning round every apartment, where no order can come or ought to come"—a habit which has prevailed since the days of Bramante down to their own time. Especially in low rooms do they deplore columns, without proper entablatures, usually supporting a solitary outsize cornice which usurps the place of its complementary architrave and frieze.

As regards ceiling and wall decorations they are even more dogmatic. They condemn the ponderous compartment ceilings, "now universally exploded" by them, which originated with the Italian Palladians under the mistaken notion that they were imitating the ancients. On the contrary, had the Palladians only known it, the ancients reserved their heavy compartments for the soffits of their temple porticos, where they accorded with "the strength, magnitude, and height of the building" and its adjuncts as seen from out of doors. "But on the inside of their edifices the Ancients

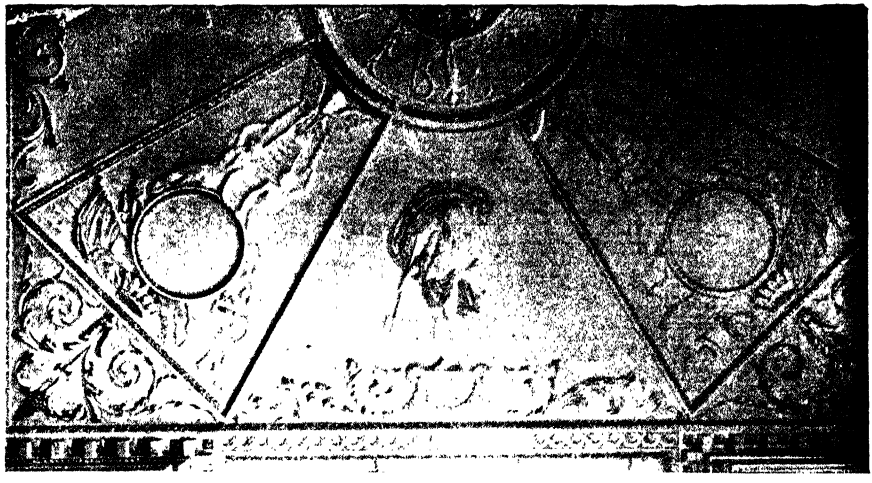
were extremely careful to proportion both the size and depth of their compartments and panels, to the distance from the eye and the objects with which they were to be compared: and, with regard to the decoration of their private and bathing apartments, they were all delicacy, gaiety, grace, and beauty." In this connection the Adams do not hesitate to reproach Inigo Jones for being the first to introduce the compartment ceiling into this country as the result of his Palladian studies in Italy, whence, of course, the Burlingtonians derived theirs. They even go so far in their chastisement as to rebuke him for displaying less fancy and judicious embellishment in his designs than Le Pautre. This seems hardly fair to Jones, for both Pierre and Jean Le Pautre positively overloaded the ribs and interstices of their ceilings with a profusion of garlanded ornamentation of just the kind to which the brothers objected, and filled their flats with large fresco paintings and their angles and coves with sculptural figures practically in the round. The Adams claim, for their part, to have introduced greater lightness and so beauty into their own interiors, diversifying them with "a mixture of grotesque stucco, painted ornaments" and so forth, derived, as we have already seen from their study of Cinquecento and, above all, Roman ornamentation, in the Baths of Titus and the Catacombs. Robert took the greatest trouble over the precise colouring of his ceilings and walls, whether treated in low stucco relief or just painted. In a letter to Sir Edward Knatchbull at Mersham-le-Hatch he says he is sending down a London painter of experience and repute for this purpose, "As I do not think any of the Countrey hands could do it, as it ought to be."

From the ignorant mistakes of these "modern" architects in Italy—and here, undoubtedly the followers of Palladio are identified—the Preface continues, "all Europe has been misled, and has been servilely groaning under this load for three centuries past". Michael Angelo, Raphael, Ligerio, Domenichino, Vasari, Algardi "threw off these prejudices", yet the early Georgians under the leadership of Lord Burlington resurrected "these absurd compositions". As for the large fresco paintings of Verrio and Laguerre, those sprawling galaxies of heathen gods and goddesses ("as if", Horace Walpole observed, "Mrs. Holman had been in heaven and invited everybody she saw"), they are mocked as tiring "the patience of every spectator". Big pictures, they state, should be looked at with ease and, they imply, should be works of art or nothing at all. Grotesques on the other hand may be seen "with the glance of an eye". They do not invite detailed examination by the spectator obliged to lie flat on his back upon the floor, and are purely decorative. In direct opposition to this theory (which presumably must condemn out of hand the Sistine Chapel ceiling) is the opinion of Sir William Chambers. It is always a little difficult to determine when Chambers's downright contradictions are provoked by that overweaning jealousy of his contemporaries to which he is invariably prone and by his undisguised resentment of the Adam brothers' very existence. He on the contrary deplores the passage of

fresco painting, "for one cannot suffer to go by so high a name the trifling gaudy ceilings, now in fashion, which, composed as they are of little rounds, squares, hexagons, and ovals, excite no other idea than that of a dessert upon the plates of which are dished out bad copies of indifferent antiques". By this unguarded language he obviously refers to the Adams and their decorators, Angelica Kauffmann, Zucchi, and the whole tribe.

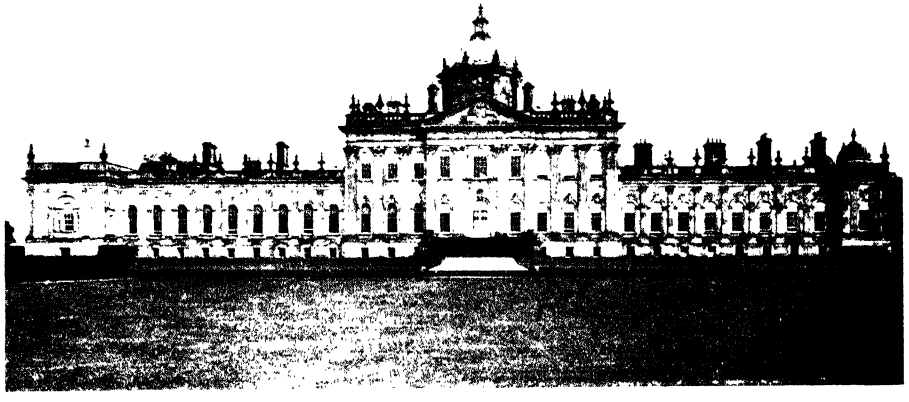
In fine, the brothers mean to strike an intermediate note between rigid adherence to rule, in so far as it results in pedantry, and extravagantly heterodox conduct in architecture. While not for a moment vindicating licentiousness of design, they do not exclude the whimsical and the bizarre. As an example of this hazardous approach to the rococo we have what they describe as "the flowing rainceau", that motif of acanthus foliage, flowing indeed and scrolling in a perpetual theme around their friezes and lending a graceful relief and beauty to the otherwise strictly classical detail of their apartments. The Adams assimilated the spirit of revived antiquity, while breaking with the Palladians' dead tradition of the Orders, that allowed no deviation into the realms of inventiveness and, so they opined, of creative ability. They actually professed to believe both "in Palladio and the Ancients", a tenet they are very careful to express, yet they held an even course between the Palladians and the extremists of the baroque and rococo schools, who had so much shocked them—with some reason—in France and on the continent. They had no sympathy with the uncoordinated flamboyance of the Régence architects like Meissonier, the Mansarts, and their designers and decorators, like Le Roux and Andran. Mr. Avray Tipping has suggested that both the Burlingtonians and the Adams were torn between a scholastic desire for reserve in construction and an innate tendency towards exuberance in decoration, which led to the employment of the rococo stuccoists like Artari and Bagutti by the one party and the arabesque artists like Rose and Zucchi by the other. It is true enough that both parties shared the same tendency to gay and fanciful decoration, but there was a distinct divergency in their architectural formulae, wherein the former were pledged to an uncompromising reserve and stasis, but the latter sought to express lightness and above all "movement". It is probable that the Adams were secretly often exercised how to steer their "movement" between the Scylla of Palladianism and the Charybdis of the baroque.

Notwithstanding a marked deviation from their predecessors' principles, the Adams unconsciously owed a good deal to the example of Lord Burlington, who actually went beyond academism in his return to the Roman tradition, thus anticipating to some extent Robert's return to the classical generally. Burlington with his novel use of semi-circular and polygonal forms introduced a greater flexibility and variety into planning than Jones and Webb had known. This can best be appreciated by studying the plan in Burlington's own hand of his Kirby Hall in Yorkshire. John Carr of York was the young clerk of the works who actually executed the building under the earl's supervision. Now, as we shall see, Adam

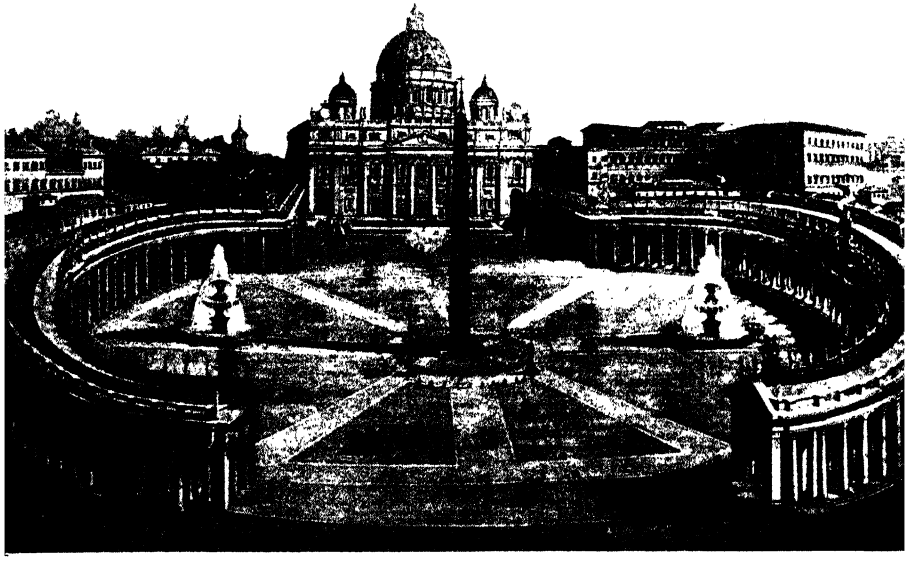


78 Part of a ceiling at Hatchlands, Surrey (1759). (*Country Life* photograph.)

79 The Hall, treated in the Doric style, at Lansdowne House, London (1761)



80 Castle Howard, Yorkshire, built by Sir John Vanbrugh after 1702



81 St. Peter's and Bernini's colonnade, Rome, "a striking instance" of "movement"

came into close contact with Carr at Harewood, where he was obliged to adopt in all essentials Carr's own plans. Is it too much to suppose that Carr here was chiefly responsible for forming the link between the two architects and so the two greatest English schools of the eighteenth century? We find that after Harewood and down to his last country house at Newliston Adam developed to a pronounced extent the apsidal forms that so distinguished the planning of Burlington and which had evidently impressed themselves, because of their originality, upon Burlington's clerk of the works. Carr began his career as an avowed Palladian, and was indeed slow to discard the principles imbibed in his youth. Apart from his initiation into architecture under the Vitruvius Britannicus at Kirby Hall, Carr will have been familiar with the earl's Assembly Rooms at York, which are distinguished above all for these revived Roman features.

There are yet other Adam features of design that derive from the same source. We have already referred to Lord Burlington's wide use of the vault, of coffered domes and semi-domes at Chiswick House. Robert Adam copied these on innumerable occasions, as we shall see, at Kedleston, Osterley, Syon, and Kenwood. There is, too, the famous Venetian window in alabaster in the drawing-room at Kedleston. There are those other Venetian windows in the angle towers of the Register House in Edinburgh (129), clearly reproduced from Colen Campbell's elevations for Wanstead and Burlington House; and again that sequence of Venetian windows, each under a relieving arch and a straight entablature, in Adam's design for the wings at Stowe, and in the semi-circular orangery at Osterley. In the repetitive Stowe windows and in the Osterley orangery Robert Adam unconsciously follows further down the Palladian path than was ever trod by the Burlingtonians, for whereas Palladio reproduced a sequence of Venetian openings upon the Basilica at Vicenza, the Burlingtonians never executed more than one at a time.

We may suppose, then, that Robert Adam quite consciously derived his Venetian windows from Burlington's Chiswick House, Kent's Houghton, or Campbell's several elevations. His interest in this peculiarly Palladian feature was very marked, and in the *Ruins* he expressly postulates that the Palladians found its prototype in the arch over the two centre columns of the porticus of the Vestibulum of Diocletian's palace at Spalatro.

# VI

## ADAM'S CLASSIC ACHIEVEMENTS

In our first chapter we saw how the later Palladians, like Vardy, Ware, Miller, and Taylor, could build in the 1750s still in the manner propounded by Lord Burlington and his school There were, moreover, other notable Palladians, even more contemporary with and only slightly older than Robert Adam, namely Carr, Paine, Lancelot Brown, and Keene—whose houses Adam was to alter and extend in the following decade.

There were, besides, important buildings begun by men of a yet older generation and rival school to the Burlingtonian—Wren, Vanbrugh, Gibbs, and Leoni, the pseudo-baroquists—which Adam was called upon to enlarge and "improve". It is extraordinary how out of some score of country houses (and the majority of his great surviving buildings are country houses) with which Robert Adam's name is associated, only five were entirely constructed by him from the foundations up. The explanation is that by the time of Robert's return from Italy the great spate of country-house building coincident with the ascendancy of the Whig families was, if anything, on the wane; that soon after his return his reputation became so exalted, his decorative style so novel, that noble proprietors tumbled over themselves to solicit his services in order that he might bring up to date their fathers' palaces, which they supposed to be already outmoded.

Few are the number of Robert Adam's buildings of any sort left to us entire from which we may judge his abilities as a creative architect. Many of his better known houses were mutilated in the mid-nineteenth century, like Harewood and Bowood by Sir Charles Barry and Compton Verney by John Gibson; or, in our present century, like Luton Hoo, Brasted, and Single Speech Hamilton's house at Brighton. Others, like Lansdowne House, have entirely disappeared. We know too that several had suffered the initial interference to which all eighteenth-century architects, great and small, were subjected at the hands of clients. This was an age when every patrician was bitten with the mania for amateur architecture, as the result of Lord Burlington's example and encouragement, the pursuit of culture, and the fast accumulating wealth of landed estates. General Robert Clerk, the friend of Robert Adam, gives voice to this irksome habit in a letter to Lord Shelburne in 1765. "It is seldom anybody gives him opportunity", he writes, "to think upon a house at leisure and do what he pleases without directions and caprices, which often spoil the whole." Robert himself frequently makes complaints of this sort of interference, and in a letter to Sir Edward Knatchbull specially thanks his patron for having given him a free hand at Mersham-le-Hatch as well

as for so conscientiously paying him his fees. "I wish many other of my Employers were possessed of the same Principles of Justice and Honour" is his grateful tribute on this too rare occasion.

Nearly all of Robert Adam's largest country houses had been begun either by predecessors or contemporaries. This fact has given rise to the constantly mistaken notion that he was really a decorator rather than an architect. It is true that Adam was the first person to give the eighteenth century a consistent decorative style, which to his detriment was reproduced *ad nauseam* by unimaginative imitators or servile copyists. For this declension the brothers themselves were no doubt largely responsible by introducing towards the end of their careers through mass manufacture cheap materials and compositions that lent themselves to facile reproduction. They were notably guilty of applying these patent substances to their own town house interiors, particularly of the Adelphi terraces, and their later speculative streets and crescents in the Marylebone district of London. But to judge the magnificent decoration of which Robert was capable we fortunately have the princely interiors still surviving at Harewood, Kedleston, Newby, and Syon of a sort that even Wren had not excelled. They are the monuments to his fame. On the other hand, it is abundantly clear that Robert long cherished an ambition to leave behind some great public edifice of monumental exterior. The great tragedy of his life was that, unlike Wren, this ambition, for which he had all the potential qualifications, was on account of a succession of vicissitudes never to be realised.

We come across repeated references and hints in Robert's designs and correspondence to his persistent search for opportunities of utter self-expression. But opportunities, which usually come to an architect from adventitious sources, either did not manifest themselves or just eluded the grasp of Robert Adam. Amongst his early designs done at Rome are several monumental castles in the air (35), or, rather, upon paper, in the shape of ambitious schemes for royal residences, new Houses of Parliament, and Law Courts worthy of a great kingdom. In the Spalatro volume we have remarked upon his cunning comparison between the happy circumstances of the reigns of George III and Diocletian and his oblique allusion to similar opportunities under the British monarch to those of which signal advantage had been taken by the Roman emperor. In both reigns the material was ready to hand if the patron were only forthcoming. This hint is frequently on the tip of Adam's pen, and in the famous letter to Lord Kames the architect assumes the spokesmanship of the profession of which he is the leading exponent when he writes, "I flatter myself that the arts in general are in a progressive state in England." If the king were only to build a palace, he continues to claim, "in a magnificent and pure style of architecture, it will give a great push at once to the taste of this country: as it will not only furnish ideas for lesser buildings, but show effects both of external and internal composition which this country as yet is entirely ignorant of. If it is done meanly, or in bad taste, I should

apprehend the worst of consequences." But it was not to be done at all, and, as Robert was to learn well enough later on, he personally need not have hoped for encouragement or patronage from George III.

The ill-fated Adelphi project may have aspired to this ambition, but it certainly never attained it. In any case the gilt was taken off its factious gingerbread by the troubles that ensued with the City of London authorities. Fitzroy Square, Euston (126), as an entity, was never completed; nor was Charlotte Square in Edinburgh (127); but what remain of these abortive experiments, both undertaken during the last phase of his life, prove that Adam was concentrating once again upon exterior effects, as in his first phase, in contra-distinction to the interior decoration of his middle phase, the 1770s. The splendid Register House at Edinburgh (127) approximates most nearly to the monumental, although Robert Adam himself would probably never have placed it in a high category of building. The Cambridge (128) and the Edinburgh University schemes, both begun at the end of his life, gave promise of that architectural fulfilment on the grand scale to which he had always been aspiring. The first, after all, never came to anything; the second, incomplete at the time of his premature death, was deliberately mangled posthumously.

Of Adam's country houses, his earliest period up to 1770 witnessed the start if not always the completion of by far the greater number, the best known, and the most important. One of the curious factors of his country-house practice was that he frequently continued work upon individual buildings over prolonged periods and often at broken intervals. This was due to the large and varied commissions he was given at the beginning of his career and to the unlimited scope he allowed for continuous embellishment. Adam could always add a richer ceiling effect or an expensive suite of furniture to his several state rooms as and when his clients could afford the extra financial outlay required. Unlike most artists, he was gifted with an acute business sense, so that his clients were often prevailed upon to spend more than one fortune upon his houses.

As for the town houses authentically attributed to Robert Adam's authorship, they were, as we would expect, almost entirely his own and owe nothing to previous architects. Necessarily few of them survive, owing to the preposterously high land values in modern London and our larger provincial towns and the consequent depredations made upon them of late years, first by the English themselves, and secondly, in lesser measure, by the Germans.

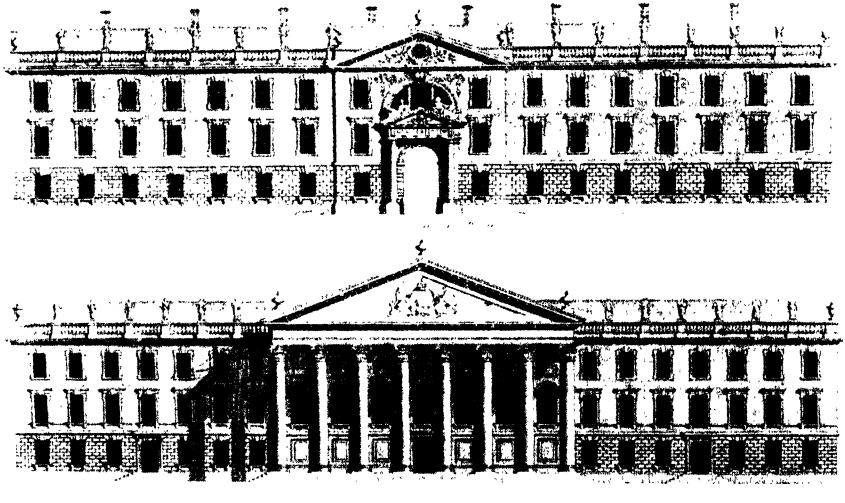
They were, moreover, nearly all built throughout his middle period. This was due not so much to Adam shifting his interests from country to town architecture as to the exigencies of the times. By the 1770s the ever-increasing wealth of England induced her aristocracy to demand town residences in addition to country palaces. We have it on the authority of an observant foreign visitor, Madame du Boccage, that in George II's reign London town houses of the nobility and gentry were small and insignificant compared with those in Paris. "About a dozen

82 Croome Court, Worcestershire: the Garden Room, *circa* 1766

83 Croome Court, Worcestershire: the Doric Orangery (after 1760)

84 Harewood House, Yorkshire: the North Elevation as designed by John Carr, from *Vitruvius Britannicus*, Vol. V

85 Mersham-le-Hatch, Kent: the North Elevation (1762–72)



86 King's College, Cambridge: James Gibbs's elevation (*above*) of the east side of his west quadrangular block, as executed, and (*below*) of the proposed south block, not executed (*circa* 1728)

buildings," she computes, "which are here called palaces, but at Paris would pass only for large houses, and which men of fortune amongst us would find many faults with, are highly esteemed in London." The decade coincided above all with Robert's concentration upon interior treatment, where he achieved an absolute unity by designing fitments, ornaments of every description, and furniture for his apartments. But as the decade drew to a close the effects of the American War upon art patronage were seriously felt, and its end marked, indeed, the climax of his greatest decorative period.

Adam's boldest attempts at monumental public building came at the very close of his career, with what degree of unfulfilled success we shall endeavour to determine.

## PART I. *The Early Period 1758–1770—Country Houses*

The tendency was for the buildings of Robert Adam's early period to display exteriors composed of boldly projecting masses and supported by gigantic orders in the Roman style. This is well exemplified in the great porticos at Bowood and Nostell and in the heavy window surrounds with their entablatures and pulvinated friezes. His interiors of this period are likewise divided into rather large units, embracing bold naturalistic motifs, as in the staterooms at Hatchlands, Shardeloes, and Croome. Yet notwithstanding the natural tendency of most young architects to follow unconsciously the conventions of the present, the earliest works of Robert Adam, however immature, show an almost deliberate break with the accepted style of his contemporaries, thus making the date 1758 a landmark in English architectural history.

### *Hatchlands*

Of the earlier houses of any size with which Robert Adam's name has been associated, Hatchlands in Surrey is the first known. The red brick shell had already been built for Admiral Edward Boscawen, the hero of the Siege of Louisburg and the husband of that inimitable letter-writer Fanny Boscawen. Mr. Bolton has attributed the shell to Thomas Ripley on the sole ground that, like the Admiralty (by that Burlingtonian architect), of which Boscawen was a Lord Commissioner, and which Robert was called upon about this time to disguise with a screen, it was dull work. But actually there is no circumstantial evidence of Ripley's authorship whatever. Robert worked here in 1759, and the admiral after a bare two years' enjoyment of his new possession died suddenly in the house, to everyone's distress.

The interior is chiefly interesting for a number of Adam's very earliest plaster ceilings, still in that bold relief which he was quick to modify later, but here already unmistakably Adamatic. The ceiling of the stair well is divided into compartments surrounding a central irregular octagon, each section containing scrolls of naturalistic foliage and deep bosses alternately,

in a manner decidedly French and verging upon the rococo. The dining-room ceiling (78) repeats the same scroll device (Adam's favourite "flowing rainçeau") over the cornice; but at the four corners the introduction of a winged male figure, standing on a shell and holding by their tails two dolphins, is almost Venetian in derivation and puts us in mind of those early dolphin sofas designed by Adam for the drawing-room at Kedleston. The statuary marble chimneypiece in this room is supported by two large caryatides of draped female figures,[1] practically in the round, and is the first of a type favoured by Adam in his early days and repeated by him in the dining-room at Harewood and the gallery at Croome. The library ceiling is adorned with highly naturalistic marine trophies in compliment to the admiral, with merfolk and with Father Neptune complete with trident. It is noteworthy that Horace Walpole in 1764 pronounced the chimneypieces and the ceilings at Hatchlands to be "uncommonly beautiful".

### *Shardeloes*

Shardeloes, near Amersham, though preserving the core of a very much older house, was rebuilt in 1758 by Stiff Leadbetter (architect of Nuneham Courtenay in Oxfordshire) and certainly decorated by Adam, who one year later began upon the sketches for his contribution, which he completed in 1761. There exists at Shardeloes a letter written by Leadbetter to his patron, Mr. William Drake, which explains how the collaboration was proceeding. It is dated and addressed "February 13. 1761. London", and runs as follows: "Hon$^{d}$ Sir, Agreeable to your order I deliver'd the Plans of your best Rooms to Mr. Adams about the middle of last Month; and as soon as he has made Designs for the Cielings etc. (which you approve) I will immediately send as many Plasterers as can be employed." The designs for the interior of Shardeloes show an almost thorough break with the past, even if the execution reveals the origination rather than the fulfilment of the Adam theories of decoration which the brothers, after ten years' experience, were to expound in the *Works*. There are still signs of heavy ornamentation of early Georgian character in the pronounced curves and scrolls and other naturalistic expressions upon doorhead and fire-jamb; but in the panels of the dining-room walls we come across for the first time tentative plaster designs in the grotesque, reproduced by Robert from his Cinquecento studies and as revolutionary in decoration as anything witnessed by the last half century in England.

At Shardeloes, too, greater use was made of materials of good quality than in Adam's very latest buildings. As yet, fortunately, those *ersatz* compositions which were to bring the Adam style into some discredit had not been patented. Much profuse wood-carving upon skirtings, dadoes, and doors, all of the very finest grained mahogany and supplied by Messrs.

[1] These caryatides are taken from paintings of Daniel da Volterra in the Church of the Trinità dei Monti, at Rome.

Allen and Lawrance, enriches the interiors of Shardeloes. The apartments have, up to date, been hardly altered since they were finished, and the Drake family for whom the house was built are luckily still in ownership. The original tints of walls and ceilings, if slightly subdued by time, are well preserved.

In the hall we have the first of many interiors in the Doric order which Robert Adam liked to reserve for this introductory chamber. The doorway entablatures, in particular, strike a note of martial strength peculiar to this essentially Roman order. The robust fire-jambs, with their sinewy console scrolls suggesting clenched forearms of giant captains-at-war, convey the same massive quality and are of Inigo Jones severity. Here we glimpse a reflection of that Hogarthian simplicity of life led in the reigns of the first two Georges, for there is as yet no indication of the later Zoffanyish elegance of manners. The ceiling is of similar character, and the bay wreathed circles and lambent rosettes are separated into compartments. The central octagon of the ceiling is slightly coved, as though to give a domed effect. The dining-room ceiling, however, is of far more delicate design, encircled with a large oval of bound reeds, repeatedly criss-crossed with the thrysus and ivy, indicating the bacchic use of this apartment. The sideboard and its independent vases upon plinths are part of the decorative scheme, and little inferior to those at Kedleston. The drawing-room [1] frieze is directly inspired by that of the Sun Temple at Palmyra, delineated in Robert Wood's book, to which Adam paid high tribute, and is one of the comparatively rare instances of Greek influence upon his interior detail.

Leadbetter's exterior of Shardeloes is interesting in demonstrating the attempt of a minor architect at perpetuating a moribund style, shortly to be exterminated by the very man who was decorating the interior. It clearly belongs to the immediate pre-Adam era, and the effect of it is unimaginative, squat, and heavy.

The vast entrance portico of beautiful fluted Corinthian columns rests on no podium. As seen from a distance it loses its purpose, owing to the sharp fall of the ground delusively thrusting it back against the building, the grandeur of which it is meant to accentuate. The other façades are really extremely simple, for there are no orders. A straight stone balustrade forms a severe skyline over comfortably pedimented or architraved windows in the distinctly Palladian manner.

### *Harewood House*

Although Robert Adam's connection with Harewood House dates from 1759, he did not complete his work there until ten years later. Harewood is the first of his country houses on the palatial scale. During the course of its erection and afterwards it provoked curiosity and admira-

[1] John Linnell's bill for £32 10*s*. exists for "Wood, getting out and carving 5 Cornices with festoons, by drawing, and gilding the same in parts in Burnish Gold, for the Drawing Room."

tion, as we gather from the number of descriptive accounts of it given in the journals of northern travellers, like the local John Jewell, the anonymous author of a *Tour to the Western Highlands*, the diarist Joseph Farington, the Reverend Richard Warner, and even the Reverend John Wesley. Its wider international reputation is reflected in Josiah Wedgwood figuring it upon an ice-pail which he supplied for Catherine the Great only three years after it was built.

The story of its exact origin has been obscured by the illustrations in the fifth volume of *Vitruvius Britannicus* (84), which attributes its elevations as well as plan to John Carr of York and only its interior decoration to Robert Adam. "The apartments", it says, are "from designs by Mr. Adam." That Carr had designed and built Harewood village in its entirety no one will dispute. Yet in the Soane Museum there are plans and elevations by Robert Adam of the house as it was carried out, subject only to minor modifications, and those probably done at the express dictates of its owner, who was throughout difficult to please. These elevations of Adam, however, differ substantially from those illustrated in *Vitruvius Britannicus* and attributed to Carr.

John Carr was five years older than Robert Adam and came of a local family of hereditary masons. His mother's maiden name was Rose Lascelles, so that it is possible he was distantly connected with the fashionable and rich Mr. Edwin Lascelles, whose father, sprung from Northallerton, had amassed a vast fortune as a Collector of Customs at Barbadoes and as a director of the East India Company. Nothing would be more natural than that the affluent son should choose a Yorkshire kinsman to provide for him a country palace to suit his dynastic requirements.

The probability is that Carr, who represented the older established traditions and had been Lord Burlington's pupil at Kirby Hall near Ouseburn, was enlisted before Lascelles had even heard of Robert Adam's name; that soon afterwards Adam's novel services were engaged, and Carr relegated to second fiddle. At the same time Carr, under Adam's direction, carried out on the spot the scheme which he himself had adumbrated first of all, but which Adam subsequently altered without altogether rejecting. Had Carr's plans been entirely discarded Lascelles would have been involved in even higher costs than those he had to bear throughout. Thus Robert Adam found that he was expected to adapt his planning and to some extent his designs to those already supplied by one who had anticipated his advent upon the architectural field. His elevations, though necessarily controlled by Carr's planning, were his own, and so were the dispositions and decoration of the interiors. In spite of these alterations there is no evidence that collaboration did not proceed smoothly and happily—surely a tribute to the younger man's tact and the elder's forebearance. On the contrary Carr generously gave credit for all the interior work to Adam, which undoubtedly was the case.

On 23rd March, 1759, Mr. Edwin Lascelles laid the first stone of his new country palace, and on the 23rd of the following month Robert Adam

signed and dated a sketch plan and elevation for the church at Harewood. We may therefore suppose that at this early stage Adam was at work on the spot and that his compromise elevations of the house itself were already taking shape. In looking at the front of Harewood to-day it is difficult to shield from our eyes the superimpositions of Sir Charles Barry and to recapture the Adam elevations underneath; but they are there clearly enough for those with a little trained imagination to detect. A glance at Carr's illustration of the north or entrance front, with its widely spread portico, in the *Vitruvius Britannicus* pages is enough to reveal an elevation far more old-fashioned even than that of Shardeloes. Robert Adam's altered elevation of this same north front abolished the spread portico, narrowed the whole projecting central feature, without, however, altering the planning, and made a tremendous academic advance upon Carr's design.

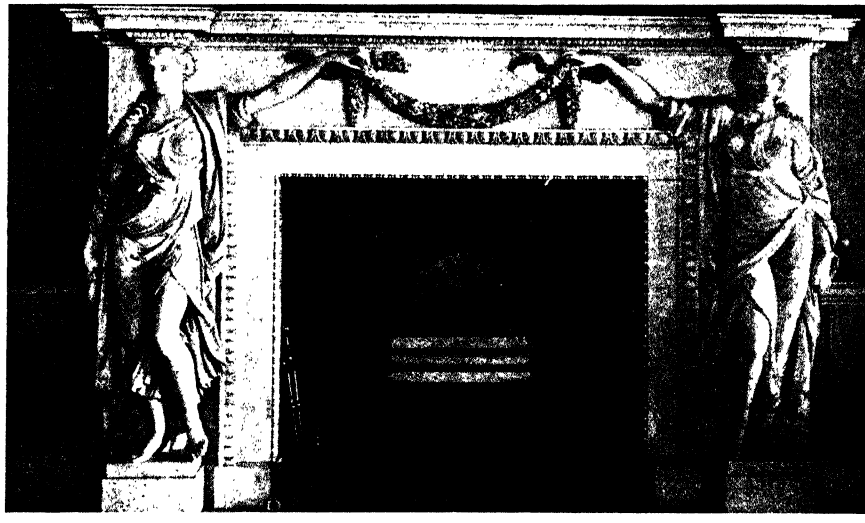
All Adam's drawings for his interiors at Harewood (and a greater variety of alternatives survive than for any other of his houses, thus giving fairly clear evidence of his employer's repeated interferences) are dated 1765. Lascelles, who had been travelling on the continent, returned in August of this year, and the drawings were presumably done that autumn. A comparison of them with the finished subjects themselves reveals how exactly and faithfully Adam's designs were carried out to the smallest detail. Sir Charles Barry, with no historic and certainly no artistic regard for Carr's and Adam's original work, added an extensive bedroom floor to the two pavilion wings, even altering the planning arrangements of parts of the Georgian interiors. He invested the south front with an alien Italianate character, added the top-heavy balustrading so as to conceal the hipped roof of the eighteenth-century house, and was responsible for the grand terraces. His several interior alterations to Adam's decorative apartments were still less happy.

The supposed completion of the greater part of Adam's decorative work at Harewood is marked by the date 1767 in the entrance hall. Here the order is Doric again, only the engaged columns (an unusual feature with Adam) being fluted and their capitals enriched in just that manner against which he warned rash innovators in his epistle to Lord Kames. The ceiling design of this room is, however, apart from the thick supporting sections, far too delicate and finical for this order. The music room retains the original carpet, specially designed to reflect the ceiling pattern, the medallions of which are by Angelica Kauffmann. Even the ceiling spandrels are repeated in this sumptuous carpet. The inset landscape panels by Zucchi are beautifully framed; likewise the fine Hoppner over the chimneypiece, but more elaborately, according to Adam's most delicate linear manner. The remaining wall spaces of this room are panelled in plaster grotesques of the Shardeloes type. The dining-room has been altered and its present chimneypiece, brought from the Long Gallery, is adorned by swathed carytides holding out draperies, as upon the early Hatchlands and Croome fireplaces. We are told that Locatelli executed

one of the Harewood chimneypieces and that Nollekens may have been the sculptor of another. The great gallery is one of Adam's acknowledged interior masterpieces, although the two ponderous fireplaces now installed here are Barry's irrelevant insertions. The ceiling was executed by Joseph Rose from an Adam drawing, dated 1769, and definitely belongs to the architect's later development. The curtain boxes and the illusory draped pelmets, really of wood cunningly painted, are of Chippendale's manufacture to Adam's design. The magnificent pier glasses over console tables, with lion legs still slightly cabriole, only have their equal in those of the gallery at Corsham. The picture frames and the suite of chairs are likewise of the very highest Adam workmanship.

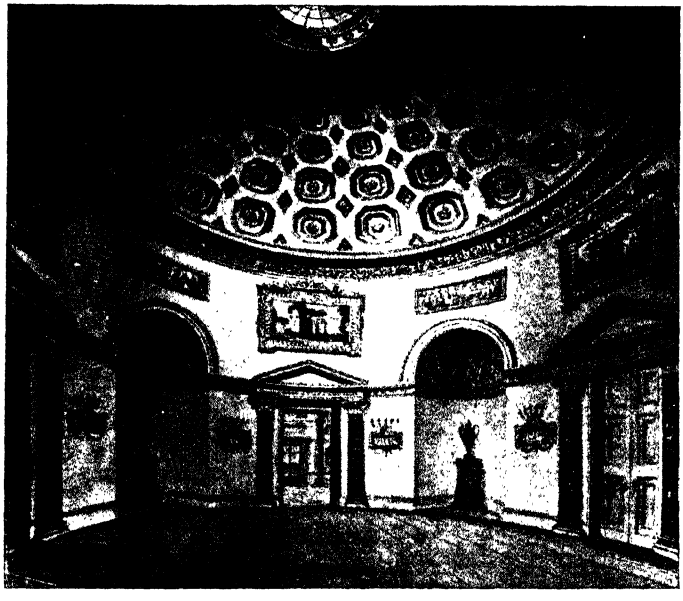
*Croome Court*

The origin of Croome Court in Worcestershire has for long perplexed the experts. Its planning and elevations rightly belong to the George II style, whereas the greater part of the interior is known to have been carried out by Adam in the very early stage of his career. Mr. Bolton somewhat rashly attributed the plan and design to Sanderson Miller for the simple reason that Croome closely resembles Hagley in the same county and was built about the same time. To substantiate this theory he refers to Miller's correspondence with the 6th Earl of Coventry, who had certainly consulted Miller before and while the building of Croome was in progress. He quotes a letter from Coventry (then Lord Deerhurst) written in February 1750 to Miller about a "proposed lodge" as though Miller had designed it, and another letter of December 1752 as conclusive evidence. In the last letter Lord Coventry wrote "whatever merits it [Croome] may in future time boast it will be ungrateful not to acknowledge you the primary author". But in 1756 Lord Coventry also wrote to Miller, "Croomb is a good deal altered since you saw it, but I fear will never deserve the encomiums you have so plentifully given it." Is it very probable, we may well ask, that Miller, a modest enough man, would have lavished encomiums upon his own handiwork? We must remember that Miller was a neighbouring squire and landowner at Radway in Warwickshire, on the best of terms with the county families, including the Lyttletons and Coventrys, and as an acknowledged expert on architectural principals would almost undoubtedly have been consulted by his friend, Deerhurst, upon an undertaking so close to his own interests. On the other hand, we have no proof that the fascinating Gothic church at Croome is not the work of Miller and the sham Dunstall Castle on the estate certainly does bear a distinct relationship to his Hagley ruin. Nevertheless neither Volume V of the *Vitruvius Britannicus* nor Humphrey Repton supports Mr. Bolton's assumption as regards the house. Both these authorities, on the contrary, attribute the authorship of Croome Court to Lancelot Brown. Miss Dorothy Stroud, moreover, sees in it a near resemblance to Claremont and even Redgrave in Suffolk, two country houses indisputedly by Brown.

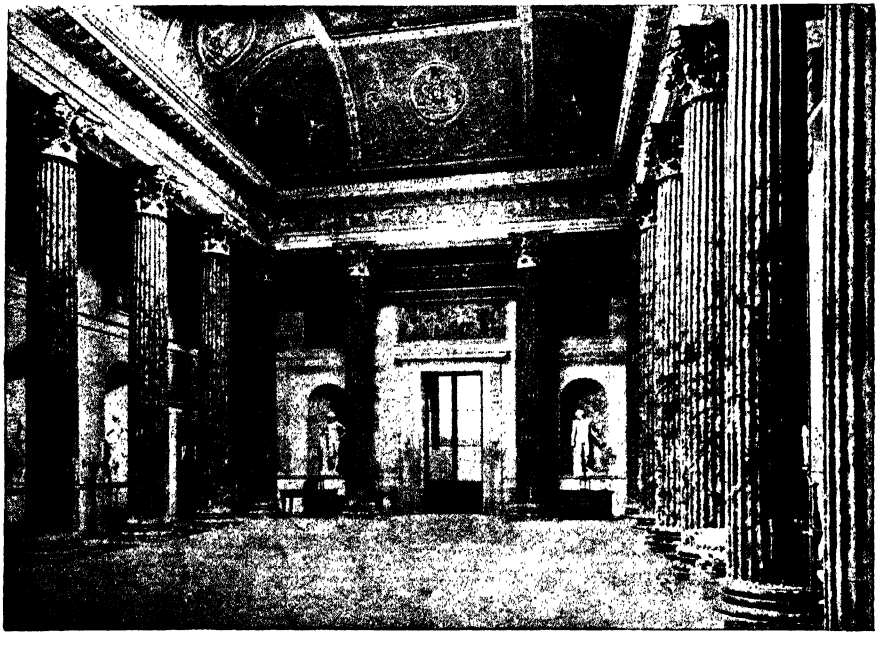


87 Croome Court: the Gallery fireplace, of a very early Adam type (*circa* 1760)

88 Croome Court, Worcestershire: the Gallery. The furniture almost certainly designed by Adam



89 Kedleston, Derbyshire: the Saloon, after a sketch by J. C. Buckler



90 Kedleston, Derbyshire: the Hall, designed by Adam (1760) to correspond with the Roman *atrium*. The monoliths are of Derbyshire alabaster

In any case, Croome, a rectangular block with four square towers in Kent's Horseguards manner, was begun in 1751 for the 6th Earl of Coventry. This was just after his first marriage with the beautiful Maria Gunning, who only survived nine years and died as the result of clogged pores from too much make-up. Mrs. Delany, writing of this tragedy, remarks, "Dr. Taylor says that the white she made use of for her face and neck was rank poison."

That Adam's interest in Croome practically spanned his whole working career is shown by the earliest surviving drawing, dated 1760, and the latest for a gateway, in 1791. The hall, saloon, and gallery here occupy the same dispositions as at the prototype, Hagley. How far Brown had proceeded with the interior by 1760 is a matter for speculation. What were his feelings when Adam was called upon to supersede him, we do not know. Certainly there are no records that Brown was affronted, and in later years he collaborated in laying out the grounds of Compton Verney and Bowood while the other was engaged upon the mansions. As to the hall at Croome (with the possible exception of the Doric screen), the rococo chimneypiece, the ceiling device of dove and clouds, and the drapery swags of the walls proclaim pre-Adam decoration. The saloon likewise, with its coved ceiling and flat of three panels and clumsy baroque picture frames, must belong to the reign of George II. But it is the gallery (88) where we look for and find another good example of the Adam style. It occupies the whole length of the west wing. Its east wall, facing the windows and the great bay, contains a central chimneypiece with sculptured female figures (as at Shardeloes and Harewood) and six alcoves filled with figures from the antique. The remaining wall spaces are decorated with panelled sketches in grisaille for arabesques of the Shardeloes dining-room kind, but the interesting fact is that only on the fireplace side have these arabesques been executed in stucco. They and other instances of incompletion impart a slightly stage-scenery effect to the gallery, as though the interior was meant to be finished subsequently and had then been overlooked. The painted wooden curtain boxes survive; so do the original curtains, the typical Adam pierglasses over straight-legged tables, the suite of Adam settees, chairs, and tapering standards, all in the strictly classical manner. Unfortunately no precise date can be attached to these furnishings. The ceiling is extremely effective, with its sunk octagonal panels of most incisive mouldings, and shows the distinct influence of the Villa Madama.

The library is lined with tawny mahogany bookcases with anthemion cresting, simpler than those at Nostell. The ceiling is of an early Adam type. The tapestry-room formerly contained one of the famous Boucher-Neilson sets of Gobelins, which was sold several years ago for £50,000. The ceiling of this room is in comparatively low relief. All the ceiling designs of the house date from 1760 to 1763.

Not the least interesting Adam buildings are in the grounds. The beautiful Doric orangery (83) closely resembles the one at Osterley.

The basket of flowers in the pediment, in very naturalistic high relief, is exquisitely carved in stone and was inspired by the frieze of the Palmyra temple illustrated in Stuart and Revett's book. The entrance gateway is similar to a design by Adam for one at Harewood and is derived from the gateway at Palmyra. The round panorama and the garden room are among the most delightful examples of Adam's temple architecture in existence.

### *Compton Verney*

At Compton Verney in Warwickshire Robert Adam was working, off and on, between 1760 and 1765, and this house affords a rare instance of the architect, or indeed of any major eighteenth-century architect, compromising with the dictates of his own genius in order to conform with the style of an older building. What Adam spared at Compton Verney alone speaks of his unbounded admiration for Vanbrugh. We should never guess that the extensions to the two east wings (94) were Adam's work were it not for a design by him, signed and dated 1760 and until lately preserved in the house. Adam has, in fact, made absolutely no attempt outside to be original. Instead he carried on the bold, massive elevations, with their gigantic window surrounds, semi-circular heads, and emphatic keystones of essential Vanbrughesque quality. Only in his connecting portico or loggia do we sense a familiar Adam touch, in spite of the background wall having been altered by John Gibson in 1855. The detached Adam orangery and the beautiful bridge, guarded by squatting sphinzes in lead over Brown's artificial lake, are more easily identifiable.

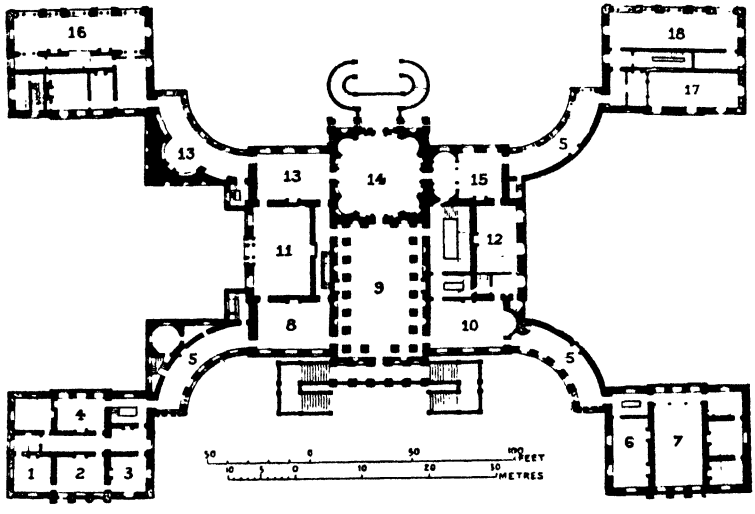
Where Robert Adam worked upon the inside of the house—and several of his rooms have unfortunately disappeared altogether—we find no compromise with the baroque at all. This would have involved an extreme length to which, out of respect for no great artist, could he bring himself to go. On the contrary he decorated the great hall in his typically classical manner, as the large and exquisitely decorated inset frames to the landscape scenes reveal. But here again Gibson's Victorian hand was laid upon the ceiling, and the deep fish-scale coves, themselves dignified and pleasingly restrained, are indicative of the style of his master, Charles Barry.

### *Kedleston Hall*

Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire (93) belongs chronologically to the first decade of George III's reign almost inclusively. Sir Nathaniel Curzon, later created Lord Scarsdale, was a man of culture and erudition, a patron of the arts and enough of an archaeologist to justify his dabbling in building projects according to the approved versions of the antique. His sense of the fitting for a man of taste and a prominent member of the aristocracy induced him to pull down the Queen Anne residence at Kedleston that had satisfied his forebears and to embark upon a palace that would rival in magnificence the grandest enjoyed by his contemporaries. In this respect he was eminently successful. Like Mr. Edwin Lascelles, he engaged a prominent north-country architect of even superior stature to

John Carr, namely James Paine, who in his *Noblemens' Houses* of 1783 tells us that he had built the whole of the north front in 1761, having adopted the scheme of Matthew Brettingham for "four pavilions or wings" and planned the "central block and connecting corridors".

There is absolutely no reason to dispute the truth of this statement by Paine, who illustrates his design of the north front in his book. Indeed, the exterior of the central block betrays a certain heaviness of composition




Plan of Kedleston

1. Bedchamber
2. Lady Scarsdale's Library
3. Dressing-Room
4. Lord Scarsdale's Dressing-Room
5. Corridors
6. Laundry
7. Kitchen
8. Music-Room
9. Hall
10. Dining-Room
11. Drawing-Room
12. Bedchamber
13. Libraries
14. Saloon
15. Ante-Rooms
16. Music Gallery
17. Chapel
18. Greenhouse

quite uncharacteristic of Robert Adam. Instead it bears the strongest similarity to those other central blocks of Paine at Thorndon and Worksop, both built about this time, both emphatically Burlingtonian still, and the latter actually dating just after the Kedleston elevation. Here we have a formidable hexastyle portico with a sharp pediment, as at Thorndon. "The front," remarked Horace Walpole, after a visit to Kedleston in 1768, "is heavy, there being no windows, but niches behind the columns." We may safely conclude that Paine carried out the whole of the north front—

only the roundel reliefs under the portico having been added by Adam, as the Soane drawings testify—even going so far as to decorate the insides of his "connecting corridors", where the friezes and cornices of egg and tongue moulding as well as the overdoors are integrally early Georgian in character. But since Paine did not advance beyond this point we can only surmise that Lord Scarsdale lost faith in his capabilities or, more probably, succumbed to the prevailing rage for the fashionable Robert Adam, whom he induced to enter his service. In any case, by 1760 we know that Adam was already designing ceilings and carpets for the interior, and it would be interesting to have a first-hand account of the relations between the two leading architects during this delicate period of overlapping. Years later James Paine excused his dismissal by stating that he was so busy with other commissions in different parts of the country—which was true, but equally so of Adam—that he had begged to be excused from completing Kedleston. Thereafter, he relates, "the noble owner placed this great work in the hands of those able and ingenious artists, Messrs. Robert and James Adam". At least, this passage shows that Paine behaved handsomely, for on whatever terms he parted from Lord Scarsdale, he expressed no grudge at being superseded by a younger rival and remained on good terms with both brothers in spite of the Adelphi crash, in which he was to be financially involved.

So once again we have Robert Adam being called upon to complete work begun by another. He, of course, was to do far more than decorate the interior, stupendous as his achievement upon the state rooms proved to be. As we shall see, he considerably modified Paine's interior planning, and, what was more important, built the south front, having himself designed the two flanking wings thereto in fulfilment of the original Brettingham scheme. These were unfortunately never carried into effect. He furthermore built the beautiful bridge in the park, the boat house, the orange house, possibly the bath house, and likewise the entrance screen upon the main road with its "lovely iron gates" admired by Walpole. The south front is, quite apart from its exceptional beauty, interesting because Robert imputes to it his greatest success in signifying "movement". In making this vaunt in the Preface to the *Works* in 1773 Adam must thereby have been quite confident that Lord Scarsdale would recall him to complete what he had left unfinished. From his designs for the unexecuted wings it is clear that he had no intention of copying Brettingham's north wings or James Paine's connecting corridors. Without his wings the "movement" of the south front is far less convincing to our eyes than it was to Adam's strongly developed imagination. Even so Mr. Sitwell, that great lover of the baroque, is surprisingly indifferent to Robert's intentions, and in dismissing the south front as merely "coldly Roman", like "a triumphal arch [1] with a dome above it", he is surely unjust. We can see clearly enough how Adam meant to achieve startling effects in the contrasting convexity of the dome and the concavity of the

[1] On this very account Sir John Soane had warmly praised it.

perron below,[1] in the advance and recess of light and shadow, sharply defined and accentuated by those projecting columns, especially under a summer sky. The completion of the whole scheme by the additional concavity of the curved corridors and the convexities of the recurrent Venetian windows of the wings—we remember that in Adam's time all the sash-bars of the windows were gilded on the outside—would have resulted in a work of art of far-reaching importance in the European Renaissance. As it is, the south front of Kedleston by this unhappy deprivation just misses being the greatest building in the monumental manner that Adam ever created. What survives reminds us once again of that tragic fate which persistently denied to this most gifted artist the utter fulfilment of his signal potentialities.

In consequence, Robert Adam's genius must be assessed by his interior work at Kedleston, which in itself is of monumental quality and as such surpasses anything he was to produce in his succeeding periods. It is essential, first of all, that we do not approach it in that parsimonious, utilitarian spirit of Dr. Johnson, who avowedly disapproved of it because it implied an impudent flouting of his democratic beliefs and political prejudices. The great doctor, like most giants of philosophy, looked upon the arts as an economist computes a financial balance sheet, with a view to judging whether the outlay of so much human endeavour will be justified by its material benefits to a hungry population. He in fact was made indignant by the waste of physical and financial resources expended upon all ornamental architecture—"such as magnificent columns supporting a portico, or expensive pilasters supporting merely their own capitals". Kedleston shocked him profoundly because the building of it "consumes labour disproportionate to its utility". Of course it did. Of course the marble columns, the expensive pilasters of Kedleston were magnificently wasteful, unproductive, and useless. So, we must thank the Almighty, are Shakespeare's Sonnets, Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto, the Venus de Milo, and Wren's St. Paul's Cathedral. So are the arts in general. On the other hand there is no need for us, in our zeal for Kedleston as a work of art, to go to the opposite extreme, like Mr. William Bray, who in 1777, having pronounced "the apartments elegant", somewhat extravagantly added that they were "at the same time useful, a circumstance not always to be met with in a great house". Horace Walpole, however, had, as we should expect, the grace to recognise that Kedleston must be judged as a work of art rather than as a domain. "Magnificently finished and furnished," he commented, and "all designed by Adam in the best taste, but"—and his humanity could not forbear what follows—"too expensive for his [Lord Scarsdale's] estate"; which is quite another matter and one that need not concern posterity. We may then judge Kedleston as a superlative expression of Adam's genius—only rivalled by Syon—at this early period of his career, when he was still allowing a

[1] It incidentally shows strong affinity to Carr's perron at Tabley, which was itself copied from Campbell's at Wanstead, built in 1720.

generous and copious use of natural materials—alabaster, stone, rich woods, and metals.

As at Nostell, Robert Adam provided here a lower entrance hall on ground floor level for use in wet weather and upon domestic occasions generally. Above it, on the piano nobile, is the great hall (90) for exclusive ceremonial use and not for every-day habitation, like all the other rooms of this floor in the centre block. William Bray tells us that in his time the family's private quarters were contained within only one of the wings. In his Spalatro volume Robert Adam gives detailed accounts of the conventional uses made by the ancient Romans of the several apartments in their palaces. The great hall corresponds with the *atrium*, which he says, was habitually "consecrated to their ancestors, and adorned with their images, their arms, their trophies, and other ensigns of their military and civil honours". In this stupendous room at Kedleston we have a total of twenty vast, fluted monoliths, in column or pilaster, of the Corinthian order, the material a green-veined Derbyshire alabaster. The scheme is only marred in our opinion by the three-foot narthex formed by the columns at the portico entrance that correspond with the pilasters at the saloon end, so as to detract from the symmetry of this most magnificent apartment. But lapses from uniformity—which Lord Burlington easily avoided in his Egyptian Hall at York—are curiously characteristic of Adam, who was over fond of breaking in upon his classical interiors with an introductory screen space, as though he meant the visitor to view after entry the proportions of an entire room and to make believe he really was standing outside it. The lighting of the hall is by three small oval lanterns in the flat of the roof. The coves of the ceiling are adorned with plaster arabesques carried out by Joseph Rose as late as the 1770s, possibly to the design of George Richardson, for the arabesques take a distinctly more modified form than was customary with Adam in the sixties. The ribs that frame the flat of the ceiling are almost as thick as those upon the ceiling of the hall at Syon. Around the walls we have panels in chiaroscuro depicting sacrificial and martial scenes. As a contrast to these emblems of war the twelve alcoves are filled with statuary casts in place of the ancestral figures of the ancients. Under the alcoves and against the walls are sarcophagus benches, designed by Adam, with plush seats. The vast open floor, which put Dr. Johnson in mind of a town hall, is composed of a central radiating starfish of S scroll tentacles in grey Hopton marble, quite independent of the ceiling design. The panels of the doors to the hall are made of a paper composition from Birmingham, according to William Bray, highly polished and painted in arabesques and cameos by Angelica Kauffmann. Over each doorway is placed a panel of plaster trophies by Rose. In the middle of the aisles and opposite one another are the two fireplaces, combinations of exquisite statuary marble in the chimneypieces, the work of either Spang or Wilton, and of bold plaster relief in the overmantels, undoubtedly the contribution of Rose. Within the fireplaces are the superb steel and brass gryphon grates which Mr.

Sitwell rightly describes as veritable masterpieces of the applied arts. "Adam has lavished", he says, "the utmost refinement of his skill upon the two fireplaces . . . but more so upon the grates of burnished brass and steel, the fenders and the fire-irons. These grates and fenders are real show pieces."

The *vestibulum*, Adam goes on to tell us in his Spalatro book, "was sacred to the Gods (Vesta)" and in the Roman palace was approached immediately from the atrium. Here at Kedleston we find that Adam in his antiquarian purism did away with Paine's intervening stairwell so as to revert to the strictly Roman arrangement by making entry straight into the circular saloon. In place of Paine's stairwell he contrived his two staircases on either side of the aisles, or *alae*, of the atrium, within the two narrow passages, or *androne*s, lighted from the roof and so called because they prevented the noise of the waiting slaves, *atrienses*, from reaching the state apartments. Thus the west and east passages bounding the hall contain the main staircase and a narrower subsidiary stair respectively.

The saloon (89) ranks amongst the most successful of all Robert Adam's staterooms. In conjunction with the hall it makes the Kedleston disposition one of the most monumental schemes of apartments evolved in the vast gamut of eighteenth-century architecture. The whole army of Robert Adam's collaborators seem to have been severally employed at Kedleston, for nothing and no one were spared in making of it one concentrated work of art. The saloon proportions are more correct than those of Borra's oval saloon at Stowe. The coffered dome has its lacunae and rosettes pricked out in gold. William Hamilton was employed to paint the framed ruin scenes, Biagio Rebecca to do the alternating chiaroscuro panels. For each exedra Robert designed two curved rout seats on either side of a cast-iron altar stove, part of a hot air system invented by himself. The grey pilasters of the doorways are of polished scagliola, the wings of the doors under pedimented heads curved to take the shape of the rotunda. Tremendous trouble was taken over every detail, whether the stucco tablets of the candelabra, polished to look like marble, or the chased door handles fashioned into rosettes, all in accordance with the architect's minutest sketches.

In Horace Walpole's opinion the great parlour, or dining-room, was in the best taste of all the apartments. The ceiling retains its original colours: a ground of biscuit yellow, the flat ribs of blue, the low reliefs in white. The painted rectangular panels and roundels of mythological scenes are by Zucchi. The walls enclose romantic landscapes by Zuccarelli, Snyders, Claude, Romanelli, within inset panels of Adam's simplest design. Between the windows hang two pier glasses over classical tables. The chimneypiece of statuary marble displays two sculptured terminal figures—a reversion to the young Adam's favourite device—and a central plaque by Spang. But the outstanding feature of the room is the exedra with its most intricate semi-dome, specially disposed so as to present the table silver to most advantage. The furniture of this alcove

survives *in situ*, including the plate warmer like a vase "and two tripods for candlesticks in good taste", to quote Walpole, and a central wine cooler of solid Sicilian jasper, said to have been designed by Athenian Stuart. The harvest and vintage scenes in basso relievo on either side of the alcove are by William Collins, a well-known plaster modeller of the day. The only discordant note in the room is the unfortunate pediment of the south-west doorhead, which is allowed to cut clumsily into the continuous frieze from the alcove.

The designs for the drawing-room, music-room, and library are the earliest dated, and indeed it is apparent that the decoration of these three rooms was carried out first of all. In the drawing-room, for instance, the deep and widely projecting cornice without frieze, the oversize anthemia and ovals of the cove smack of George II's time and resemble some of the work at Hatchlands. Did we not know otherwise, we should be inclined to attribute them to Paine. The chimneypiece sculptural figures again follow the Croome type. Remarkable features are, of course, the great Venetian window and the four-columned doorcases, all of green Derby alabaster. The furniture in this room contains the four famous sofas of merfolk with dolphin feet, designed by Robert Adam in 1762 in a distinctly Venetian manner and executed with only slight alterations by Seddon. The music-room chimneypiece is inlaid with bluejohn and the central plaque is by Spang. The walls of this room are decorated with landscapes in inset frames. The organ is of mahogany richly gilt, but of a simpler character than Adam's surviving design. The library ceiling consists of deeply recessed octagons and roundels of his markedly early type, like the gallery ceiling at Croome, and is tinted in its original blues, pinks, and mauves. It is the only Doric room at Kedleston, and the entablatures of the door cases and that of the chimneypiece (with central plaque here by Wilton) are disporting rams'-skulls wreathed.

The state boudoir is the single disappointment. Its proportions are marred by Adam's familiar trick of a screen of columns, forming an oval space of ingenious contrivance. The columns have capitals of a composite late Roman character that are bastard and ugly. The ceiling is of that lighter type which Walpole rightly dismissed as having "too great a sameness" and the walls have lost their original blue damask hangings. The great palm looking-glass in this room, *en suite* with the furniture in the state bedroom next door, is of unusual interest. The bed itself, originally curtained in gold lace, has posts in the form of palm trunks whose capitals spray into graceful falling branches and tufts. The only known Adam counterpart to this furniture is the palm decoration in his tea pavilion at Moor Park of the same date. The gilt chairs and the settees in the state bedroom are by Daniel Marot.

### *Bowood*

If Kedleston still survives—only rivalled by Syon—as the greatest monument to Robert Adam's comprehensive genius, Bowood near Calne

91 Bowood, Wiltshire: the Orangery or Diocletian wing. The portico shows the composite capitals (Robert Adam, 1769)

92 Bowood, Wiltshire. Begun by Henry Keene, 1755, and continued by Robert Adam, 1761–71

93 Kedleston, Derbyshire: the south block, entirely designed after 1760 by Robert Adam to emphasise "movement"

94 Compton Verney, Warwickshire, showing Adam's extensions (1760–5) to Vanbrugh's two east wings (*Country Life* photograph)

in Wiltshire, begun a year later, namely in 1761, belongs to a very different category. Here again Adam's main task was one of alterations to a predecessor's work, but, alas! much of Adam's work in its turn was altered or tampered with by his nineteenth-century successors. In Bowood we must not look for uniformity of excellence in Adam's contributions, rather for some isolated patches of high quality.

In 1755 Henry Keene, a follower of James Gibbs and at this date a classicist not yet attracted to the Gothic taste to the exclusion of every other, had begun upon a great palace at Bowood for John, first Earl of Shelburne. We have already seen that Keene was to build for his patron the beautiful red brick Guildhall at High Wycombe, not to be completed until 1757. We cannot be certain whether Lord Shelburne became dissatisfied with Keene or whether their relations were merely terminated by the peer's death in May 1761. In any case, there is little indication that Adam was interested in Bowood during John, Lord Shelburne's lifetime; we only know that he was designing the Mausoleum in the park (28) for the widowed countess that same year. William, the second earl, the famous politician and later to become first Marquess of Lansdowne, took over Bowood from the first earl's countess and with it perhaps Henry Keene also. It is not inconceivable that he, George III's "Jesuit of Berkeley Square", a man of notoriously difficult temperament like many people of high principles, quarrelled with Keene. He certainly quarrelled with Robert Adam at a later stage and was, in a hostile fashion, to oppose the Adams' Adelphi Embankment Act in 1770. Before the year 1761 was out we find Robert definitely engaged upon the interiors at Bowood (125) and revising the scheme for the great portico. Except for his superb Doric Mausoleum, Adam made few constructional designs of his own for this house, where he was to work spasmodically until the final rift in 1771 with his difficult and exacting client. There has in the past been much confusion over Adam's contributions to Bowood, where he has been accredited with far more work than in actual fact he carried out. In these circumstances we need not pay too much heed to those loud-voiced nineteenth-century detractors of Adam's Bowood, beginning with John Britton. For in his *Beauties of England and Wales* Britton, writing in 1814 in the full flush of the Adam reaction, strongly disparages, not unjustly as it happens, work which he wrongly attributes to the great architect. That very year C. R. Cockerell was called upon to make alterations and to add a chapel, and from 1834 to 1857 Charles Barry set the seal of his ubiquitous, heavy hand upon the greater part of the building.

For very little of the main body of the house was Robert Adam responsible, and the only proved exception is, according to Mr. Bolton's exhaustive researches, the entablature of the great portico. That the general features of the portico are Keene's work is, apart from its very un-Adamatic heaviness, suggested by the curious fact that the columns had to be reduced in diameter in 1768 and the capitals accordingly modified. The whole south front is a mis-shapen, lumpish affair, and the portico

detached from its context is its best feature. From the number of experimental drawings in Robert's hand it is evident that he was extremely embarrassed by the flanking bays, which Lord Shelburne would not suffer him to remove. Britton in his ignorance attributed them with some acerbity to Adam, but in no respect do they resemble other instances of his polygonal formations and they point rather to Keene's imperfect classical schooling under Gibbs. Their over-crowded assertiveness (which reflects incidentally the chief weakness of his master's St. Mary-le-Strand) cramps the portico, so that with difficulty can we detect its detailed merits. As to the capitals remodelled by Adam, these are hardly consonant with his declared principles in regard to a strict observance of the Doric order. But we have seen how upon other occasions Robert allowed himself to lapse from orthodoxy whenever occasion suited his genius, and the composite capitals upon the Diocletian wing (91), though even uglier, are presumably his responsibility. The deep cornice and balustrade of the house, to which he laboured to adapt his remodelled portico, and the singularly top-heavy pediment of the west front are undoubtedly the work of Keene.

Before relations with his architect were broken off by Lord Shelburne in 1771 and the completion of the work at Bowood committed to imitators, Robert left his mark in several of the magnificent apartments. The most notable of these are, first the great drawing-room, dating from 1763–4, with its coved ceiling of octagons and circles and its wall panels of plaster arabesques, no less successful than their exemplars at Shardeloes; and, secondly, the entrance hall in the Doric order, with its shallow saucer dome and those unique quadrant balconies that provide passage-ways on the first floor.

The impression made upon Mrs. Montagu during a visit to Bowood in 1765 was not particularly favourable. At that time Adam had only just begun upon his arduous and unrewarding task. "The place is now not fine", Mrs. Montagu wrote, "but between Mr. Adam and Mr. Browne [at work on the grounds] there will a fair creation rise. Mr. Adam has fitted up some fine chimneypieces and cielings. The ceilings are stucco from patterns taken from Palmyra, the chimneypieces of fine wrought marble are highly wrought and expensive", which indeed a visitor would expect since they were supplied by the well-known and fashionable London firm of Thomas Carter and Son. As Mrs. Montagu anticipated, the finished result of Bowood provides a fair enough creation, but in estimating Robert Adam's contribution to the whole we must confine our studies to a few individual rooms and detail.

### *Osterley Park*

Osterley was likewise begun in 1761 and not finally completed until 1780. Once again Robert Adam began work upon a house already in existence, for not yet had opportunity offered him a free hand to build to his own designs upon his own foundations. This time he was obliged to adapt his disposition to an earlier plan than usual, the original Osterley

having been built for Sir Thomas Tresham in 1577. The features of the large Elizabethan mansion are still clearly observable in the four square angle towers, with their ogival cupolas, and in the roof construction. The red brick composing the principal material of the walls adds a superficially Elizabethan flavour, but, as its regular and very fine pointing shows, does not belong to the sixteenth century. The only surviving plan amongst the Adam collections dates from 1761, but the several drawings are all later, and indeed the general work at Osterley marks a definite advance in Robert's decorative development, whereas the more effeminate quality of the last rooms undertaken is indicative of the approach of his middle period.

The drawings show us that in 1767 Adam was designing looking-glasses for the drawing-room and a sideboard for the dining-room, from which we deduce that these two apartments were then in process of construction. On 21st June, 1773, we have Horace Walpole writing to the Countess of Upper Ossory in rapturous apostrophies of Osterley as "the palace of palaces—and yet a palace *sans crown, sans coronet*, but such expense! such taste! such profusion! . . . it is so improved and so enriched, that all the Percies and Seymours of Sion must die of envy", and of this same drawing-room as "worthy of Eve before the fall". Now, only five years later, Walpole paid a further visit to Osterley, after which we find him writing to another correspondent with no less gusto but in a very different strain, as follows: "I never saw such a profound tumble into the bathos."

What precisely had happened to provoke this utter volte-face and sheer contradiction of impressions? Horace Walpole was admittedly a person of mercurial likes and dislikes, but where the arts were concerned he was a sagacious and unusually discriminating observer who sheathed his lightning prejudices, only to lunge them against human frailties and absurdities. In the interval between his two visits the state bedroom, the Etruscan room and the tapestry room had been undertaken. These rooms, lovely as unquestionably they are, for so much lavish elegance and refinement cannot fail to please, do indicate a parting of the ways. We have no hesitation in pointing to them as the first declension of Robert Adam's imaginative powers. We detect in these rooms a lapse into the purely linear. The old sculptural forms are gone; a whole dimensional factor has been cast aside. Robert, all his life in revolt against his Burlingtonian upbringing—from which, did he only know it, he was destined never to escape—and from which he derived so much that we most admire in his style, had unconsciously slipped his halter in order to browse unfettered upon fresh pastures that proved in the end to be of more restricted circumference than the old. Only an artist of Robert's training and calibre could henceforward prosper in handling what was to devolve into a stereotyped manner of decoration where his followers and imitators lamentably failed. In spite of Walpole's and other contemporaries' strictures Adam usually carried it off, and only occasionally did he stumble badly. Therefore we must allow that Walpole on his second visit to Osterley was remarkably shrewd in seizing upon this change of Adamatic direction, which he had

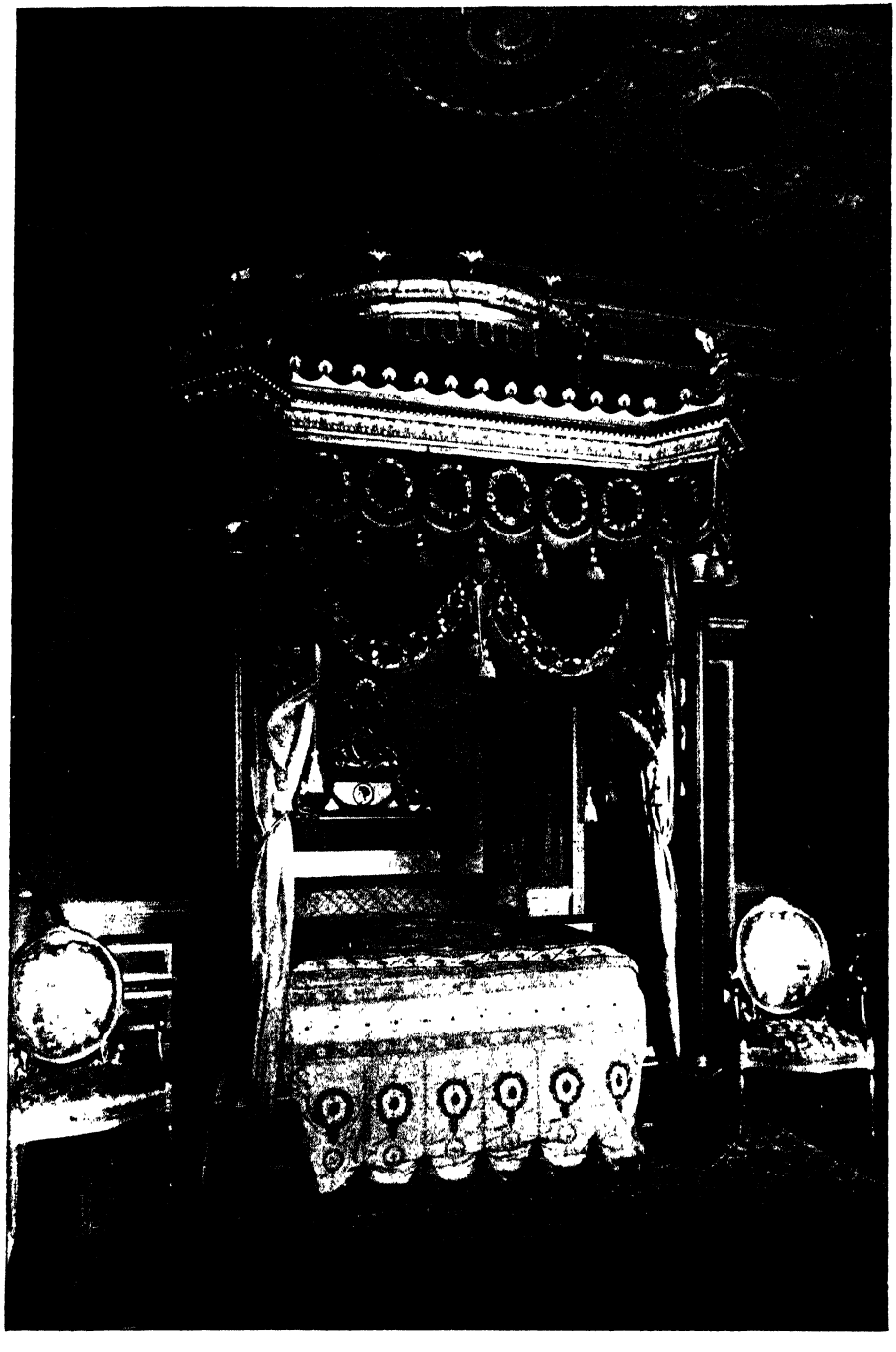
the foresight to deplore. Henceforward we shall constantly read Walpole's disparaging, if frequently over-severe references in correspondence and speech to the gingerbreads and sippets of embroidery of Robert's linear phase.

Before we go round the staterooms, of which the disposition and even character resemble to some extent those at Syon (where, however, they take in the height of two storeys instead of one, as at Osterley) we must consider Adam's connecting portico on the north front (95). We see that he set the piano nobile above the ground floor, thus raising the old Elizabethan courtyard level, so that the great portico assumes nobility by an impressive height lacking at Shardeloes and at Compton Verney. This portico, which Horace Walpole compares with the Propyleum at Athens, was more probably inspired by Robert Wood's plate of the entrance to the Court of the Temple of the Sun at Palmyra. But whether or not the provenance was consciously in Robert's mind, the portico is a thoroughly Grecian feature and as such indicative of his eclecticism in building. The octagonal lacunae, with their central rosettes, in the soffits of the portico, though not an improvement upon the gallery ceiling at Croome, have their direct prototype in the plate entitled "Soffit of the side door" in Wood's volume the *Ruins of Palmyra*, which Adam knew and admired so well.

In the library (115), the dining-room, the Wedgwood hall, and the drawing-room we have, broadly speaking, examples of the early Robert Adam style. The library ceiling is already in low relief and of fussy design, but the splendid Ionic bookcases are still structurally robust. The panels above them are painted by Angelica. The dining-room ceiling, with its interlacing ivy and thyrsus device, is closely related to that in the corresponding eating-room at Shardeloes. The wall spaces, where not interrupted by Zucchi's landscapes, are filled with classical arabesques in stucco, still very delicately tinted in a thin wash. On the chimneypiece are black basalt vases by Wedgwood, whereas the candelabra in this room are by Matthew Boulton. The Wedgwood hall, although extremely long for its height and unbroken by screens of columns, which one might expect to find, is singularly impressive. The heavy Shardeloesesque compartments of the ceiling and the deeply cut Syonesque wall panels—though not so brilliantly executed as at Syon—do not accentuate the lack of height. This danger is cleverly averted by the very effective exedrae with octagonal coffers in five tiers at either extremity of the hall. The drawing-room ceiling, which evoked generous praise from Walpole, was executed between 1766 and 1773. It belongs to Adam's early period and is unique, among his ceiling designs, for its central oval and the astonishing fanlike display of brightly coloured ostrich feathers in pink, blue, and gold. Walpole asserts that its design was based upon that in the Temple of the Sun from Wood's book. The splendid carpet was made for the room by Thomas Moore of Chiswell Street, who manufactured similarly patterned carpets for Syon.

95 Osterley Park: the Great Portico inspired by the Sun Temple, Palmyra (*Country Life* photograph)

96 West Wycombe Park, Buckinghamshire: the Portico added by Nicholas Revett after his return from Greece, 1766 (*Country Life* photograph)



97 Osterley Park: the State Bed (*circa* 1776)

With the tapestry room we advance to Robert Adam's middle period. The walls are entirely taken up by one of four sets of Boucher-Neilson gobelin in the colour known as rose du Barry (36). The signature of James Neilson, the Scottish manager of the Gobelin firm, and the date 1775 are woven into the fabric, and the subject of the set is "Les Amours des Dieux". The carpet to match the ceiling is also by Moore and dated 1775. The ceiling, with ugly central motif of reversed curves, is in flat relief, but its execution is of the greatest possible delicacy and refinement. The state bedroom, of small proportions, is dominated by the vast bed (97), domed like a wedding-cake and following down to the very bed-cover the minute designs done for it by Adam and dated 1775–6. The carpet of this room accurately follows the drawing, which carefully identifies by four spots the exact position for each bedpost. The famous Etruscan room, which shocked Walpole into observing that the first approach to it was like going out of a palace into a potter's field, must be regarded as a *tour de force* rather than a work of art. It is the only one by Adam that survives to-day (his five others were at Home House, Old Derby House, Harewood, Apsley House, and Cumberland House) and reflects the Pompeiian influence that overtook other decorators at this time. As early as 1768 we have Josiah Wedgwood writing "Mr. Cox is as mad as a march hare for Etruscan vases", and at Heveningham and Heaton James Wyatt and Biagio Rebecca and at Woodhall Thomas Leverton were later to perpetrate similar experiments upon the walls and doors of small apartments.

Of all Robert Adam's great palaces where he worked over a number of years in embellishing state apartments, Osterley affords the best example of his comparative styles side by side under one roof. Above all it is distinguished for fidelity of execution in accordance with the architect's drawings and for its wealth of original furnishings. In this last respect it transcends even Harewood, Kedleston, and Syon.

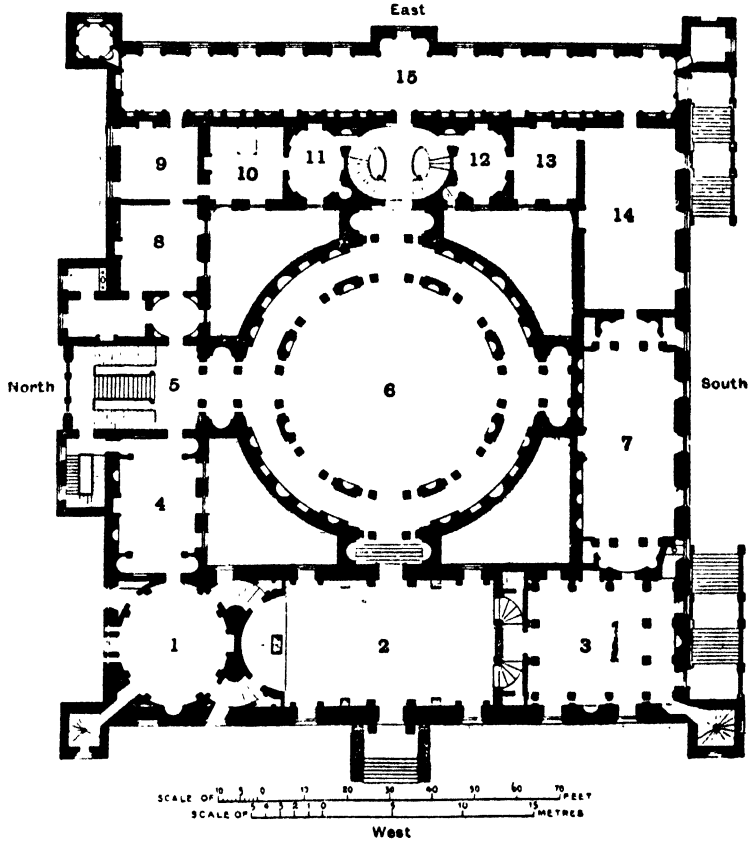
### *Syon House*

Kedleston, for sheer artistic perfectibility can have only one rival—in Syon. They unquestionably can hold their own with the greatest palaces of the continent.

Adam gives us 1762 as the year when Sir Hugh Smithson, soon to become 1st Duke of Northumberland of the new creation, decided to modernise the home of his wife, who was a daughter of the 7th Duke of Somerset with the blood of the Plantagenet Percies in her veins. Smithson was a man of munificent habits and, in Adam's words, of "correct taste", a phrase amply borne out by the manner in which he transformed his splendid residences and by his choice of the leading architect to do it. Besides Syon, where Adam began work immediately after he had completed Shardeloes for Mr. Drake, the duke had previously employed him at Alnwick Castle and was to employ him again at Northumberland House

in the Strand, where he took over operations from the Scottish architect Robert Mylne.

At Syon Robert once more embarked upon extensive operations where




Plan of Syon House

1. Antechamber
2. Hall
3. Antechamber
4. Private Eating-Room
5. Principal Stairs
6. Great Saloon (not carried out)
7. Great Dining-Room
8. Duchess's Dressing-Room
9. Antechamber
10. Bedchamber
11. Duke's Dressing-Room
12. Duke's Powder-Room
13. Duke's Writing-Room
14. Withdrawing Room
15. Gallery

a building was already in existence, and again he was fated not to carry through the full scheme which he had evolved on paper. The great central rotunda, designed by him to rise above the middle courtyard and to be used as the "general rendezvous" for the whole house, was never carried out, nor were all the state rooms round the courtyard fully finished.

Instead it was left to another and lesser architect, of a later age and style, namely Charles Fowler, the builder of Covent Garden market, to complete the series of staterooms in 1825. Fowler did his job efficiently and decently, without, fortunately, making any inroads upon Adam's existing apartments.

In 1604 the old Nunnery of the Order of St. Bridget at Syon, where Henry VIII's putrefying corpse had on its last journey incurred the gruesome indignity of mutilation by the convent dogs, attracted by its overpowering stench, was granted by James I to Hugh Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland. Round the nunnery quadrangle was a Jacobean mansion erected without any particular regard for site or symmetry. Accordingly, when Adam appeared on the scene, he found the levels presented a most awkward problem, for the hall was above ground level and itself six steps below the principal floor. These inconsistencies were overcome by Adam, but not removed, so that one wonders why Duke Hugh, who spent so lavishly upon the aggrandisement of the Percy properties, drew the line at any alteration of the internal plan. Adam was certainly not allowed to tamper with the levels, any more than with the general layout of the house itself. The exterior of Syon as Adam left it and as it remains to-day presents very much the same appearance as it did when Samuel and Nathaniel Buck drew it in 1737. The only visible Adam touches are his substitution of thin sash-bars for the thicker bars to the window glazing shown in the drawing, and his clothing of the whole house in an outer skin of Bath stone. With few exceptions, therefore, Adam's activities were restricted almost entirely to the interior.

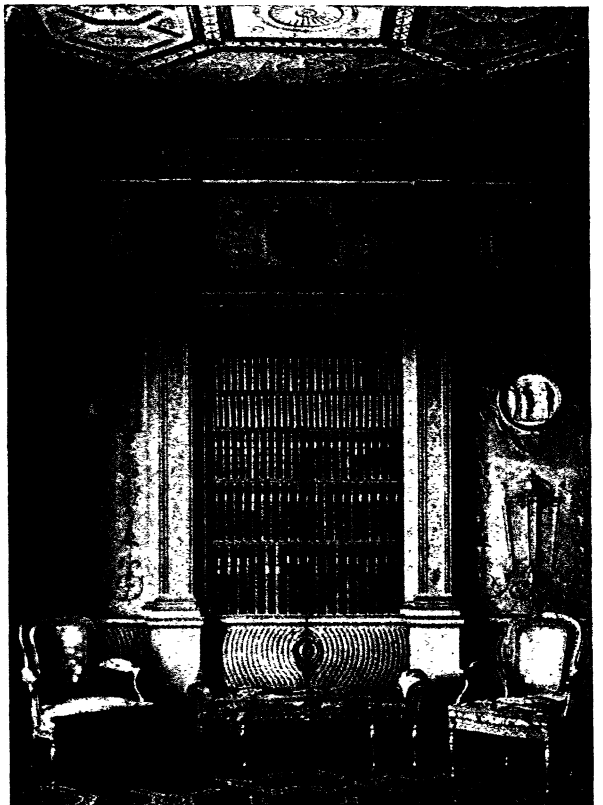
The first apartment we walk into from the west entrance is the great hall (98). This room, with the vestibule and the gallery, is very fully illustrated by Adam in the *Works*, and it is apparent that the brothers were immensely proud of Syon and considered it to be the finest advertisement of their firm. The immediate impression is of a vast apartment of impeccable proportions, cool and colourless, but strikingly effective on account of its lights and shadows, the walls and ceiling being of a creamy white, the floor relieved by a precise pattern in black and white marble that repeats the ceiling device. The hall is, in fact, all but a double cube and comprises two storeys. The high ceiling, in strong contrast to the low plaster reliefs in many tints of his later ceilings, is Burlingtonian in its pronounced compartments divided by deep cross ribs and the wide framing border ornamented with enormous Greek honeysuckles. At one end of the hall is a great coffered apse sheltering a caste of the Apollo Belvedere; at the other a square screened recess with curved steps leading to the vestibule on the higher level, and especially contrived to convey with remarkable success through its contrasting curves and its ascendency the ever-intended axiom—"movement". The order used in the room is the favourite Doric in its most monumental and Roman form. The twisted columns, nowhere else thus used internally by Adam, to the tabernacle frames of the lower windows over vast projecting consoles, accentuate the

monumental effect. They were clearly inspired by Piranesi's illustration "Columna in claustro Basilicae Lateranensis" in his *Della Magnificenza*, published in 1761. The stucco work by Joseph Rose (105, 107), whether of the delicate statue pedestals or of the massive wall swags and trophies, is of the highest quality. Where there are merely framed chiaroscuro panels on the upper walls the architect and his stuccatore had evidently intended plaster reliefs to supersede them.

The vestibule or ante-room (100) affords a complete contrast to the hall. It is no doubt the most brilliantly coloured of any Robert Adam room that still exists, and the medley of colour is not so much applied in decoration as integrally fused into the rich and rare composition of the materials used. The outstanding feature of this truly magnificent room is the series of twelve disengaged columns in verde antique which were found in the bed of the Tiber. To these ancient columns Adam added gilt Ionic capitals and bases of white and gold. The floor from which they rise does them ample justice. It is of scagliola—one remembers James's ambitious prognostications upon this medium in his Italian diary —highly polished, its pattern almost identical with that of the ceiling, its predominating tones being yellow, brown, and red. The shape of the pre-existing room as Adam found it was oblong, whereupon he proceeded to give it a square setting by building out at one end a projecting screen, the effect of which is somewhat to impair its proportions. Each of the Roman columns of the screen is made to support a sculptural figure in gilt gesso. Beautiful and ornamental as these figures are, they nevertheless detract from the height which the overbold compartment ceiling needs and themselves appear crushed by the too close weight of it. The audacious wall panels of gilt trophies are inspired by da Udine's martial panels at the Villa Madama. Nowhere in the world shall we find plaster work more delicately executed, and it raises Rose to the status of the most renowned Cinquecento stuccatori, like Piero Ligorio, of the Papal casino in the Vatican gardens, or, so far as we may judge from their surviving fragments, the unnamed artists among the ancients of the Roman catacombs.

The dining-room in the south front is more conventional than the two rooms we have just reviewed, but it too displays workmanship of the finest quality. It was, moreover, one of the first rooms at Syon to be completed. Its length is exactly three times that of its breadth and each end is finished with a clever manipulation of a screen before an apsidal recess, as in the famous library at Kenwood. A flat, fluted band is continued from the Corinthian entablature of each screen all around the walls. Above the band are long rectangular frieze panels in chiaroscuro by Cipriani, somewhat formless and feeble and possibly meant to be sketches for plaster work. Robert gives a minute and interesting description of this room, and reasons why he has provided his walls with statues and not tapestries—to which the smell of viands are wont to cling offensively in an eating chamber. The ceiling resembles that in the library at Shardeloes, but is

98 Syon House, Middlesex: the Hall (*circa* 1762), the walls creamy white, the floor paved in black and white marbles



99 Syon House: detail of the Gallery. The wall decorations perhaps designed by Pergolesi

100 Syon House: the Ante-Room, the most brilliantly coloured of all Adam's interiors

improved in detail. The pedimented overmantel with its anthemion finials follows Piranesi's illustration of the Temple of Honor and Virtue without St. Sebastian's Gate. Adam designed similar pedimented chimneypieces for his eating-room at Headfort in Ireland.

The next room we come to on this front is the red drawing-room. Here is the first known example of the use upon walls of damask hangings, these being of Spitalfields silk, patterned in flowers and ribbons. The ceiling, of which both coves and flat are sprinkled with a firmament of small octagons and squares, each enclosing a decorative paper panel by Angelica, provoked Sir William Chambers's indignant taunt about a myriad skied dessert dishes. The carpet is signed by T. Moore and dated 1769. The pilasters of the two doorways are of ivory ground, decorated with inlaid ormolu, which is likewise applied to the white marble surrounds of the fireplace.

The whole length of the east front is taken up with the great gallery over the cloister arcade (99), supposed to have been formed by Inigo Jones out of the original conventual building. This gallery corresponds to the Crypto Porticus (as at Spalatro above a lower basement storey overlooking the sea) of the typical Roman palace, designed for walking and loitering during the heat of the Mediterranean sun. Robert Adam himself explains the purpose of the gallery he here contrived. "It was finished", he says, "in a style to afford great variety and amusement" as a supreme concession to feminine frivolity and dalliance during the idler hours of an eighteenth-century lifetime of summer elegance. The technical problem confronting the architect lay in the constrictive Jacobean proportions of this long and narrow corridor apartment, 136 feet long by 14 feet wide and only 14 feet high. On no other occasion does he show more thorough mastery over awkward siting than in this gallery at Syon. Maybe, one merited criticism is that concentration of so much elaborate detail has a fussy effect. But this objection pales before the brilliance of Adam's achievement. The solution he arrived at was a happy succession of closely grouped units contained within four pilaster [1] divisions, comprising bookshelves, at wide bay intervals. With the dexterity of an expert he so disposed his ceiling ribs to convey to the gallery a make-believe width, which in reality did not exist, by suggesting a repetition of the pattern beyond the actual wall boundaries. Everywhere in this gallery is there some exquisite detail to delight the sensible visitor, whether the classical arabesques upon walls of faded green and pink, the small relief panels in polished stucco duro, the ridiculous oval portraits under the frieze, or the superb marquetry furniture designed by the architect. At either end of the gallery are two closet retreats of irresistible fascination in the angle towers: one square, its little walls depicting exotic birds upon idyllic trees; the other round and alcoved, suspending from its delicate plaster dome a gold bird-cage with a gold bird.

[1] In the first Duchess of Northumberland's Syon House Book of *Prices of Some of the Works done at Syon*, is a note: "62 Pilasters by Pergolesi at £3 3*s*. 0*d*. each".

### *Mersham-le-Hatch*

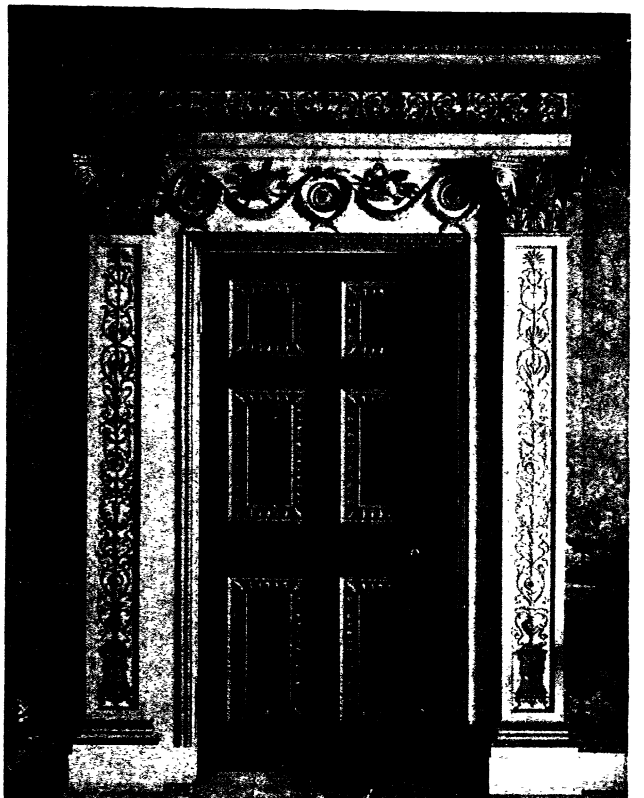
With Mersham-le-Hatch (85), built between 1762 and 1772, we have the first country house that is entirely Robert Adam's from the foundations up. Compared with the preceding houses (except Hatchlands) with which we have been dealing, Mersham is a very modest edifice, for complete as it is, it was not built on palatial lines. Indeed, a letter from Robert to Sir Wyndham Knatchbull refers to his specific intention that it shall be "kept entirely plain; and as nearly adapted to what I imagined you meant, as I possibly could". This intention was subsequently modified to some extent by the client until finally agreed with the architect. The result was a central block of six principal rooms, the living-rooms oddly enough facing north, and two connecting wings for offices and so forth, projecting south. The wings were added at Robert Adam's express wish so as to "take it off the appearance of a Town House", for which the low spread central block could hardly have been mistaken. On the other hand, their addition greatly enhances the balance and harmony of the composition.

With the exception of the dormer windows (added subsequently to both block and wings in a style reverting to the late seventeenth century and so not a happy afterthought) Mersham preserves quite untouched the aspect it must have presented when Adam had finished work upon it. The material used is a very sympathetic rose-red brick in English bonding, the door and window surrounds dressed in finely chiselled ashlar on the south or entrance front. The entrance is approached by a dignified series of steps guarded by beautiful railings and lamp standards in wrought iron, supplied by the Carron Company and manufactured by Messrs. Alexander and Shrimpton in 1770, at the cost of £125. On the north front, with its wide semi-circular bay forming the middle feature, the windows, apart from their slightly projecting cills, are without surrounds, but flush with the wall, in accordance with the later Adam's invariable practice in street architecture.

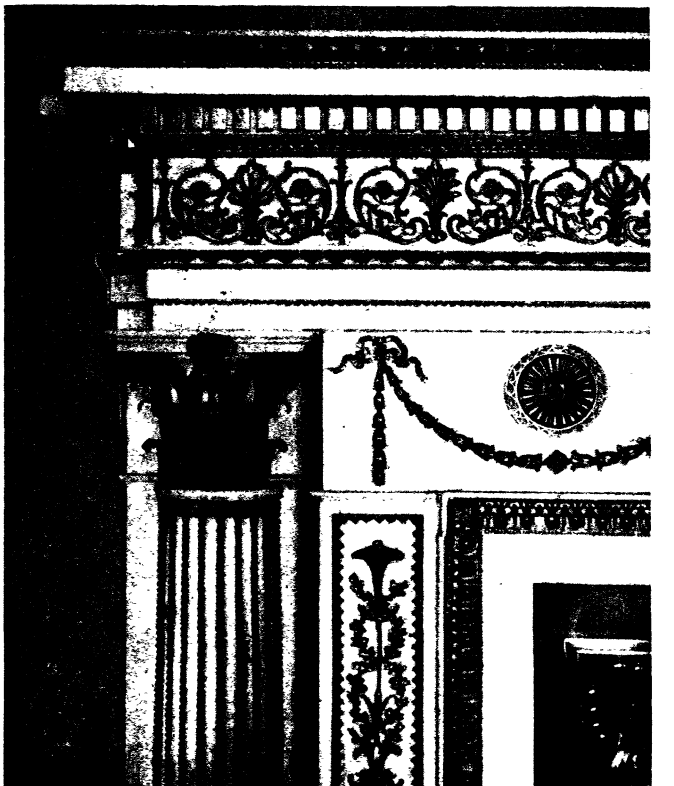
Owing to the sudden death of Sir Wyndham Knatchbull in 1763 at the early age of twenty-six, work on the building, which had shown signs of an easy start, was brought to an abrupt halt. Young Sir Wyndham was succeeded by an uncle of over sixty, who with commendable enthusiasm ultimately consented to proceed along the line initiated by the nephew. Consequently, decoration of the interior was not undertaken till 1766. In witness of this there survive at Mersham a remarkably complete collection of accounts and letters from Adam, Chippendale, Carter, the statuary of Piccadilly, Rose, the stuccoist, and others. Thus an unbroken chronological history of the work done over the ensuing years is provided, and we are able to piece together the methods by which Robert Adam and his band of collaborators usually went about the business of embellishing a typical country house of the period. These documents have all been most ably edited and presented by the late Mr. Avray Tipping in his

101 Lansdowne House, London: the Dining-Room (1762–8)

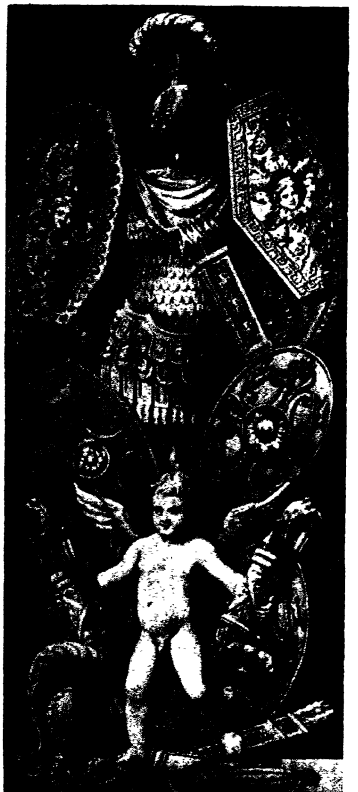
102 Shelburne, afterwards Lansdowne, House: the façade, begun 1762, and pitilessly mutilated 1929



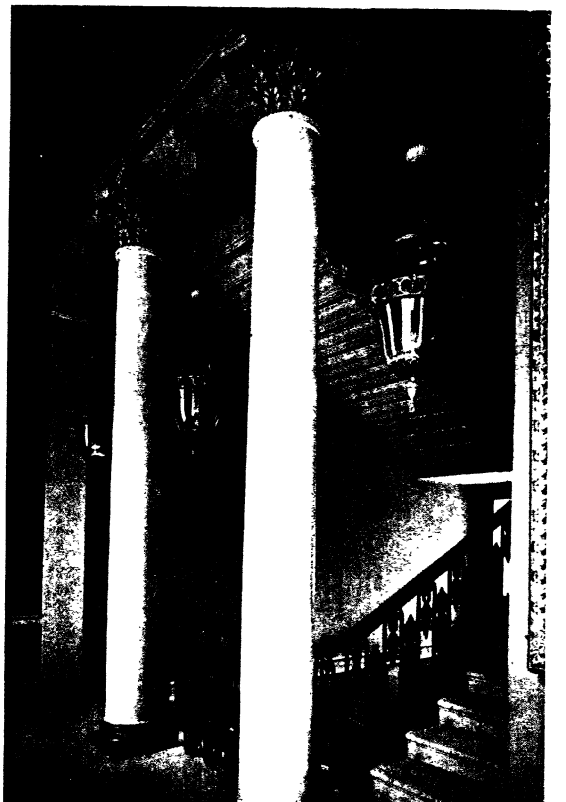
103 Syon House: a Drawing Room doorcase



104 Syon House: detail of the Drawing Room chimney-piece of white marble enlaid with ormolu



105 Syon: a stucco panel by J. Rose for the Ante-Room. From the *Works*



106 Osterley Park: the staircase. The balusters resemble those at Kenwood

107 Syon: a stucco panel by J. Rose for the Ante-Room. From the *Works*

108 Home House, Portman Square, London: the Music Room, showing Adam's linear and geometrical decoration (1775) (*Country Life* photograph)

109 Nostell Priory, Yorkshire: the Saloon (1770) (*Country Life* photograph)

informative chapter upon Mersham in the "Late Georgian" volume of his *English Homes*.

### *Lansdowne House, London*

Lansdowne House in Berkeley Square, although of course strictly a town dwelling, stood not in a street but in its own grounds and was so large in scale that it should rather be classed in the country house category. All that remains of this excellent building, which was demolished in 1929, is a travesty of its former front and a few mutilated vestiges of rooms inside. For by some extraordinary process of the commercial conscience, the façade of Portland stone was taken down, the foundations pushed back several feet, and the front partially re-erected, only in another composition, to adorn an amorphous mess of glazed brick, steel, and concrete that dares to parade the title of a luxury club. No more Belsen-like treatment of a work of art by speculative Philistines was ever tolerated in the decadent inter-war period by a smug and cynical public. Notwithstanding this nation's indifference to the fate of Lansdowne House, the Americans were allowed, at no little expense to themselves, to salvage a few pickings out of the holocaust. The drawing-room, with its pilasters painted in glowing arabesques, may now be viewed by shamefaced British visitors to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The eating-room, with its niches for statues and its geometrical ceiling of stucco segments and ellipses, has found another appreciative home in the Metropolitan Museum (101). The disgraceful fate of Lansdowne House was only one instance of this country's breathless anticipation of the brave new materialism into which the Gadarene swine are to-day gleefully plunging.

Lansdowne House (102) was begun by Robert Adam in 1762 for Lord Bute and continued after it had been bought by Lord Shelburne. Lady Shelburne's diary records that on 20th August, 1768, the family took up residence, although several of the rooms were still unfinished. Two days later Robert Adam dined at the house with the Shelburnes, when she consulted him about "the furniture for our painted anti-chamber, and determined that it should be peagreen and satin spotted with white and trimmed with a pink and white fringe, it was originally my own thought and met with his entire approbation". After dinner Adam and Lord Shelburne set forth for Bowood, "where he is also to give Lord Shelburne some plans of buildings and of joining up House and offices by an additional apartment".

### *Nostell Priory*

At Nostell Priory, near Wakefield, Adam worked from 1766 to 1776, but here we must not estimate his achievements as a co-ordinated whole. In the first place he was called upon to make additions to the main block of a house that had already been built by James Paine; in the second place, his own piecemeal additions were never even completed by him. Paine

had in 1745 laid out a vast and ambitious scheme, which, according to his own account, was his earliest essay in country-house practice. Dr. Pococke, who saw Nostell in 1750, wrote that the new house is "the most convenient I have seen", but the impression of the greatly extended building to-day is just the contrary, for what is left is careless in plan and as an entity straggling and unsatisfactory.

Amongst Robert's designs are one each for the library, hall, drawing-room, and saloon ceilings between the years 1766 and 1770; lastly, a drawing for the new wing, which was not actually finished until precisely one hundred years later.

Mr. Bolton was convinced that Adam was called in as much to correct the extravagances to which Paine had committed his patron, Sir Rowland Winn, as on account of the brothers' more popular manner of interior decoration. The story of Nostell would seem, if this be the correct version, to repeat the experiences of Sir Nathaniel Curzon at Kedleston. But there is nothing in Paine's writings to excuse his dismissal by the Yorkshire baronet because of pressure of other commissions, as he tells us was the case at Kedleston. So we find the southern half of Paine's great block decorated in the early Georgian style that he was slow to discard, in spite of his several associations with Adam, whereas the central and northern parts are palpably the handiwork of the younger man. Robert's work at Nostell must therefore be judged from a few individual rooms and not by any standards of planning. Chief of them are the saloon (109), with its beautiful geometrical ceiling in his middle period manner, in shades of pink, green, and cream, the plaster cameos pricked out in white from a blue background: and the tapestry room, with Neilson-Boucher gobelins specially arranged to fulfil the decorative ensemble and ceiling distinguished for the effective use of various colours on Rose's stucco reliefs, in conjunction with painted canvas scenes from the antique in the lunettes.

### *Newby Hall*

It is open to question when Robert Adam started work at Newby Hall in Yorkshire, although it is fairly clear that he had not finished before 1783. Only two years later we have Lady Bute writing to Mrs. Delany as follows: "You must have heard of the elegance and magnificence of Mr. Weddell's house, all ornamented by Mr. Adams, in his highest (and indeed, I think) best taste. There is a gallery fill'd with fine statues, busts, and bas-reliefs; a great number of fine pictures dispersed in different rooms; and the drawing-room furnished with the most beautiful Gobelins tapestry I ever saw." This passage implies, therefore, that by 1785 at least the finishing touches had been put to Mr. Weddell's country mansion. Adam's earliest known designs for ceilings at Newby are dated 1767, and it is very probable that before this year he had submitted a general scheme for extensive alterations to the existing house. Ceilings are not usually an architect's first consideration, and indeed the more fundamental features

of his apartments at Newby show very close resemblance to other examples of his domestic work belonging to the mid-sixties.

Mr. William Weddell, who had inherited Newby from his father, visited Rome in 1765 and brought back to England with him what in those days of collecting on the grand scale was a famous assembly of antique sculpture. In order to house these works of art, which he had set out on his Italian visit to acquire, he engaged the services of Robert Adam. Weddell was a man of quite exceptional culture and taste and in Adam he had chosen for his purpose an associate who shared his enthusiasms to the full. In the splendid gallery (110) Robert was given unfettered scope to create a background for the display of these products of the sister art of which, after architecture, he had the greatest understanding and love.

The house which Robert was called upon to alter was a rectangular three-storeyed block of red brick with stone dressings, belonging to the pre-Palladian phase of building before introduction of the orders was made obligatory. Its design was simple and massive, of the kind exemplified in Dyrham Park or Chatsworth, both built by William Talman, the disciple of Wren. What is more, Newby has definitely been ascribed to Sir Christopher himself by the editor of the Yorkshire volume (published 1812) of *The Beauties of England and Wales*, by Hargrove in his *History of Knaresborough*, and by Wyatt Papworth in *The Dictionary of Architecture*. Mr. Bolton, who was the editor of the "Wren Society" volumes, likewise assumed that Newby was amongst the last buildings of Wren. Mr. Christopher Hussey, however, has forcefully disputed this theory,[1] preferring to attribute the original block to one of those unknown architect craftsmen from York who flourished prior to the impact of Vanbrugh's influence upon this part of England. But if, in the face of this conflicting opinion, it is rash to name Wren the architect, we may safely classify Newby in the Wren school of building, as dating well before the Hanoverian succession, which brought about the eclipse and enforced retirement of the architect of St. Paul's.

In any case Robert Adam allowed the red-brick Queen Anne block to stand. He greatly modified its internal planning and entirely redecorated the apartments to provide an up-to-date setting for the tapestries and furnishings that William Weddell had purchased or commissioned him to design. At the south-east end he added the sculpture gallery, which he balanced by extending an office wing to the north-east. In his additions he was unusually careful to use the same materials and to repeat more or less the older theme.

Robert's only surviving drawing of the gallery elevation is dated 1776, and this record has led writers on Newby to suppose that all the alterations belonged to this year. But there also survive, apart from the first ceiling design of 1767, pencil sketches for the hall chimneypiece dated 1769, and for looking-glasses to the tapestry room dated 1770–1. These records, in addition to the character of the interior decoration, which betrays the

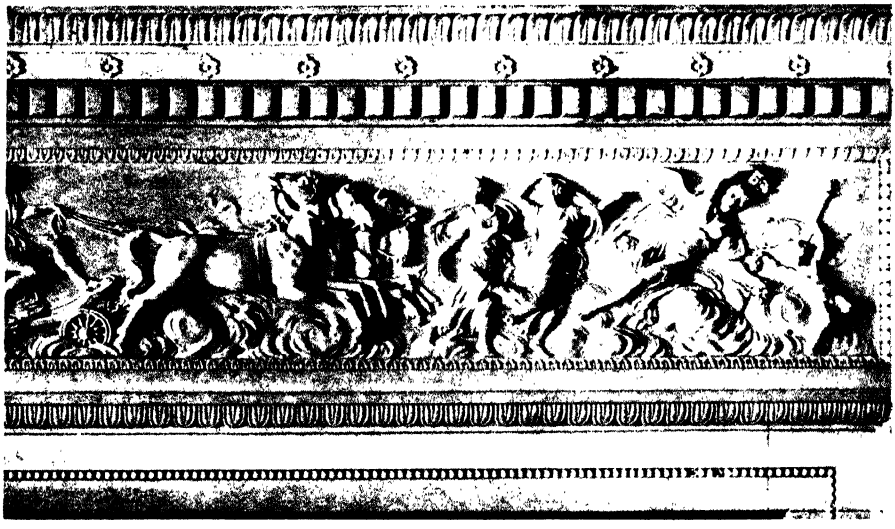
[1] *Country Life*, vol. LXXXI.

touch of Robert's early phase, prove not only that his work at Newby extended over a number of years but that it began in the 1760s.

Through the Adam porch, added to the centre of the east front of the Queene Anne block, the rectangular entrance hall is reached immediately. It is, like so many Adam halls, treated in the Doric order, and as regards the entablature shows no development upon that round the walls of the Doric library at Kedleston, which was one of the first rooms Robert decorated for Lord Scarsdale in the early sixties. The ceiling of the hall, which echoes the beautiful design of the black, white, and Sicilian grey marble floor, likewise belongs to the same phase of evolved design as the Kedleston library ceiling. The plaster wall panels contain, over the doors, antique two-handled vases in relief and, on either side of the organ and the large framed canvasses by Carraci and Rosa de Tivoli, military trophies resembling those by Joseph Rose in the Wedgwood Hall at Osterley. The organ-case itself is of an architectural design in dark mahogany, involving Ionic columns and tripods on its base. The pipes above are gilded and the soffit of the central recess is decorated with the typical Adam shell device. To the left of the entrance hall is the staircase hall, where a screen supported by two exquisite columns in Cippolino marble, procured by Weddell in Italy, separates it from the ante-room. The wrought-iron stair balusters are practically identical in design to those at Osterley and Kenwood, where the pattern is formed of repeated Greek honeysuckles. The landing arcade on the floor above springs from columns supporting sections of entablature in a manner not usual with Adam but frequently practised by Paine and Taylor.

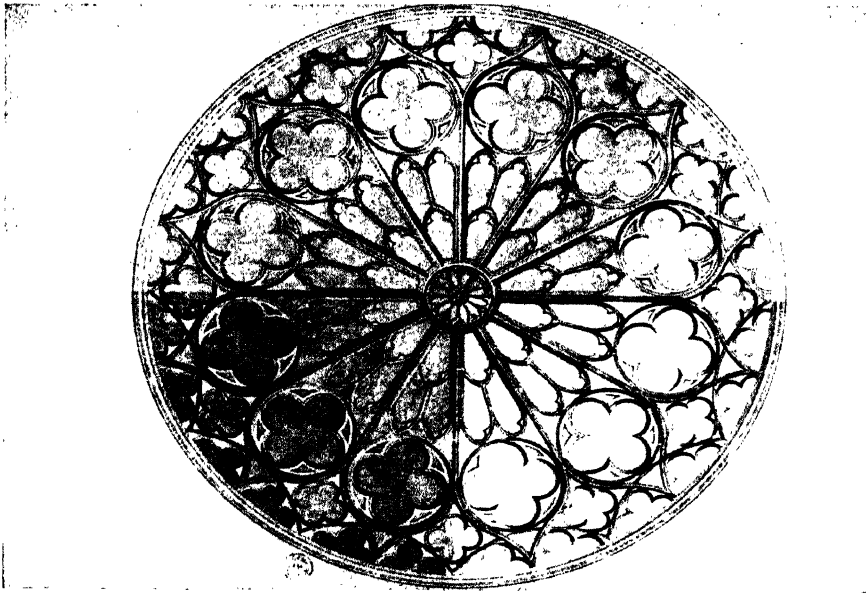
The ante-room leads, from the right, to the tapestry room, formed by Adam out of the original entry hall in the middle of the west front of the Queen Anne block. The walls of this superb apartment are completely hung with one of the famous sets of "Les Amours des Dieux" Gobelins, acquired by Weddell at the same time as the Moor Park set were acquired by Sir Henry Dundas. Here the ground and flowers designed by Neilson are of a delicate fawn tint, the figure subjects for the medallions by Boucher of the familiar rose du Barry tone. The signatures of both artists are woven into the fabric and two of the Boucher panels are dated 1766. As in the case of the other Gobelin rooms contrived by Adam, here the furniture is *en suite*, the chairs, doubtless designed by the architect, having gilded framework and woven coverings. The ceiling, with medallions by Zucchi, is carefully related to the wall hangings, as is the carpet with its geometrical and repeating pattern. From the ante-room, to the left the library, meant by Adam to be the eating-room, is reached. This long room, with screened apsidal ends, is a modified version of the famous library at Kenwood. But here Adam was obliged to use a flat ceiling instead of a barrel vault on account of the floor above, and the consequent lack of height detracts a little from the proportions. We gather that Adam was aware of this shortcoming from the ingenious manner in which he provided radiating panels in place of the Kenwood semi-domes of the

110 Newby Hall, Yorkshire. The Sculpture Gallery (*circa* 1776) remains to-day exactly as Mr. Weddell and Adam arranged it (*Country Life* photograph)

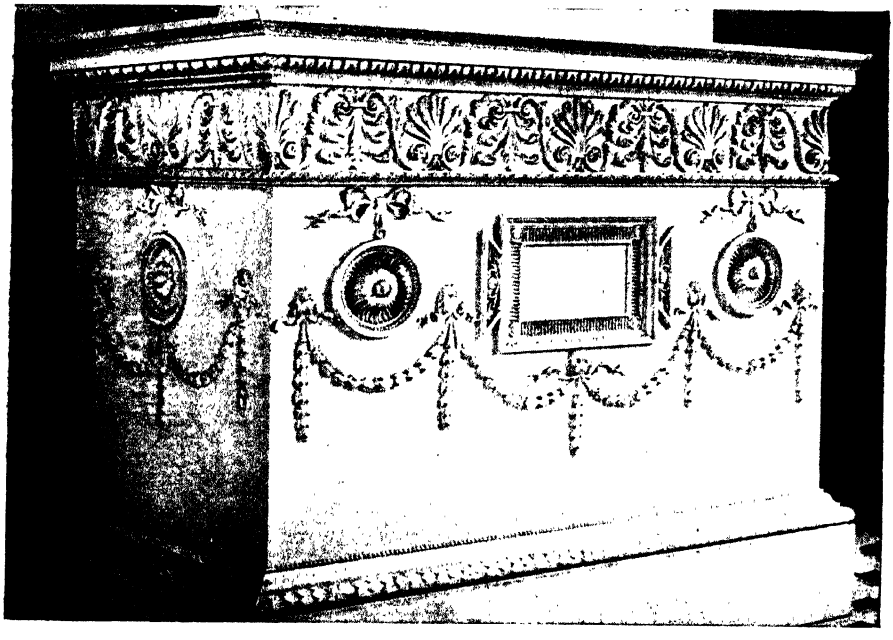


111 20 St. James's Square, London: detail of entablature of fireplace (see below)

112 20 St. James's Square, London: fireplace in the First Withdrawing-Room (1772–4)

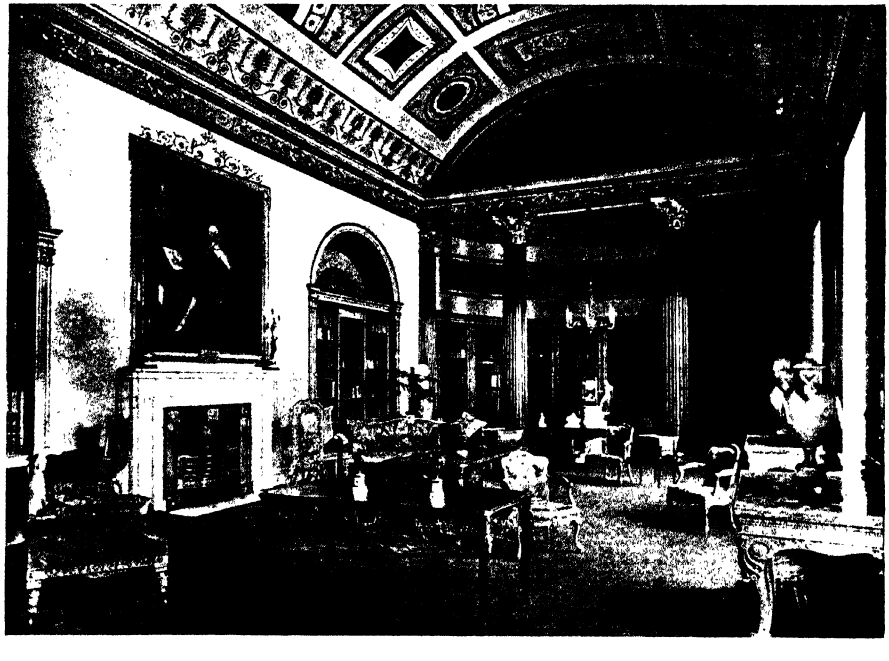


113 Strawberry Hill, Twickenham: Robert Adam's sketch for the ceiling executed in the Round Room (1766) for Horace Walpole



114 Syon House: a statue-pedestal—the stucco work by J. Rose—in the Great Hall

115 Osterley Park: the Library, in white. An example of Robert Adam's early decorative style before 1770



116 Kenwood, Middlesex: the Library, likewise finished before 1770 for Lord Mansfield

apses. The ceiling pattern of alternating recessed and framed geometrical panels is of the very early Adam type that we have seen at Kedleston and even so far back as at Croome.

Whereas the library occupies the length of the Queen Anne south wing, the famous sculpture gallery, in three compartments, is an extension of it to the east. As Mr. Hussey has observed, the gallery remains to-day "exactly as Weddell and Adam arranged it", so that it "is the best example in this country of the beau-ideal of a classical cognoscente: the meticulous reconstruction of a Roman interior, according to the evidence of Herculaneum and the Catacombs". The central compartment is the rotunda —in the daytime lit from its coffered dome by a small aperture—containing four exedrae and two recesses. These shelter Mr. Weddell's sculpture, and their selection proves that the collector and the architect were unanimous in observing an exact scale between the exhibits and the building. All the statuary is appropriately small, so as to relate with the exedrae of the rotunda and the alcoves of the two end galleries. These are connected to the rotunda by vaulted passages in the thickness of the dividing walls, of which the soffits are adorned with plaster relief octagons and circles in the true catacomb manner. The ceilings of the galleries are low and flat, so as to form a clever contrast to the height of the central dome of the rotunda. The walls opposite the windows are coloured in varying shades of salmon pink, bearing inset cameos of deep red on white with grey marble borders, the whole enclosed in square frames. The wall lights resting on console brackets and the hot air vents in the pedestals of the statues are as Adam left them. Seen from the open library door the vista through the three compartments—enlivened by the interplay of light from the gallery windows and the central dome—terminating in the apse with its huge bath in white and purple pavonazzeto, conveys a most convincing representation of the Roman catacombs in their antique splendour.

As for the statuary itself, Weddell's contemporaries marvelled at the rarity and value of the individual pieces. To-day we, with the experience of the intervening century and a half behind us, are less impressed by their quality than by their decorative value. To Weddell the chief treasure of his collection was the Venus discovered by Gavin Hamilton in the Barberini Palace. Nollekens, the sculptor, told Farington years later how Hamilton's notorious partner, Jenkins, sold it to Weddell for a preposterously high figure, after having matched a modern head, arms, one thigh and a leg. Furthermore, the old sculptor confided how the figure of Minerva which he sold to Weddell for £600 had been found by him in a vineyard and bought for 60 crowns, and how he justified the difference in the sums by having himself provided a head for it. But the trusting patrician collector never, we may be sure, was made aware of these deceptions.

### *Kenwood*

As the last country house begun in the architect's early period we select Kenwood, near Hampstead. This house, which was remodelled

by Robert Adam from an earlier structure for the great lawyer, Lord Mansfield, was completed within a comparatively short period, 1767–68. A number of minor alterations to the façades have been made since Adam's day, but the body of the house, including the portico of the north front, remains unchanged from his designs. But, alas! the wonderful collection of furniture, mostly designed by Adam and in all probability supplied by Chippendale, has been dispersed from the rooms to which it belonged since Mr. Bolton's two volumes were published.

Of the rooms at Kenwood the famous library (116) was far and away the most important. It is only one of several examples of Robert's fondness for books. The sale catalogues of his effects, auctioned after his death, prove him to have been a keen and discriminating collector of volumes upon architecture and the arts generally, and there are many indications of the enjoyment with which he contrived libraries for his numerous clients. This apartment is the only one at Kenwood to be illustrated in the *Works*, where the brothers explain to us that, as well as to provide a setting for Lord Mansfield's library, it was meant to be the principal "room for receiving Company". In July 1770, Lady Mary Coke wrote, "I dined to-day at Kenwood. The improvements since I saw it are very great: Lord Mansfield has laid out a vast deal of money and with a very good taste. The great room he has built is as fine as it can possibly be; no expense spared. The finishing part put me in mind of one of the rooms at Luton."

This great room, or library, at Kenwood is a fitting climax to the development, through the medium of Robert Adam, of the English idiom of purely classic building which was first introduced by Inigo Jones. In none of the interiors of Adam's great predecessors do we find such elegant refinement of the decorative tradition; in none of the interiors of his talented and capable successors do we come across an improvement upon this quality. The room is one of Robert's great triumphs, and is besides academically important in proving how he copied and perfected the free use of semi-circular and apsidal forms which Lord Burlington had been the first to introduce. The resounding theme of the room is the repetitive half circle of the two end apses, of the ceiling, and the heads of the doors and bookcases. This theme is most skilfully tempered, so as not to suffer from over repetition or indeed interruption, by the generous length of the rectangle and by the two screens of fluted Corinthian columns. They are made to carry before each semi-dome an entablature which binds into one continuous harmony the richly ornamented frieze, from which the barrel of the ceiling directly springs. And the ceiling is for the first time not a cove but a semi-circle decorated with flat panels of ovals and rectangles "in the form and style of the ancients", framing either mythological paintings by Zucchi or delicate arabesques by Rose. In his description of it Robert explains its novel use in "imitation of a flat arch, which is extremely beautiful and much more perfect than that which is commonly called the cove ceiling when there is a height sufficient to admit of it, as

in the present case. The coved ceiling, which is a portion or quadrant of a circle around the room, and rising to a flat in the centre, seems to be altogether of modern invention, and admits of some elegance in the decoration". The coved form had of course been that chiefly favoured by himself, as it was by the Burlingtonians, but the barrel form at Kenwood now seemed to Adam, in his increasing tendency towards reproduction of the correct methods of the ancients, to justify ambitious handling by the experienced artist. Henceforth he was to repeat the experiment on special occasions, as at 20 St. James's Square, Old Derby House, and Headfort, County Meath.[1] The ground colours of his ceiling panels are in light tints of pink and green, "so as to take off the glare of white", to quote Adam's words again, "so common in every cieling, till of late. This has always appeared to me so cold and unfinished that I ventured to introduce this variety of grounds, at once to relieve the ornaments, remove the crudeness of the white, and to create a harmony between the ceiling and the side walls, with their hangings, pictures, and other decorations". This statement gives a clear interpretation of Adam's advanced preference for flat forms and tones, as opposed to the old-fashioned high plaster reliefs, in order to emphasise the basic structural vertebrae of decorative architecture. At the same time it foreshadows the discredit into which his new style was eventually to decline at the hands of inexperienced imitators, who by dabbling in their paint boxes merely applied their brushes to the surface of ceilings and walls without any regard to the fundamentals of architectonics.

For sheer simplicity of construction and refinement of decoration Robert Adam never surpassed his efforts in this room, to which he gave minute attention. In presenting illustrations of it in the *Works* he had bravely introduced his descriptions in these words: "Whatever defects, either in beauty or composition, shall be discovered in the following designs, they must be imputed to me alone." We do not suppose that his severest critic—and there are and have been many—has ever ventured to take up this particular challenge. The great room at Kenwood marks the culmination of Robert Adam's earliest or architectural period, wherein plastic values still held him enthralled, and the transition into his second or decorative period, to be distinguished rather by linear effects.

### PART II. *The Middle Period 1770–1780—Street Houses*

In his middle period Adam's exteriors lost their plastic for linear values, thus completely abandoning one of the dimensions stressed by the Burlingtonians in all their architecture. The result was that Adam's exteriors became less satisfactory, with the suppression of projections and reliefs, except upon his façades of narrow street architecture, where the suppression was not ill-considered and the ensuing austerity looked well enough. So with the Adelphi terrace (as seen across the wide expanse of river)

[1] At Headfort, however, Lord Bective, the owner, disregarded Adam's design for a barrel vault and substituted coves.

or with James's Portland Place elevations (where again the spectator may stand back for an uninterrupted full view in this broad street) something seems amiss. We look for and do not find any needed features to provide an accentuation of light and shade that we do find, for example, on the façade of Somerset House. Instead, the shallow relieving arches, the windows flush with the wall, and the thin strips of pilaster tend to sink unnoticed into the glare of the unadorned background. Robert's perspicuity and wisdom eventually guided him to correct this over-emphatic linear treatment of his façades, for in his last period there are signs that he was returning to the plastic dimension, as at Newliston, the Register House, and the University block in Edinburgh.

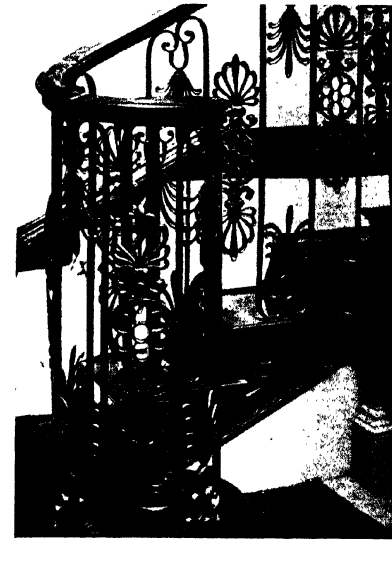
Of the four best known London street houses built in their entirety by Robert Adam during the 1770s, or middle period of his working life, three by some miraculous chance survive at the time of writing, whereas the fourth, Old Derby House in Grosvenor Square, disappeared many years ago, before the inter-war rage for destroying architectural works of art swept like a whirlwind over the face of Great Britain. Many other town buildings by both Robert and James Adam there were and still are known to be, not only in London but in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and even Brighton. But the four which we shall consider as examples were meant to be very much more than commercial speculations and they alone sufficiently prove Robert's consummate mastery of planning and decoration in this particularly restricted field of building. The London town houses are far and away his most splendid.

### *Chandos House, W.1*

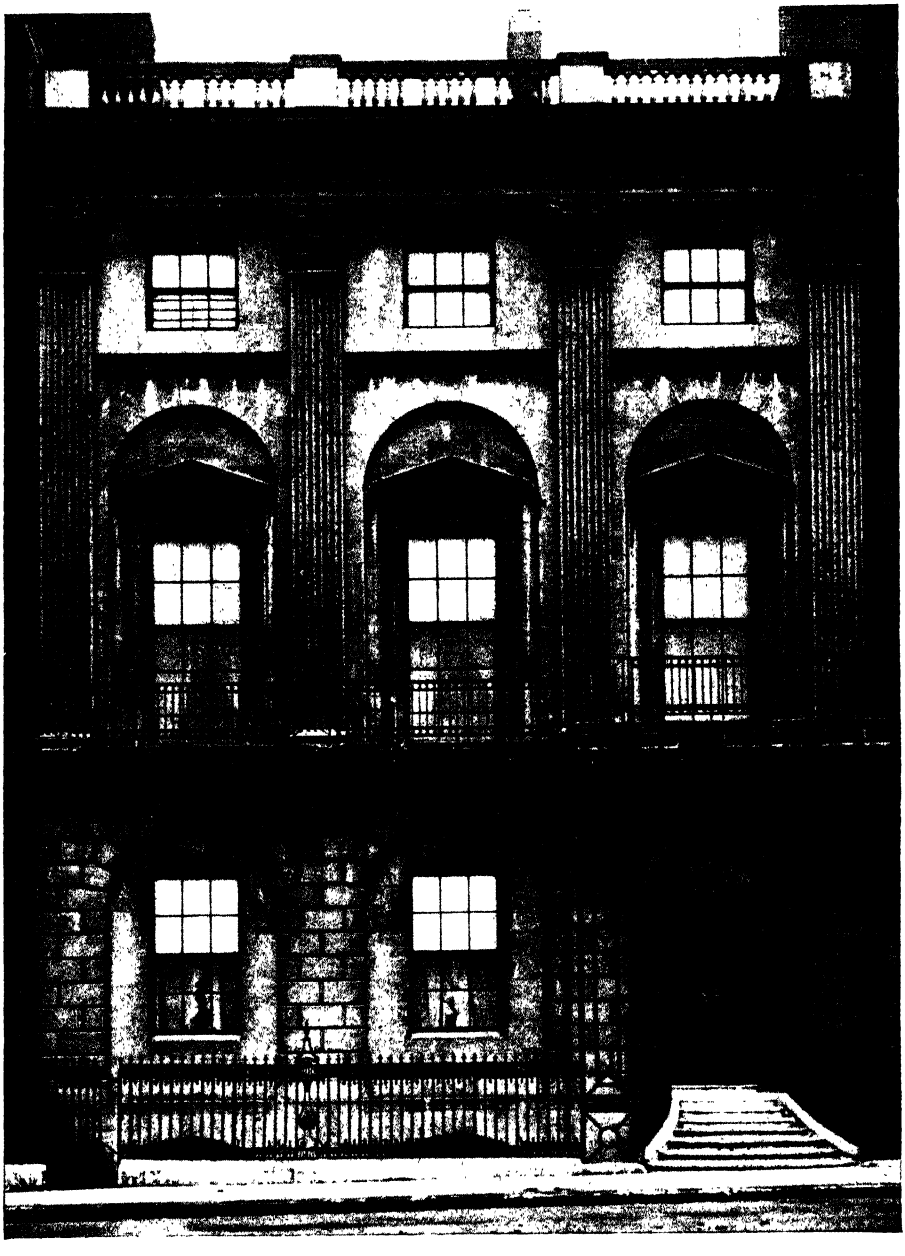
Chandos House, standing at the north-eastern extremity of Queen Anne Street, W.1, and overlooking the length of Chandos Street in the precincts of Mansfield Street (previously laid out by the brothers, Robert and James), was conceived in 1770 and built for the 3rd Duke of Buckingham and Chandos. The dates 1774 and 1775 under a ducal coronet upon two lead tanks in the back courtyard indicate that the house had just been finished about this time. It was inhabited by the Duke's family for forty years, the last Duchess of Chandos having rented it until her death in 1814. Three years later Prince Esterhazy, the Austrian Ambassador, was living here, and down to our own day successive families have made it their temporary and secondary home. In spite of the normal vicissitudes of London town residences and in spite of the surroundings of Chandos House having greatly changed in late years, the exterior and interior have been remarkably little altered. The street elevation, of smooth-faced ashlar with regular flush windows, is severe but exceedingly pleasing. Its distinctive feature is a projecting porch upon fluted columns under a prim entablature of chiselled rams'-heads linked by swags of husks. The beautiful area railings and lamp standards with their torch extinguishers are contemporary and serve to complete the proper setting. Successive owners have, however, inevitably reconstituted rooms, here throwing two

117 Chandos House, London: the Staircase Hall (*circa* 1771)

118 Stair balusters at 20 St. James's Square (*circa* 1773)



119 Stair balusters and newel at Kenwood (1767–8)



120 No. 20 St. James's Square: begun in 1772. The façade photographed in 1922 before recent alterations

into one, there stripping the woodwork, now adopting fashionable and bizarre colour-schemes. All the wall furnishings, specially made for the rooms, the girandoles, the chimney and pier glasses, have of course long been dispersed.

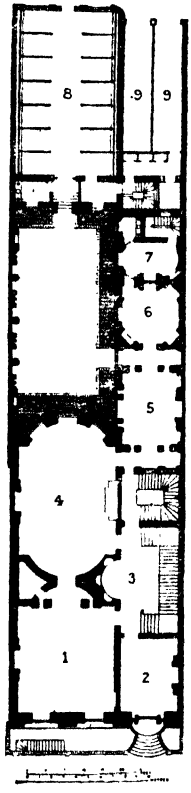
In the Soane Museum collection are preserved six drawings, dated 1771, for ceilings, all of which survive and faithfully agree with the architect's intentions. We may therefore be fairly satisfied that the rest of the interior features were executed in accordance with Adam's directions. Taken by themselves these features are by no means remarkable specimens of Adam's invention, and the chief attribute of Chandos House lies in Robert's unfailing dexterity, even better exemplified in his later town houses, in achieving a sense of space and grandeur within a restricted sphere and behind an unassuming façade. The entrance hall is square and roomy and is approached directly from the threshold of the porch. There is no Doric order here, as in Adam's larger and designedly grandiose halls. Only a massive stone chimneypiece with early console jambs and a plain ceiling with circular fan border introduce that sense of strength and simplicity which he intended to convey. The heads (changed to lions' now) and linking swag device of the porch are repeated upon the mantel and along the frieze. The finest achievement of the whole house is the staircase (117), deceptively spacious when we consider that the well is seven feet shorter in length than that at 20 St. James's Square. The wall panels are unadorned and the ample top lighting from the decorated dome illuminates the clean design of the wrought-iron balusters.

To the right of the entrance hall and the stairwell is the original eating-room, a columned screen at its north end forming Adam's favourite narthex, with independent soffit, and making the proportions of the room awkward. The ceiling recalls that of the early Shardeloes dining-room, of intertwined bacchic wreaths, but here the plaster relief is low and thin. The library and study at the back of the ground floor have lately been thrown into one to form the present dining-room. On the first floor the three main rooms have the same disposition as those below, and the painted medallions on the ceiling of the second drawing-room, with its segmental bay window, are signed by Angelica Kauffmann. Though all the original wall and ceiling colours of Chandos House have disappeared, most if not all the interior decoration remains. Already we detect a marked departure from the robust, three-dimensional treatment of Hatchlands and Croome and an assumption of that flat, flimsy, and slightly conventional form that Horace Walpole so vociferously deplored.

### 20 *St. James's Square, S.W.*1

The planning of 20 St. James's Square (120) closely resembles that of Chandos House, only in reverse, but the scale and decoration of the building show a distinct advance upon its predecessor's. No. 20 was begun in 1772 for the opulent Welsh baronet Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, who was not only a sympathetic client and close personal friend of Adam, but

a man with a genuine love of the arts and always at the fore in his lavish patronage of any new artistic enterprise. The rich and seemingly boundless estates owned by Sir Watkin amounted to a principality, and the income from them was habitually spent by their lord in amassing whatever architects, painters, sculptors, and manufacturers of virtu could tempt him of their choicest. Thus, for instance, we have Josiah Wedgwood writing to his partner in 1769 that Sir Watkin has ordered some of the potter's very first made Etruscan vases, no matter what the cost.




Ground Plan of Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn's House, 20 St. James's Square

1. Eating Room
2. Porter's Hall
3. Great Stairs
4. Music-Room
5. Library
6. Sir Watkin's Dressing-Room
7. Powdering-Room
8. Stables
9. Coach-house

It is obvious that Robert at No. 20 had eagerly put into his decoration the best of which he was capable without fear of ignorant interference or parsimonious restraint on the part of his client. In the *Works* he was proud to illustrate the house very profusely as an example of how an architect, given a free hand, was capable of completing a decorative scheme down to the last detail, for the plates even depict Sir Watkin's sedan chair, Sir Watkin's door-knocker, and Lady Williams-Wynn's watch-case. When Mr. Bolton published his two volumes, No. 20 was still the private residence of Her Majesty the Queen's father, Lord Strathmore, and the photographs show the magnificent rooms with much of their original furnishings. Now unfortunately all the rare contents are dispersed; the house has since become the offices of the Distillers Company, to whose exceptional appreciation and care great tribute is due and to whom every sympathy must be extended over the severe injuries the building received during the war. The noble street façade with its fluted Corinthian pilasters and pedimented windows under relieving arches on the first floor has been duplicated upon the adjoining house, which is likewise the property of the Distillers Company. Through the front door of No. 20 we enter a porter's hall purposely made smaller than that at Chandos House in order to give greater grandeur to the square eating-room alongside it and greater length to the stairwell behind it. This

stairwell reveals masterly planning. It cleverly conveys a palatial sense of space within the length provided and a deceptive breadth by the generous apse, with its three niches, so disposed to fit in with the oval music-room on the ground floor and the second withdrawing-room above it. The head of the stairwell is extremely effective, for its ceiling is coved, ornamented with stucco arabesques in bold relief and its top walls finished with shallow blind arcading determined by flat pilasters.

The front room, or eating-room, on the ground floor has a screen of columns, with rams'-heads in their capitals, before the end recess; the ceiling is composed of octagons containing rosettes in the Roman manner, as in the gallery at Croome Court. The sumptuous furniture and extremely effective chimney-glass, framed by terminal figures holding husk swags in their hands and bearing urns upon their heads, that lent such lustre to the room, have now gone. The curved mahogany doors and the door furniture are of the finest quality. The white marble chimneypiece was probably supplied by Wedgwood. Behind the eating-room comes the music room with its two apsidal ends. The flat ceiling with fan ornamentation in low relief and five painted roundel panels is the very quintessence of elegant refinement. The walls are appropriately embellished with panels "to have stucco ornaments with Lyre Girandoles introduced".

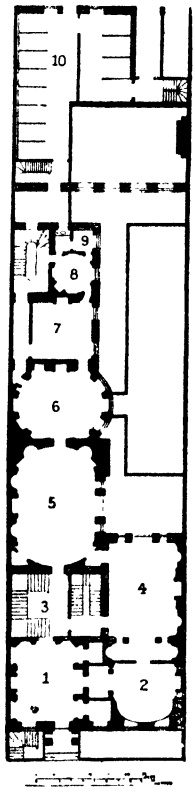
Until fairly recently a theatrical view was to be enjoyed from the back windows of this room, of the paved court, stable, and laundry buildings, themselves forming the most spectacular and enchanting part of the whole ensemble. Adam's plate of the courtyard in the *Works* shows between the house and the stable block the connecting wall with its serried Venetian openings, statues upon circular pedestals under the arcades and small satyr terms carrying vases in the intercolumniations. Alas! this exquisite stage setting has completely disappeared.

Upon the first floor the back room, or second withdrawing room, is the show piece of the house (123). It is surely the most superb surviving specimen of a highly decorated state apartment in London, and it is greatly to be hoped that its owners will see their way to reinstate it. Its beauty and interest lie in the exquisite semi-domes at each extremity, the great segmental barrel ceiling apportioned into wide intersecting bands and lunettes of elaborate stucco, painted in Pompeiian reds and greens. This ceiling vies with that of the great room at Kenwood in representing Robert Adam's middle-period style of developed decoration that has not yet deteriorated into the cheap or flimsy.

### *Derby House, Grosvenor Square, W.1*

Magnificent as 20 St. James's Square is—or until quite recently was, and may be again—Derby House, in Grosvenor Square, must, from contemporary accounts and the Adam drawings of it that survive, have eclipsed it. These drawings in Robert's hand date from 1773–4. A letter from

Horace Walpole to the Countess of Upper Ossory, written as early as 30th April, 1773, gives a detailed description of the brilliant reception held in the house, before it was near completion, by Lord Stanley, soon to become the 12th Earl of Derby. Walpole's pen on this occasion traces in its swift and trenchant passage his vivid recollection of yesterday's fashionable guests rather than of the decorative details of Lord Stanley's new town residence. Through the chinks occasionally allowed us in the dense throng of the "French horns and clarionets in laced uniforms and feathers" at this evening's entertainment, of the "bevy of vestals in white habits, making tea", and nymphs in "errant sheperdly dresses" or in "banians with fur", we may just steal a favourable glimpse of "coloured glass lanthorns" in the dome of the staircase, then "a drapery of sarcenet . . . red and green pilasters, more sarcenet" of the temporary decoration. It is a tantalising picture, for it withholds too much that we should really like to know.



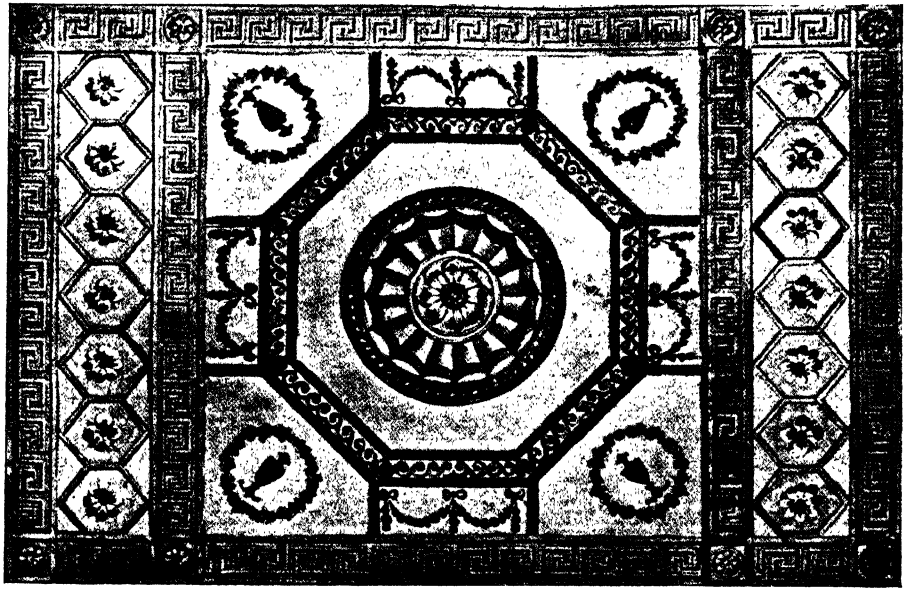

Ground Plan of Lord Derby's House, 26 Grosvenor Square (Now demolished)

1. The Hall
2. Anteroom
3. Great Stairs
4. Parlour
5. Great Eating-Room
6. Library
7. Lord Derby's Dressing-Room
8. Closet
9. Powdering-Room
10. Stables, etc.

Robert's drawings are, as we would expect, rather more precise, but even they show signs of the great pressure put upon him in getting the house properly in order for the ensuing wedding-feast of Lord Stanley and Lady Betty Hamilton, his bride, in May of the next year. A hasty pencil note on the back of a design for the ceiling of the nuptial chamber explains "the figure of night sowing poppies", an allegory that can have had surely little soporific effect upon the tormented mind of the young wife, whose experience of Hymen with a brute of a husband was misery indeed. Another note states "this is drawn at large and ready for Mr. Rose", which indicates the high finish to be expected from the stucco ornaments.

In the *Works*, however, we get the only indication how the house must have looked in the common light of day, for there is nothing fanciful or

121 Derby House, Grosvenor Square, London: designed 1773–4 for Lord Stanley. From a plate in the *Works in Architecture*



122 Design (1778) for a carpet at Wormleybury for Sir Abraham Hume, Bart.

123 No. 20 St. James's Square, London: the Second Withdrawing-Room (*circa* 1773), the most highly decorated state apartment in London

sensational in the prosaic, measured records of the plates. The chief innovation, which the brothers were constrained to advertise, in Lord Stanley's town house was the Etruscan variety of decoration, which in their opinion they had lately brought to a pitch of perfection. Robert's experiment at Derby House preceded by a year or two his only surviving Etruscan room at Osterley. The Etruscan style the brothers are careful to claim in the Preface as something quite novel and original, differing "from anything hitherto practised in Europe; for, although the style of the ornament, and the colouring of the Countess of Derby's dressing-room, are both evidently imitated from the vases and urns of the Etruscans, yet we have not been able to discover, either in our researches into antiquity, or in the works of modern artists, any idea of applying this taste to the decoration of apartments".

The illustrations in the *Works* are alone sufficient to prove that Robert Adam had produced a suite of staterooms at Derby House in the most up-to-date taste and of unexampled magnificence, which convinced the world of fashion and patronage that his firm's ingenuities and resources were by no means exhausted.

### *Home House, Portman Square, W.2*

The climax as well as the turning-point of Robert Adam's decorative period, in so far as we are able to judge from what remains to us of his work, may well be summarised in Home House, Portman Square. The quality of workmanship displayed in the whole range of its lavish and over exquisite apartments is still wonderfully sustained: on the other hand there is clear evidence of a falling off of Robert's inventive powers and a too easy reliance upon the conventional stratagems he had by now evolved from prolonged study and application of the antique methods of interior decoration.

Home House stands a highly finished and complete example of a town house in the grand Adam manner. The vagaries of successive owners and residents have left quite unusually little imprint of divergent tastes or styles upon the original. Furthermore, in this uncertain world its future seems fairly assured; it is in the ownership of the Courtauld Institute of Art. By 1769 the east, west, and south sides of Portman Square were in process of building, and readers of *Evelina*, first published in 1778, will recollect how this new London square had already become a favourite resort for people of fashion and *ton*. For several years, however, the north side of the square was to remain vacant and uncompleted. Then, beginning from its eastern end, Nos. 11–15 were undertaken by the rising architect, young James Wyatt. No. 16 is probably by Robert Adam and Nos. 17–21, the remaining houses at the western end, are certainly his. Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell very plausibly attributes the superlative magnificence of Home House, or No. 20, in some measure to Adam's resolution to outshine a dangerous rival and prove to the world of liberal clients, not yet affected by the economic setback of the American

War, that he could still be reckoned the leading architect of the age. This may very well have been Adam's prevailing motive, but consideration of dates should make us just a little cautious. In the first place, the Pantheon, which was Wyatt's initial building to burst upon an admiring world, was not completed and open to view until 1772. In the second place, we know that Nos. 11–15 Portman Square were not even roofed until 1777, quite two years after Robert had dated his drawings for ceilings and walls at Home House and the very year when his work there was finished. Wyatt's No. 14, again, was still a vacant site in 1780 and his No. 15 in 1782. The fact that Adam was the first to complete his share of the north side of the square does not, of course, preclude the possibility that Wyatt had been the first to receive his commission from the contractor who laid out this area. Our knowledge of Adam's habitual speed in tackling a new job and his business-like methods of work and of Wyatt's extreme dilatoriness and slip-shod methods may just possibly point to the older man having stolen a march upon his young rival. Adam may have been aware of Wyatt's share of the block and accordingly hastened his own efforts for the Countess of Home.

Elizabeth Dowager Countess and eccentric widow of the 8th Earl of Home was the daughter and heiress of a Jamaican merchant, and on account of her Billingsgate language was christened by the chairmen and local riffraff the Queen of Hell. While Robert Adam was embellishing her new town house at No. 20, the rate books inform us that she was residing at No. 43 on the south side across the way. She was not to pay the rates on No. 20 until 1778, the year after the house was finished. Compared with Adam's other street houses Home House is exceptional in the width of its site, for the frontage measures 65 feet and so puts it for size and cubic capacity into a category apart. It is absolutely clear that, whatever his motives, Robert took immense pains over the building for his rich and extravagant client, who herself was determined to effect a splendour that would at least dazzle the world in which she aspired to move—a world which had hitherto regarded her as a slightly ludicrous parvenue. Nor was her architect content to treat the outside of No. 20 in a parsimonious or austere manner. The material he used for the long façade was a stock brick, relieved over the first floor by rectangular panels, between graceful continuous bands, made of the new artificial Coade stone, and displaying swags and paterae. A pedimented projecting porch, not in the middle of the elevation, and delicate iron railings with standards complete the street frontage. The top storey and the disproportionate balcony are later additions for which Adam was not responsible. The back elevation is no less interesting and more varied. It is a vertical composition with coupled Venetian windows and a central semi-circular portico.

As to the planning there is nothing cramped about it, especially since there are five ample windows to each elevation. In spite of the unusually generous area allowed by the site, a glance at the plan reveals a careful

manipulation of circular and apsidal forms without any apparent waste of space or sacrifice of utility and convenience to aesthetic display. The nuclear feature is the circular stairwell of unique design, carried out with minute regard to Robert's original drawings. The only divergencies in the execution have been a slight enlargement of the light in the dome and the omission of the connecting screen bearing a lamp upon it at the entrance. This last feature was apparently never carried out at all. At a slightly later date the walls of the staircase and entrance hall were covered with marble paper, which has acquired an attractive burnt Sienna surface and polish. The front parlour, of ample proportions, is remarkable for its four unusual angle columns of porphyry scagliola. The classical compositions of the ceiling panels are attributed to Zucchi, the actual figures to his wife, Angelica. The back parlour on the ground floor exhibits a Corinthian order of panelled and decorated pilasters. Below the frieze of the order and between the capitals depend slender swags of drapery, the lights and shadows of the folds being meticulously delineated. The built-in cupboards of the exedrae and the veneered doors of the apse are of highly finished joinery. In the library the central feature of each wall is a recess, one of which encloses the fireplace. The painted canvas panels of the ceiling are signed "Ant. Zucchi, 1776" and one of the medallions depicts a portrait [1] of the architect.

Upstairs the most extravagantly decorated apartment is the music room (108). Indeed, there is no other Adam room in existence that reaches a higher culmination of linear and geometrical decoration. Here there is absolutely no vestige of the plastic dimension that the Burlingtonians had made compulsive. All is two-dimensional, flat, vertical, and finical. In spite of the resultant insipidity of the design, we cannot but marvel at the skilful complexity of the geometrical circles and ellipses which miraculously resolve themselves into an ordered if bewildering whole. One gasps not in admiration so much as astonishment at the architect's ingenuity, in the same way that one congratulates the contrivers of those topiary mazes in country house gardens not for their aesthetic but for their mathematical achievement. Even so, certain eliminations made in the nineteenth century reduced the excessive linear refinements of the music room, when the swag-draped looking-glasses were removed from the forest of pilasters. A further deprivation is the absence of the organ case provided in Robert's original scheme, for the design for it shows a delicate beauty that surpassed even those proposed for Kedleston, Newby, and 20 St. James's Square. The actual ceiling faithfully follows the original design and completes the effect of "a fine spider's web on a frosty morning", to quote Mr. Sitwell's impression of this perplexing *tour de force* of interior decoration.

The second drawing-room in green and gold is no less intricate than the music room, but more pleasing. The rich marble chimneypiece with

[1] Zucchi painted a similar but larger portrait in monochrome of Robert Adam as a young man in the drawing-room at Mersham-le-Hatch.

ormolu inlay and the framed Angelica ovals above the doorheads give a clear foretaste of Adam's influence upon the Louis XVI style about to emerge across the channel. The little Etruscan room on this floor has now entirely lost its decoration, which from the drawings must have been shallow and unconvincing.

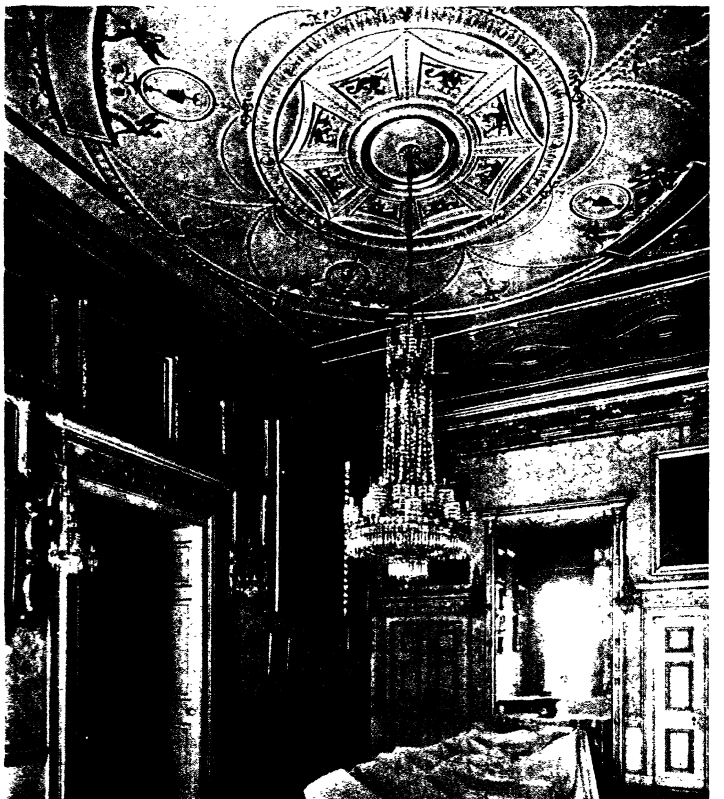
## PART III. *The Late Period, 1780–1792—Public Buildings*

We now approach the last of the three periods to which we have arbitrarily subjected Robert Adam's professional career. It is one of ambitious promise, but almost consistent unfulfilment. We have already seen how Robert's first essay at a building on the monumental scale met with financial disaster over the Adelphi scheme in 1772. The brothers were seldom daunted and even before they had cleared themselves of this disaster, which all but wrecked that public good faith upon which every sound business enterprise must be established, they were laying out plans for the development of Mansfield Street. The houses in this street, then situated at the northernmost extremity of London, are of academic interest in that they were the forerunners of those greater individual efforts that we have just described, namely Chandos House, No. 20 St. James's Square, and Home House. But judged as a terrace entity or as individual units, the houses in Mansfield Street are not architecturally satisfying. Mass produced for purely speculative purposes, they neither achieved unanimity of elevation nor careful decorative treatment. Throughout the twelve houses built, for example, only two different ceiling motifs are discernible.

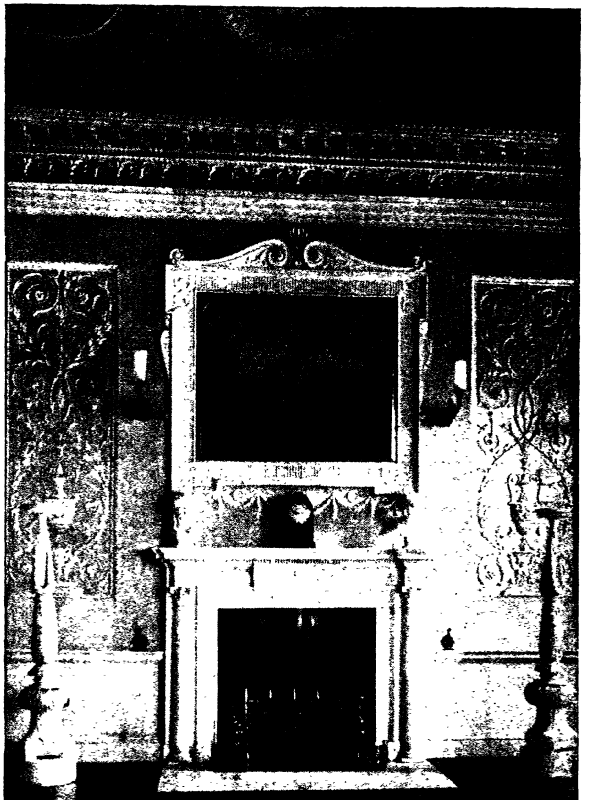
### *Portland Place, W.1*

In 1773 the brothers embarked upon their first major town planning scheme after the Adelphi, and it proved abortive. The documents in the Soane Museum reveal that in the following year their plans for Portland Place were completed. Before these plans could be acted upon the outbreak of the War of American Independence intervened. It gravely shook the confidence of London society in the stability of their inherited fortunes and whispered an unexpected caution to attend to their purses. Thus the immediate result was that the Adams' noble patrons just had time to arrest the scheme for the large town palaces they had commissioned before retiring to an enforced contentment with their country mansions. After an interval the scare subsided and confidence returned, but not to the same unbounded extent. Portland Place was accordingly finished in a far more modest fashion than that originally contemplated, of which all that survives to-day is the generous width of the impressive layout.

The original almost continental scheme, which was Robert's conception, was for a succession of detached palaces, each vying with Lansdowne House in scale and magnificence, that would, if carried out, have effectively stifled the echo of Madame du Boccage's jibes at the paucity of London noblemen's residences. Portland Place, as its name implies,



124 Apsley House, London: a room by Robert Adam (*circa* 1771) for Lord Bathurst



125 Bowood, Wiltshire: the Great Drawing-Room (1763–4)

126 Fitzroy Square, London: the eastern side (1790), showing Adam's return to a bold massing of exterior groups

was not meant to be a thoroughfare at all. At its London end Foley House, on the site of the present Langham Hotel, was to have been the focal point of the development. To the south its large expanse of grounds would be bounded by the line of the present Mortimer Street. To the north its front would face, across a long formal parterre, Marylebone Farm and the green fields beyond. On either side of the broad vista or place, other palaces hardly less impressive in size and scale would range, amongst them Findlater House, with its segmental pillared porch, and Kerry House, an enormous edifice with two wings, each of which would to-day be considered adequate for the needs of an oriental potentate. With the abandonment of the scheme upon the outbreak of the war, Robert lost interest and surrendered all his prerogatives entirely to James. So we find in the Soane collections a design by James Adam for a western block of Portland Place that fairly closely resembles our recent recollection of that erstwhile noble street which the 1920s and 30s thought fit to destroy piecemeal. James's elevation of nine attached houses was for a length of 400 feet. It was not carried out, since nowhere between the intersecting streets is there space enough for any one block of such dimensions. Yet the design no doubt served for the modified finished version of the middle block. The centre house in the design was more or less followed by the centre house in the middle west block and reflected even more faithfully in its opposite number on the east side. These centre houses, now disappeared, had, like their prototype of the design, over a rusticated ground floor a pilastered and pedimented front with crowning balustrade; and, though flat in treatment, were definitely Palladian in conception. Both in the design and in actuality the centre houses were stuccoed, the rest on either side being of plain stock brick. So many builders were subsequently engaged upon the individual houses that James can have exercised little control over the scheme beyond preserving a certain uniformity in the length of the block façades. It was left to Nash to complete the north end of Portland Place, which the American War and Robert's loss of interest had seriously jeopardised in the first instance, and to add the Crescent facing Regent's Park.

### *Fitzroy Square, W.1*

Towards the end of his life Robert's interest in the layout of whole town areas was to be resuscitated. Of his ultimate endeavours hardly anything now survives. In London and Edinburgh, however, the present Fitzroy and Charlotte Squares were begun by him, and over both he took the greatest care, as we may judge from his painstaking designs. Neither of them, unfortunately, was completed on account of the outbreak of the wars of the French Revolution and his subsequent death. In each case only two of the four sides are his, and they have suffered from the subsequent disregard for symmetry and subordination of artistic to utilitarian considerations that characterised the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Fitzroy Square (126), situated in a squalid backwater, bounded by the Euston Road and Tottenham Court Road, was begun in 1790. Only the eastern side, which is undoubtedly the better, and the south side, which is far poorer in design, are of Adam derivation. The two other were erected later and showed the influence of Greek Revival taste. The chief factor noticeable here, as in the Edinburgh square, is the unexpected adornment of Adam's elevations. Throughout his early and middle periods we have remarked how the architect tended more and more to treat the elevations of his buildings simply and severely, while concentrating his embellishments more and more upon his interiors. In the last years of his life the very reverse is the case. Robert returned to a bold massing of his exterior groups, whereas he positively abandoned the rich decorative effects of his interiors. A comparison between the Adelphi terrace and the east block of Fitzroy Square plainly demonstrates this reversal of policy. In the earlier work the unadorned cliff-like structure fronting the Thames was devoid of component ornament and relied for its effects entirely upon the too gentle verticality of its applied pilaster strips and the regimentation of narrow voids without surrounds. Within, however, the terrace comprised—and the Garricks' and the Adams' houses were typical examples—some of the most sumptuous decoration of Robert's middle period. Here in Fitzroy Square the centre house of the east front is of complicated geometrical design, with its projecting angles and engaged Ionic columns supporting the recessed entablature. Mr. Bolton read into this Adam volte-face an indication of the changing conditions of the time brought about by a succession of wars and their invariably degenerating influence upon standards of taste and art. To him the careful composition of the Fitzroy Square elevation was unconvincingly showy and a foretaste of the "theatricalities" of the Regent's Park, where Nash and his school were to screen their feeble interiors with thin fronts of stage scenery. But this generalisation is too sweeping and casual. There is nothing insubstantial in Robert's beautiful Portland stone block, if we except the trimmings in Liardet's cement, which, being incidental, have flaked away without in the least depreciating the texture or composition of their background. On the contrary, the component features as well as the material of the Fitzroy Square façade are further removed from Regency frivolities than are those of the Adelphi. Instead, they point to a new development by Adam of the old methods of his predecessors in a more positive and robust spirit, and they would surely have passed muster even in meeting the exacting standards of the Palladians. As for the interiors of the Fitzroy Square houses, these were, it is true, finished after Adam's death, when his scheme for the division of the houses was altered, but the indications are that he intended them to be of only the simplest decorative character.

### *Charlotte Square, Edinburgh*

The square in Edinburgh named after George III's queen in the early 1790s (127) was intended to be the culminating feature of the western

extension of the New Town, then in course of layout. It was to balance St. Andrew's Square, already built at the eastern end of the axis, which was the straight, wide George Street. Parallel to George Street and at right angles across it a series of important thoroughfares completed the scheme. Robert Adam was largely concerned in the evolution of the New Town at Edinburgh, which was to cost its citizens £3,000,000 before it was fully finished. A number of individual houses in Queen Street, Castle Street, and others are known to be his in their entirety.

"Robert Adam, Architect to the Square, 1791" is the inscription upon the plan preserved in the City Offices at Edinburgh. Once again we find Adam with elaborate care preparing designs for a public work of extreme elegance and magnificence that was destined not to be completed. Death cut short his supervision of its building. The outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars in the following year prohibited even a posthumous fulfilment of the scheme he adumbrated. When work upon the square was ultimately resumed, the City Corporation's short-sighted economy dictated an abandonment of Robert's plan in favour of a haphazard compromise that in the end proved more expensive than the great architect's own estimate. At least the north side of the square was built by Adam fairly faithfully from his designs and, since it has so far been spared demolition, it forms probably the most complete elevation in Robert's residential street architecture to survive. What is more, the north block is almost unique in retaining its original area railings and lamp standards down to the glass bowls. Unfortunately at some recent date the residents of the centre house and of the end houses in the row have been allowed to mar the skyline by the addition of unsightly roof dormers and the first floor windows of two others have been disastrously lowered so as to cut through the string courses.

As at Fitzroy Square in London Adam's design for the north elevation of Charlotte Square shows the same concentration upon the massing of separate groups, the same abandonment of the linear emphasis of his middle period and a distinct return to the plastic dimension. In fact, the resemblance between the blocks of the two squares, both undertaken at practically the same date, just before his death, is so close that the least observant admirer must acknowledge a common authorship. The grouping is precisely the same in both cases, even if the designs for the central and end bays vary. The block is longer at Fitzroy Square, where the architect has added an attic storey that is missing upon that at Charlotte Square. In both squares the architect has indulged in free play upon recessed semi-circular heads, in a developed form of Venetian opening for the end bays, and in an integrally Palladian central feature. Upon the Charlotte Square elevation the central feature is wider and more pronounced in spite of the reduced length of the whole front, for it consists of a full tetrastyle flanked by projecting distylar angles, all under one entablature.

The south side, which Adam intended to be a reproduction of the

north, was repeated fairly carefully at a later date, apart from the return ends. These, of which he had made an eminently satisfactory feature on the north side, were entirely neglected, and the hand of the artist is noticeably lacking on this correct but lifeless facsimile. As for the east and west sides, the first is so thoroughly a departure from Adam's design that the result cannot be identified with it at all. The second was so flagrantly abused by Sir Robert Reid that the original design which it travesties is even more to be regretted. Robert's scheme for the west side was very ambitious, but had it succeeded would have surpassed all other classical conceptions in Edinburgh. He had intended St. George's Church to dominate the centre of this side, facing eastwards over the square and down the noble length of George Street. On either side of the church were to be two detached balancing blocks of from five to six houses each. A comparison of Robert's design with the finished side will show how signally Reid failed when he tampered with the other's scheme in 1811–14. For Robert's elegant church, essentially related to the blocks, Reid substituted a lumpish affair of his own, out of scale with and overcrowding the neighbouring blocks on its flank and entirely disregarding their emphatic cornice line.

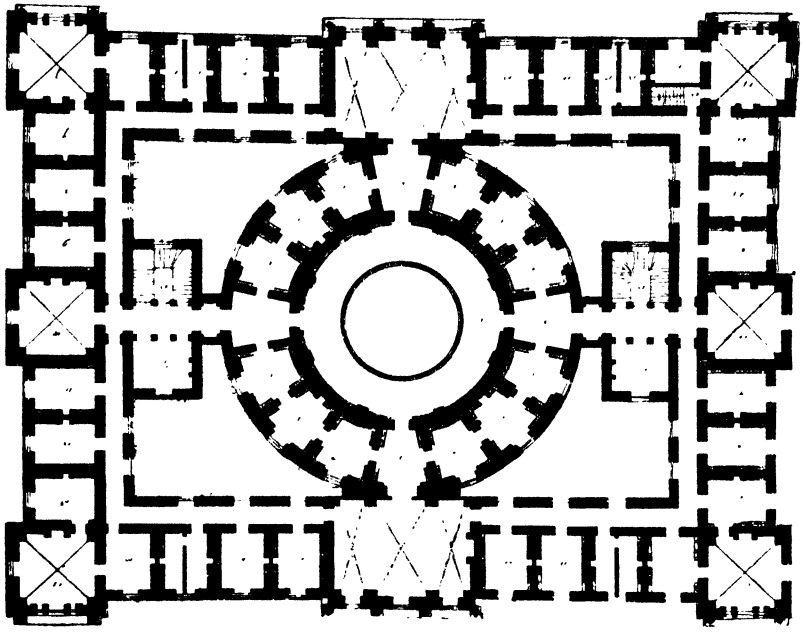
From the last year of his life there dates a design by Robert Adam for an additional west front to the old Parliament House in Edinburgh to provide accommodation for the College of Justice and a library for the Dean and Faculty of Advocates as well as another library for the Writers to the Signet. But this proposition was allowed to lapse, as had been a number of other Edinburgh schemes on the grand scale of slightly earlier date. Of these were a massive block of houses, with a terrace and shops underneath, for Leith Street and a series of palatial blocks of houses and shops upon the South Bridge.

### *The Register House, Edinburgh*

Robert Adam died in March 1792 and the Register House in Edinburgh (129), which had taken twenty years to build, was, apart from its interior decoration, finished the same year. It may therefore safely be accounted almost entirely Robert's own work, and although by no means the finest of his known conceptions of a public building on the monumental scale, it is the only one to have been carried out under his personal superintendence from beginning to end and to survive into our distracted era. As such the Register House is a work of supreme importance to the student of Adam architecture. It has admittedly been subjected to minor modifications and even mutilations throughout its century and a half's history. The Adam block was, moreover, extended by Sir Robert Reid after 1792 and again by W. H. Playfair in 1815–16, without serious detriment to the character of the original composition. As well as being the most complete of Robert Adam's public works, it is the best documented, for the year to year records of its construction have been preserved in the Register House to this day. In addition to the valuable "Official Record of the

Building" are several portfolios of Robert's working drawings. These, in ink upon coarse paper, portray for the direction of the builders and artificers innumerable details of cantilever consoles and pendants, metal-work balustrading and standards, brass gratings in the form of paterae for the hot air vents and the usual galaxy of mouldings for cornices, doorways, and fittings.

The "Official Record" of the long process in carrying through the scheme opens in 1765, although the actual site had not been determined at that early date. The first reference to Robert Adam's name is made in 1769, when it is coupled with that of James, the two brothers having con-



The Register House, Edinburgh: plan of the second storey

sented in September to provide plans. This information was imparted to the trustees appointed to erect a worthy building in which to house the nation's historical records by the Lord Register of Scotland, Lord Frederick Campbell. He, a younger son of the 4th Duke of Argyll, was the chief promoter and compelling force throughout the whole procedure, and his handsome portrait by Raeburn hangs to-day in the place of honour under the dome of the rotunda. A minute of 1772 records that the final and present site had been purchased and the brothers' plans approved by the trustees as "well calculated to answer the purposes intended". The same minute discloses the following exceedingly interesting information upon the terms propounded by the brothers.

"The Lord Register reported that he had received a letter from Mr. Robert Adam, to the effect that he and his brother James were willing to furnish all the figured drawings, and all the various parts at large contained in the said plan, as the same might be wanted in course of the work, and that they would visit the work once every year if necessary, or once in two years, at the rate of 2½ per cent. on the money expended on the building, and 50 guineas as the expense of each journey to Edinburgh, without charging anything for the plan already drawn, or their trouble in adjusting thereof. The trustees accept of Messrs. Adams' offer."

From this record we learn that the brothers' terms were reasonable and even generous. The percentage for which they asked was by no means high, nor was the allowance for travelling from London to Edinburgh excessive. In view of their permanent residence in London it was essential that a reliable clerk of the works should be engaged, and so the minute proceeds with the appointment to this office, on Robert's express recommendation, of a Mr. James Salisbury, "in whose honesty, diligence, sobriety, and capacity his brother and he had already had great experience". The clerk's salary is accordingly fixed at £100 a year, plus the expense of his journey to Scotland. John Adam, described as "Architect in Edinburgh", the eldest of the brethren, is, irrationally enough, made arbiter between Robert and Salisbury in the event of a future dispute between the "Surveyor of the Works" and his clerk, and John's "decision shall be final".

A letter from Robert and James Adam written this same year to the trustees provides illuminating data upon a number of technical matters. It contains a list of suggested prices for the stone to be used for ashlar facing, doorways, and pavements, and shows how the writers arrived at their figures. It lays down how they propose the stone shall be differently dressed for "droved and polished ashlar" and ordains that "no spots or stains in stones to be used on South Front of Register House", where to this day the texture is admirably preserved in spite of the surface blackening. It suggests that a "thorough good bricklayer with an assistant from London" should be employed, with the interesting observation that "we see none of that branch done well here", implying that the Adams put little faith in their own countrymen for this particular workmanship at least, in spite of Garrick's well-known assurance to Boswell in 1775 that all the brothers' workmen were Scots. Finally the letter enjoins that there shall be no building operations during the winter months, "that is after the last day of October nor before the 1st March, and the same to be carried on so leisurely from year to year, as to allow the parts built successively to settle, and consolidate". There was in fact to be no hurry over the execution of a work of art designed to be of lasting consequence.

In 1774 the foundation-stone was laid by the trustees in the presence of Robert. Thereafter, during his prolonged absences in England, the supervision of the work seems rather to have rested with his brother John, at that time resident in Edinburgh, who, according to the minutes, paid

constant visits to the site. In February 1776 it was expected that the south front would be built as far as the cornice by the end of the ensuing season. The next year Robert expresses to the trustees a hope that the building may be fully completed by the end of 1777. He reiterates this hope in a letter to Lord Frederick written in August, and states his satisfaction with the workmanship of the building in every particular. The letter reveals Robert's extraordinarily intimate knowledge of the work in progress down to the smallest detail.

Everything then seemed to be proceeding pleasantly and smoothly, if somewhat tardily, along the lines laid down in the brothers' plans and designs of 1772. Whereupon a halt, to be of long duration, abruptly occurs. There is a pronounced hiatus in the minutes until 1784, when, in consideration of all Robert's trouble in the past and the long delay in paying the money owed him, the trustees vote him a bonus of 150 guineas. Something serious had evidently happened to stop the work and bring about the long idle interval, and there are hints of wage difficulties, the contractors complaining that they have had to raise their workmen's pay from 1*s.* 6*d.* to 2*s.* a day and the trustees that the contractors' costs are mounting. But in this year the architect is called upon to put the finishing touches to the interior of the dome, the towers, inner courts, staircases, and drains. Again the record continues in the same tabulated and precise manner as before, and detailed work is noted down as it occurs. In September 1788 we are told that doors have yet to be provided for the different rooms and a heating system for the rotunda: "Four stoves to be built in the centre, round a cylinder of fire brick, covered with a plate of cast iron with proper flues below the pavement for warming the Dome." Adam had devised similar apparatuses to warm his domes at Newby and at Kedleston, where cast-iron stoves designed to resemble antique sacrificial altars wafted the irregular and intermittent gusts. Here the heat was to be emitted through vents in the floor, for which several designs are included in the portfolios of his working drawings and of which none seemed to have found favour. In addition, provision was made for "fitting up two cisterns and bringing in water for W.C. in the back courts", for a wind dial and a clock dial in the west and east turrets.

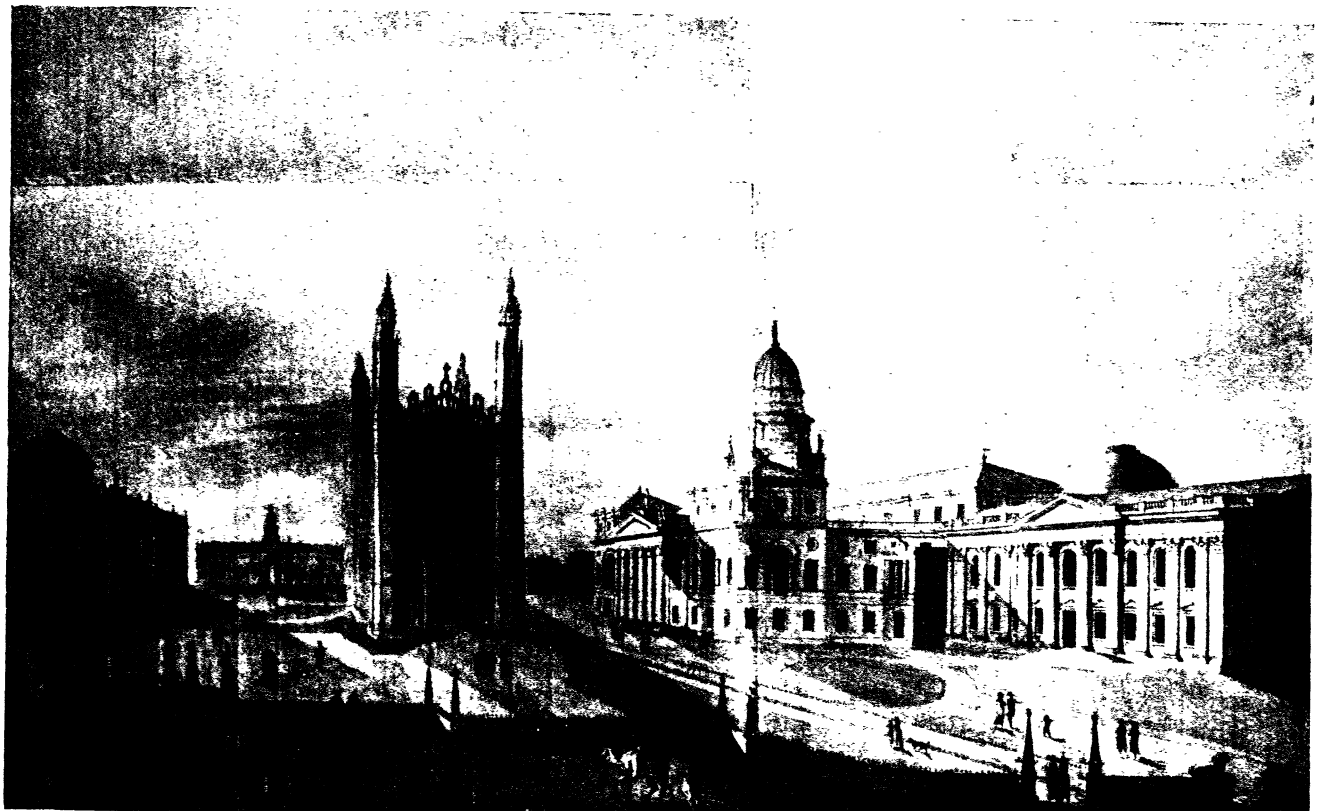
So the entries are religiously jotted down until the date of Robert's death and even after. But by 1792 the Register House can, for our purposes, be deemed complete. A total of £37,643 11*s.* 7*d.* had been expended upon the building and we are told that out of this sum Robert received £1,245 16*s.* 6*d.* for his services, and his clerk of the works, Salisbury, £1,800. We have already said that at Robert's death the decoration of the interior had still to be finished. In actual fact the only apartment to be decorated by him is the rotunda itself, where there is nothing finical about its treatment, which is in essence purely constructional. The bookcase bays under elliptical heads are extremely plain, their only ornamentation being the robust console scrolls upon the divisional jambs. The circular iron balustrade of the gallery, upheld by

cantilever brackets, is of the very chastest design. The arched recesses of the upstair bookcases are of Roman severity of outline. The plaster ceiling of the dome, with its circle of hexagons above cameo medallions, is likewise of comparatively simple device, and was, presumably, evolved by Adam not much before 1785, when a minute records the decision "to finish the ceiling of the dome agreeable to a design given by Mr. Adam". The pattern is certainly far removed from the fussy geometrical types designed by the architect for country and town houses in his middle period of the 1770s. The bold vaulted passages that abound in the buildings are as severely constructional as can be, and we may well suppose were never intended to be subjected to further decorative embellishment. The bare contours of the rest of the apartments in the Adam block and the lack of any surviving designs for walls or ceilings lead us to suppose, moreover, that they were meant to convey the starkest official imprint.

The main or south elevation of the Register House stands exactly as J. Roberts's engraving, published in 1775, anticipated it in its finished form. Looking at the engraving we are at once struck by Adam's strongly traditional, albeit unconscious, transmission upon this elevation of so many English Palladian features. Even at this comparatively late period of his career Robert has adhered to the approved Burlingtonian practice of flanking his building with square towers, each incorporating a Venetian window on the piano nobile level, just exactly as Sanderson Miller had done at Hagley in 1750 and Colen Campbell at Wanstead thirty years before that. But whereas Miller had replaced the Burlingtonian rusticated ground floor with a rusticated basement, Adam did no such thing. He has retained this true Burlingtonian feature, which was directly translated from the sixteenth-century palaces at Vicenza. Furthermore, Adam has not, like Campbell at Wanstead and again at Houghton in the 1720s, made his towers higher than the main body of the building. He has reverted to Campbell's yet earlier practice of keeping his corner towers down to the level of the entablature of the main block, as exemplified by Burlington House in Piccadilly, which Campbell built in 1717.

In spite of the academic interest of Robert's conservative elevation, a first view of it is slightly disappointing and unimpressive. The central feature is too narrow for the emerging dome, which from a distance looks as though it does not belong to the low building which it overpowers. Again, the central feature wants sufficient height to break through the flat skyline of the parapet, and the cupolas or turrets are too small for the flanking towers. In themselves these cupolas are extremely well fashioned and their projecting entablatures and angle columns in the Doric order resemble those at Mistley Church and even recall the projecting screen on the south front at Kedleston. We must remember too, in all fairness to Adam, that the curved perron which he designed for this front has been taken away and with it one of the emphatic impulses of "movement". Moreover, a full view of the elevation from the south bridge—and a distant view, when the dome fully emerges, is imperative—is denied us by the

127 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh: the north side (1791), the most complete of Adam's terrace elevations to survive



128 Cambridge University: perspective design by Robert Adam (1788) showing his scheme for the quadrangle of King's and the University Library

vast Victorian station-hotel and the post office, which completely prevent the tower extremities from being seen at all.

### *Cambridge University*

Robert Adam's ambitious schemes for ennobling the layout of King's College, Cambridge, and the chief university buildings centring round it, were doomed to end in absolutely nothing at all. Before we deal with the part he played here, we need go back some fifty years and consider those other ambitious schemes entertained by his great predecessor, James Gibbs, who, likewise unfortunate, at least was fated to leave some impression of his genius behind him. The combined history of Gibbs's and Adam's frustrated schemes at Cambridge is, in short, a direct tribute to the superior merit and above all the prestige of the Chapel at King's College, which, then as now, was recognised to be the greatest glory among the many architectural masterpieces of the university. Even in the eighteenth century, when established classical architects were not scrupulous in preserving Gothic buildings that may have stood in their path, King's Chapel was deemed sacrosanct and so unalterable and unmovable. Neither Gibbs nor Adam succeeded in circumventing the embarrassing conundrum which its site presented to them.

The Chapel then, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, stood detached and isolated, unencumbered by the haphazard cluster of collegiate buildings customary in medieval times. By the third decade of the century the authorities of King's called upon Gibbs, as one of the leading architects of their day, to provide additional accommodation to meet the growing needs of the college. At that time there was, of course, no question of building extensions in the Gothic style, even if the authorities should have hesitated to "improve" upon the barbaric splendours of the college chapel. Yet it is not a little surprising to read in Gibbs's own version of the work undertaken at King's, published in his *Book of Architecture* in 1728, his description of the chapel as "a beautiful Building, of the Gothick Tast, but the finest I ever saw". His commendable reverence for it inaugurated a permanent safeguard that it should remain unmolested so as to form the nucleus of all future schemes. Indeed, there is no evidence that its demolition was ever contemplated either by him or by Adam. Consequently, the new layout was seriously circumscribed to the north by its retention, and Gibbs explains that his contemplated quadrangle or "Court could not be larger than is express'd in the Plan, because I found, upon measuring the ground, that the south-east corner of the intended East side of the Building came upon Trumpington Street". The dimensions of his quadrangle, determined by the locality of the chapel and the street, were therefore limited to 282 feet by 240 feet. "This College, as design'd", he points out, "will consist of Four Sides", of which the Chapel necessarily occupied the north, "opposite to which [*i.e.* on the south side] is propos'd the Hall, with a Portico. On one side of the Hall is to be the

Provost's Lodge with proper Apartments; on the other side are the Buttry, Kitchen, and Cellars, with Rooms over them for Servitors."

Of Gibbs's projected buildings at King's only his west block was carried out (86). Since his clear intention was for it and its companion on the east to lead up to a south block, which with a magnificent portico of eight columns was to be a worthy counterpart to the Chapel, the surviving building was meant to be subsidiary in design and elevation and must not therefore be judged as an independent factor. In 1724 the foundation stone of the west block was laid and five years later the carcase ready for the woodwork. It was, as Gibbs tells us, built of Portland stone, "and is detach'd from the Chapell as being a different kind of Building, and also to prevent damage by any accident of fire". Progress, however, was extremely slow for want of funds, so that the block was only completed in 1749 and the remaining two not even begun. But since Gibbs's designs for his south and east blocks exist, we can judge how the finished result would have looked. Furthermore, all Robert Adam's designs for aggrandising Gibbs's west block and for replacing his south block are available, so that quite extraordinary interest is imparted to a comparison of the two versions, with their fifty years in between. As it transpired, of course, it was left to a later architect of far inferior calibre, William Wilkins, author of the National Gallery and St. George's Hospital, London, ultimately to extend King's on the south side of the quadrangle and to erect not a block but the existing screen on the east, merely separating the quadrangle from Trumpington Street. Wilkins, who was fortunately prevented from gothicising Gibbs's west block, was working in the 1820s and had no hesitation in adapting his medium to the Perpendicular style of the Chapel.

Gibbs's west block, bearing no relation to the other three sides of the King's quadrangle, looks a little out of place. It is, in any case, a prosaic affair, consisting of a long, tightly knit elevation, a heavy balustrade overtopping it. There are no end features and the centre piece is somewhat prim and contracted. When, therefore, Robert Adam was invited in 1784 to present his scheme for extensions to King's and the University buildings, he proposed to enliven Gibbs's existing block considerably, because, since he meant to provide not an eastern block but a low retaining wall, it was to be the only connecting link, as viewed from Trumpington Street, between the Chapel and the south block. Adam's sketches (128) are illuminating because they offer a rare instance of his contemplated improvements to a pre-existing Palladian building. They reveal more clearly than any of his written animadversions upon Palladian dogmatism how in the outcome he thought it failed for want of elasticity and freedom of imagination. The sketches likewise reveal how in a particular case Adam set about to remedy these defects. Here he proposed to respect the characteristics of Gibbs's planning, while deftly transforming the features of the elevation. He intended to keep the rusticated ground floor, but to sweep away all the heavy window surrounds and rely upon the plainest

of voids. In the centre he was going to keep the entrance way, with—this is unexpected of him—the reclining Michaelangelesque figures on the door pediment; also the divisional semi-circular window above it. But Gibbs's heavy swags must give place to Adam's delicate festoons and the heavy central pediment to a raised panelled entablature, supported by two pairs of disengaged columns in the Kedleston manner. Adam, furthermore, meant to introduce projecting end bays, crowned by obtuse pediments of a delicate Grecian cast. Only over the central entablature and the end bays would he suffer figures upon the acroteria to stay. A central cupola was to be added to the block to furnish lightness and elegance.

Gibbs's south block was, as we have said, intended to develop the theme of his west block, its outstanding feature being the vast octostyle portico under a wide pediment. It is easy to imagine how this conception would have outraged Adam's sense of delicacy and elegance. Indeed, Robert's composition bears no resemblance to Gibbs's design, which he may, of course, never have seen. It bears close affinity to the elevation of the Register House, but is at the same time far nobler. The square angle towers—in the Colen Campbell manner—with their Venetian windows, are exactly similar to the Edinburgh ones, only the cupolas are missing. Instead of the narrow centrepiece of the Register House and the overbearing dome, a far more generous composition was here to repeat the theme of the angle towers and the dome itself was to be more happily related to it. In Gibbs's designs and records we surmise that he paid little serious attention to the interior planning of his blocks. All he says to enlighten us is that his west block was to contain "24 Apartments, each consisting of three Rooms and a vaulted Cellar". Nor is there evidence that Adam intended to alter the internal disposition of this rabbit-warren. But accompanying Robert's sketches for his south block are elaborate plans for a vast circular college hall, approached by an impressive vestibule, which, if carried out, would have provided a feature unique in the architecture of the university.

Robert Adam's problems did not end at the King's quadrangle, which was to have covered but a fraction of a vaster layout, of which the chapel would be the central and determining factor. To the north of it he schemed in 1788 to erect a group of buildings to form one large library and to adapt itself to Gibbs's Senate House, then as now exceedingly awkwardly placed. Fortunately there is preserved, amongst the Adam papers, an interesting perspective drawing by the architect showing us how his series of large buildings was to be ranged. In spite of proving Adam's ingenuity in attempting to overcome a complicated conglomeration of sites, the perspective drawing does not convince us that the result would have been harmonious or successful.

The history of Gibbs's Senate House is a sad one, and he is fairly reticent about it in the *Book of Architecture*. It appears that the building which we admire to-day was intended to be the northern wing of a group

of three units, a corresponding southern wing to form a library and the central connecting block the consistory, the whole facing Trumpington Street. Thus, again, the existing Senate House forms but one third of Gibbs's second Cambridge venture, which we gather was fraught with difficulties and ill-feeling. Gibbs preferred to gloss over them and the cavalier treatment he received from the University authorities in a commendably magnanimous manner. The building cost £13,000 and the ill-used architect was rewarded with a paltry £100 for his pains. Beyond this figure the authorities resolutely refused to go, and moreover, they suddenly decided not to proceed with the completion of Gibbs's scheme, which they considered, not without reason, would encroach too much upon the view of the Chapel. This unusual donnish regard for aesthetics was no doubt praiseworthy, but it was in vain that Gibbs expostulated that such a decision should have been reached at an earlier stage. The fragmentary Senate House was, however, finished in 1730, long before the west block of King's College, which was the first to have been started. To our eyes the Senate House, upon which the architect expended his utmost thought and talent, is a noble performance. "It is", said Gibbs modestly, "built with Portland stone, as the rest of the Building is to be. It is of the Corinthian order, having all its Members Enrich'd; the Ceiling and Inside-Walls are beautify'd by Signor Artari and Bagutti", that pair of masterly stuccatori who worked for Gibbs elsewhere upon many occasions.

Whereas Gibbs had been prepared merely to screen the medieval schools, lying to the north of King's College Chapel, with his three-sided composition, Robert Adam planned far more drastically to demolish them altogether. He furthermore planned to do away with the new University Library, which had been built by Stephen Wright in 1758, the year of Robert's return from Italy. Instead it was his purpose to make Gibbs's Senate House into the eastern wing of his intended library range, to add a square central block, itself connected with a further balancing wing to the west, in facsimile of the Senate House. By a clever manipulation Adam meant to make his range of buildings face the Chapel instead of Trumpington Street. His only interference with Gibbs's building was to be the addition to it of a dome, which he would repeat upon the facsimile. This proposition, so strange because of its unexpected reconciliation with the heavy Palladian Senate House, no more came to fruition than Robert's complementary scheme for King's College.

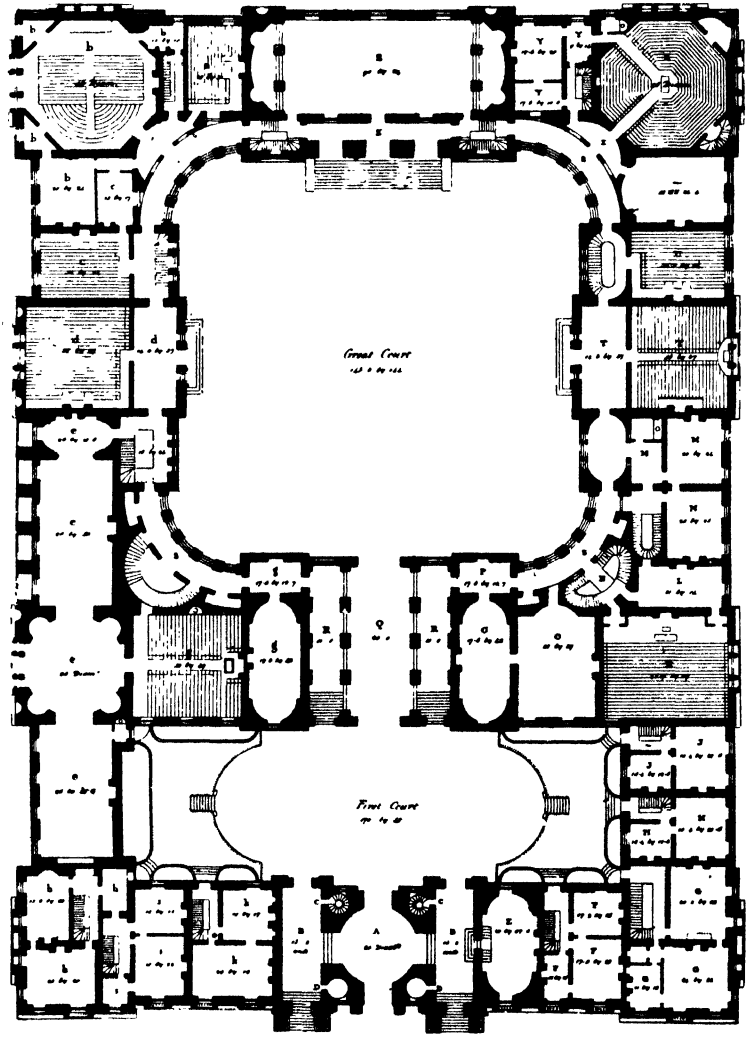
From Adam's elevation drawing we recognise in the square projecting block further affinities with his Edinburgh work. The angle towers of the Register House with their Venetian windows on the first floor are again repeated, and crowning the whole composition is a new variant of the Charlotte Square tower and dome—features peculiar to this last phase of Robert Adam's architecture and his repeatedly abortive essays at the monumental.

### *Edinburgh University*

The University of Edinburgh, with which Robert Adam was associated from 1788 until his death, was the most ambitious of all the schemes for a great public work upon which he actually embarked. As early as 1763 the University authorities were formulating ideas of expansion to meet the growing educational requirements of their country, which had at last passed into an age of intellectual maturity. But fifteen years afterwards no active steps had been undertaken. In 1778 an Italian visitor observed: "What is called the College is nothing else than a mass of ruined buildings of very ancient construction. . . . Here resides, with his family, the celebrated Dr. William Robertson, who is head of the university with the title of Principal." Palpably something had to be done; and what could be more appropriate than for the celebrated Principal to urge the employment of Scotland's first architect, who was likewise his first cousin? Robertson had already been paving the way, for three years previously he persuaded Henry Dundas (later to become Viscount Melville) to launch a fund with which to carry out Adam's plans. In 1789 the foundation-stone of the new university was laid in the presence of Robert Adam, and the ceremony is recorded in an etching by David Allan. On the bold entablature over the main entrance an inscription was subsequently carved in large lettering, giving the date of the rebuilding and prominently coupling the names of the two eminent cousins: "Academiae Primario Gulielmo Robertson Architecto Roberto Adam."

But the work did not proceed at all smoothly in spite of the favourable inauguration. A series of letters only lately discovered by Mr. W. Forbes Gray in the National Library of Scotland and in the University Library itself throws light upon the sequence of troubles. But what is of more importance, these letters throw a new light on the problems and official red tape with which a professional architect, even of Robert Adam's status, had to contend in the course of a building of this magnitude. Robert, having conceived and given birth to the whole architectural enterprise, had the foresight to stipulate a right to survey its execution, and he pressed for a clause to be inserted in the terms of the published subscription lists whereby he should be recognised as the official supervisor. This precautionary action on Robert's part clearly indicates precognition of troubles to come from some quarter or other. But Henry Dundas, the principal trustee, was unaccountably averse to this seemingly reasonable proposal. Robert Adam, greatly distressed, wrote on 31st October, 1789, to his cousin, Robertson, making it plain that if he were not to be allowed to superintend his own scheme he would withdraw from the undertaking altogether. In his letter he presses the point and goes on to say: "At the same time it was always my intention to employ any tradesman or artificer recommended by the Town Council, with the approbation of the Trustees, provided they did work as well and as cheap as any other." The clause suggests that Robert had been accused of preferring to employ his

own experienced workpeople from the south. There is every reason to suppose that the charge was well founded, for we have just seen that when engaged upon the Register House in 1772 Robert expressed unqualified lack of confidence in the ability of Scottish workmen. Finally, having




Plan of the University, Edinburgh

laid down his ultimatum, he writes with praiseworthy candour: "nor could I consent to the execution of my plan in any other Mode, as I know it could not otherwise be done either to my own satisfaction or that of the publick. And as I have bestowed so much pains and thought upon it,

and exerted myself to the utmost to make it as perfect as possible, and though the money is no indifferent object to me, yet I am conscious I have been infinitely more actuated by the motive of leaving behind me a monument of my talents, such as they are, than by any hope of gain whatever. . . ."

In this particular Robert seems to have won his point, for the time being at any rate. But other vexations arose, chiefly due to the unconcealed hostility to the architect of John Gray, the Trustees' clerk, who purposely withheld from them the terms of an original minute, thus implying that Adam was claiming "the sole command of the money". Adam strongly protests against this imputation in a well expressed letter of 9th January, 1790, to Professor Dalzel, one of the trustees and Adam's nephew by marriage. The letter concedes that "indeed it would be folly and madness to suppose that they [the trustees] would be liable for more than the sums subscribed, which was in fact what the Subscription paper had so strongly guarded against. . . . By it we were made and by it we are pledged to the publick. We cannot vary from it in one iota without endangering everything that has been done. This is my creed." Adam's frank determination to adhere to the original terms of his appointment must have taken the wind out of the ruffled sails of the clerk. He then proceeds to define what are his rights as surveyor: "I therefore look upon myself . . . to have full powers to appoint and dismiss, to reward merit and check abuse, and to settle what are the proper prices to be given to the different tradesmen of every denomination. . . . It was only on the terms above mentioned, and the reward of £5. p.c. for all my plans, trouble, and directions that I accepted the employment from the subscribers."

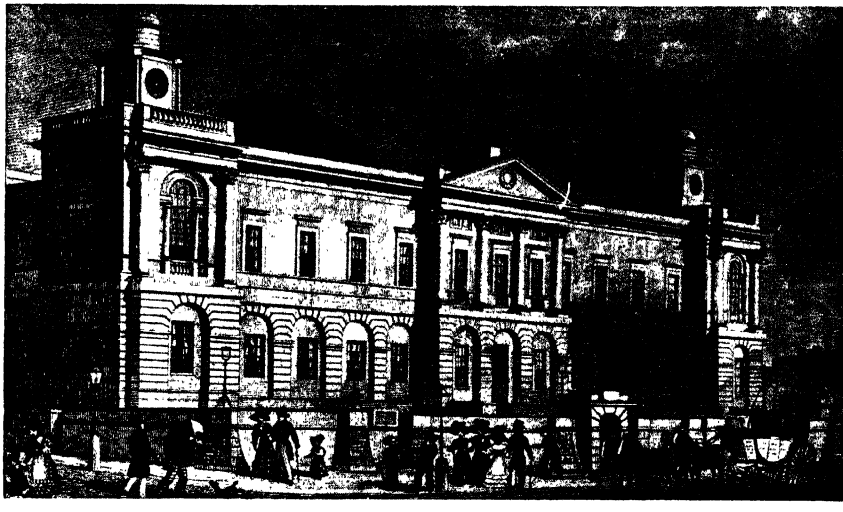
Another difficulty to which Adam refers in the same letter is the belated attempts made by the university professors to tamper with his plans. Robert, once he had decided upon his plans and designs, insisted upon their being observed, and no considerations would move him to provide living accommodation for the Professor of Medicine and Chemistry simply because he had omitted to study his domestic necessities before the plans were completed. "I am no bigot, God knows," Robert writes, a trifle disingenuously, to Professor Dalzel, "but I shall never propose converting the Chapel into anything, but let it remain as it is. I shall, however, write a very civil letter to the Doctor." At which point we feel sure the trustees agreed to let the matter rest.

A year later, however, the clerk, John Gray (of whom Adam had written to Robertson "I have always thought that he was no friend of mine"), returned to the old charge, in a most offensively worded letter, that the architect was transgressing his rights as surveyor. To it Robert replied with great moderation on 19th January, 1791, recapitulating once and for all the principles of professional practice then customary. This passage of the letter coming from the greatest architect of the time is worth quoting in full: "In this country," it runs, "the office of an Architect, or any other person acting in the capacity of surveyor to a building is perfectly

understood. His employers repose entire confidence in his skill and integrity, not only in directing the execution of the work, but also in employing such tradesmen as he thinks are fitted to do justice to the execution of it, and also to settle the prices that he thinks adequate to such work. I therefore could entertain no other Idea of the situation in which I stood as surveyor of the University. . . . It certainly would be improper that a surveyor should hazard his reputation by having unskilfull tradesmen, or those of a worse character obtruded upon him, & over whom he would have an ineffectual controul, if not appointed by himself, whilst all the blame of their misconduct would fall on him."

The deaths of Robert Adam in 1792 and of William Robertson in 1793 were grave discouragements to the trustees, already embarrassed by the cost of the operations up to date. These were in consequence abruptly suspended for over twenty years. All of Adam's scheme that had so far been put into execution were the main façade on South Bridge Street (130, 131) and the Anatomy School occupying the extreme north-west corner of the large quadrangle. Nothing else that we see at the university to-day should, in justice to Adam, be attributed to his superintendence, and no authentic interiors of any kind, with the exception of the domed vestibule under the entrance, are his. When, at last, work was resumed in 1815, it was found that Adam's roofless buildings had suffered marked deterioration from exposure to the weather during the long interval. Thereupon Sir Robert Reid reported that Adam's original scheme for two quadrangles was too expensive to be concluded after so many years of war. A public advertisement was accordingly issued inviting new plans "for finishing the College at Edinburgh on a reduced scale leaving out the South Back Front, and the cross building which formed the small court in the original plan, regard being always had to the part already executed, and to the preservation of the architecture of Mr. Adam, as far as practicable".

This last pious intention was in reality a contradiction in terms, in that the promotors were simultaneously announcing their determination to abandon the two courts which constituted Adam's chief project. Thus Reid was, at the university, instrumental in wrecking, as he had wrecked the west side of Charlotte Square and its church, Adam's most ambitious scheme for a monumental building. It is true, nevertheless, that although the completion of the university fell far short of Adam's intentions, the single large quadrangle by no means resulted in an unsuccessful compromise. It was finished in 1834 by W. H. Playfair, who attempted to carry on, in an age unsympathetic to eighteenth-century traditions, the main Adam theme and to repeat fairly faithfully the quadrant colonnade of the Anatomy School in the three other corners of the single quadrangle. The present dome, a much more recent afterthought and quite unlike the original design, is the work of the late Sir R. Rowand Anderson, and its clumsy Roman handling ill accords with the almost Grecian lightness and simplicity of Robert's façade beneath it. Thus the third project of his

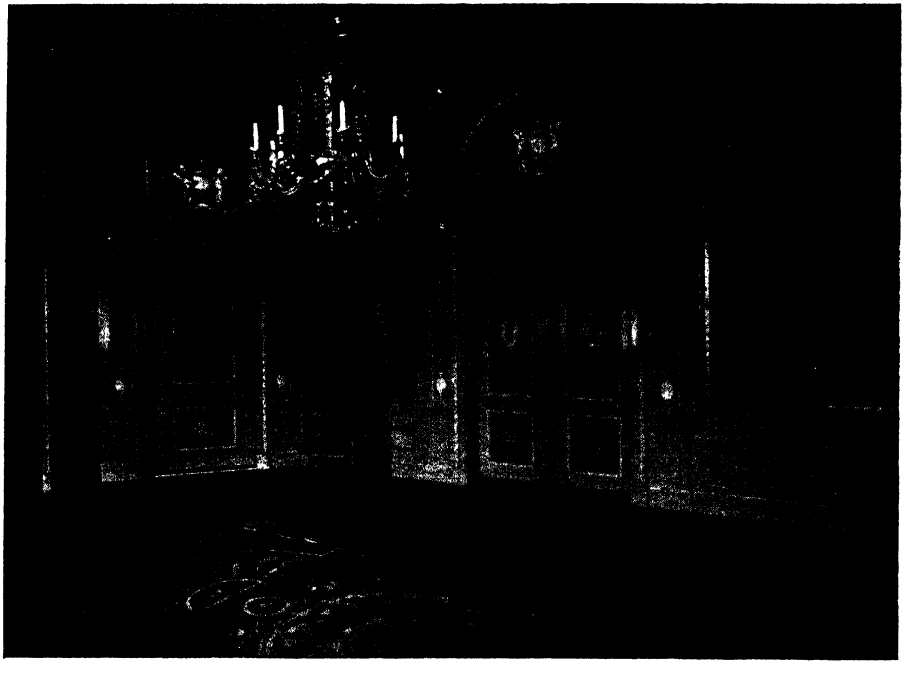


129 The Register House, Edinburgh (1772–92). From T. H. Shepherd's *Modern Athens* (1829)

130 The University, Edinburgh (1789–92). From *Modern Athens*

131 The University, Edinburgh: detail of the entrance

132 Haga Slott Pavilion, Stockholm. Architect, Olaf Tempelman (1788)
(Photograph by *Nordiska Museet*)



133 Haarlem Room in Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. The carpet and door panels show affinity to Robert Adam's designs

later years, to erect a tower and dome of noble proportions, was denied to Robert Adam.

If, however, we manage to discount the modern dome, we are still privileged to admire the great bulk of the front elevation, which represents the most accomplished and unbroken piece of architecture of Adam's monumental phase. We look upon a long frontage that is massive, simple, and imposing. The architect's task was not made easy by the fall of the ground quite 12 feet to the north, but so narrow is South Bridge Street that our necessarily perspective vision of the frontage, when approached from the city centre, is accentuated in grandeur by the steep slope. Here, as elsewhere, when Adam tends to be monumental, we notice his recourse to a Burlingtonian treatment of voids. The windows are finished with dignified pediments, supported by console scrolls or engaged columns. The order of the central feature is Doric, as befitting the dignity of the entrance, and the entablature of the projection is crowned with the kind of balustrade that the English followers of Palladio would have approved. The great columns round the archway are monoliths of Craigleith stone—which we know exceeded the cost estimated by the architect. "The carriage, workmanship, and setting in their places demand a much higher price than the original agreement for these articles on account of their extraordinary size", Adam writes to John Gray in self-justification. Under a giant fan-light within a recessed arch the gateway leads into the quadrangle of the university through the domed vestibule. This circular feature is composed of four massive piers in blocks of freestone reaching to a cavernous vault, and by virtue of its stark Roman severity is no less magnificent than, say, the Mausoleum at Bowood, built by Adam in the first flush of his genius some thirty years earlier.

# VII

## CRITICS AND CONTEMPORARIES

WAS Robert Adam, we now come to ask, considered by his contemporaries the creative genius of cyclopean stature, the Michael Angelo as it were of his age? There is no evidence that allows us to suppose any such thing. There had been plenty of people ready to acclaim him, often in extravagant terms, during the first decade of his career, but his flight thereafter was too spectacular for the untried wings of his ambition to sustain his reputation in the rarefied atmosphere of the age in which he lived. The pre-Revolutionary England of the mid-eighteenth century was not suited to giants, either in literature or in the arts. It is certain that towards the end of Adam's life intellectual disturbances across the Channel were dimly sensed in Britain, and by the time of his death the Continental deluge was in spate. But some years yet were to elapse before the tergiversations of the French Encyclopedists and the doctrines of Rousseau upset the long-established, carefree canons of English thought and inspired English intellectuals to titanic actions. The English still remained blissfully aloof from the threats of the outside world to their smug insular detachment. Until well into the next century, therefore, only the faintest shadows ruffled the social strata of these islands. English intellectual and artistic life was practically confined to the upper classes, who were wont to pursue literature and the arts in the same gentlemanly manner as their great-grandfathers. More than a hundred years of comparative peace and ease had, it is true, developed an acme of refinement and elegance in their living. Above all, this quality was reflected in literature and the arts, of which in our period no more augustan exponents were forthcoming than Thomas Gray in poetry, David Garrick in acting, Sir Joshua Reynolds in painting, and Robert Adam in building. Robert Adam, then, can proudly ascend his throne beside these lesser deities in presiding for a limited duration over this little island's supreme expression of the classical image.

With all his virtues, the professional English scribe of the eighteenth century was not devoid of that insidious human failing envy. Consequently most of his contemporary criticism of our native artists is practically valueless. The cleverer the critic, the more cunningly—and so dangerously—did he conceal the sting under a velvet tongue of faint praise. But the greater number indulged in orgies of Billingsgate abuse which we can at once dismiss as futile.

The Adams had many severe critics amongst the great, such as Johnson, Walpole, Chambers, and James Wyatt, and a host amongst the pygmies and lesser fry. Johnson's criticism of Robert Adam has too frequently

been quoted as the commonsense indictment of an over-precious manner of building. But his only recorded indictment of Adam work is confined to one particular building, Kedleston, when after a visit he declared, "It would do excellently well for a town hall", and, "There seemed in the whole more cost than judgment". Johnson's incisive comments were, from the utilitarian point of view, incontrovertible, but none the less frankly philistine. He was, moreover, quite unaware that the planning of Kedleston, which he pronounced to be so ill-contrived, was almost entirely Paine's responsibility and not Adam's. His dispraise was no more reliable than were the rhapsodies of that materialist and social snob Boswell, who had accompanied him on the occasion, and who was profoundly "struck with the magnificence of the building, and the extensive park. . . . The number of old oaks, of an immense size filled me with a sort of respectful admiration; for one of them £60 was offered"—observations which make us smile but do not impress us with "Zany Boswell's" aesthetic judgment.

Horace Walpole is, of course, a far more valuable gauge of how artistic circles amongst the select classes viewed the course of Adam's career. He is by no means always dependable. Yet in spite of frequently exaggerated sillinesses and personal jealousies, he was a man who during a full life fundamentally understood the meaning of artistic values and in the long run allowed his good taste and acute discernment to counteract his subjective and fashionable pronouncements. Throughout the 1760s he fairly constantly favoured Adam's work. This was of course easy enough, for during this decade Robert was universally successful and petted. In 1761 Walpole's natural perspicacity led him to recognise that "the taste and skill of Mr. Adam is formed for public works",[1] thus foreseeing the great potentialities of the young and ambitious architect. In 1764 he generously admired the progress of the work at Syon up to date and in 1768 his notes upon Kedleston are sound and still cordial. We have seen how in June 1773 he gave a glowing account of Osterley, which in 1778 he had entirely reversed, and we traced the change of tune to the alteration of Robert's style between those dates from the plastic to the purely linear medium of design.

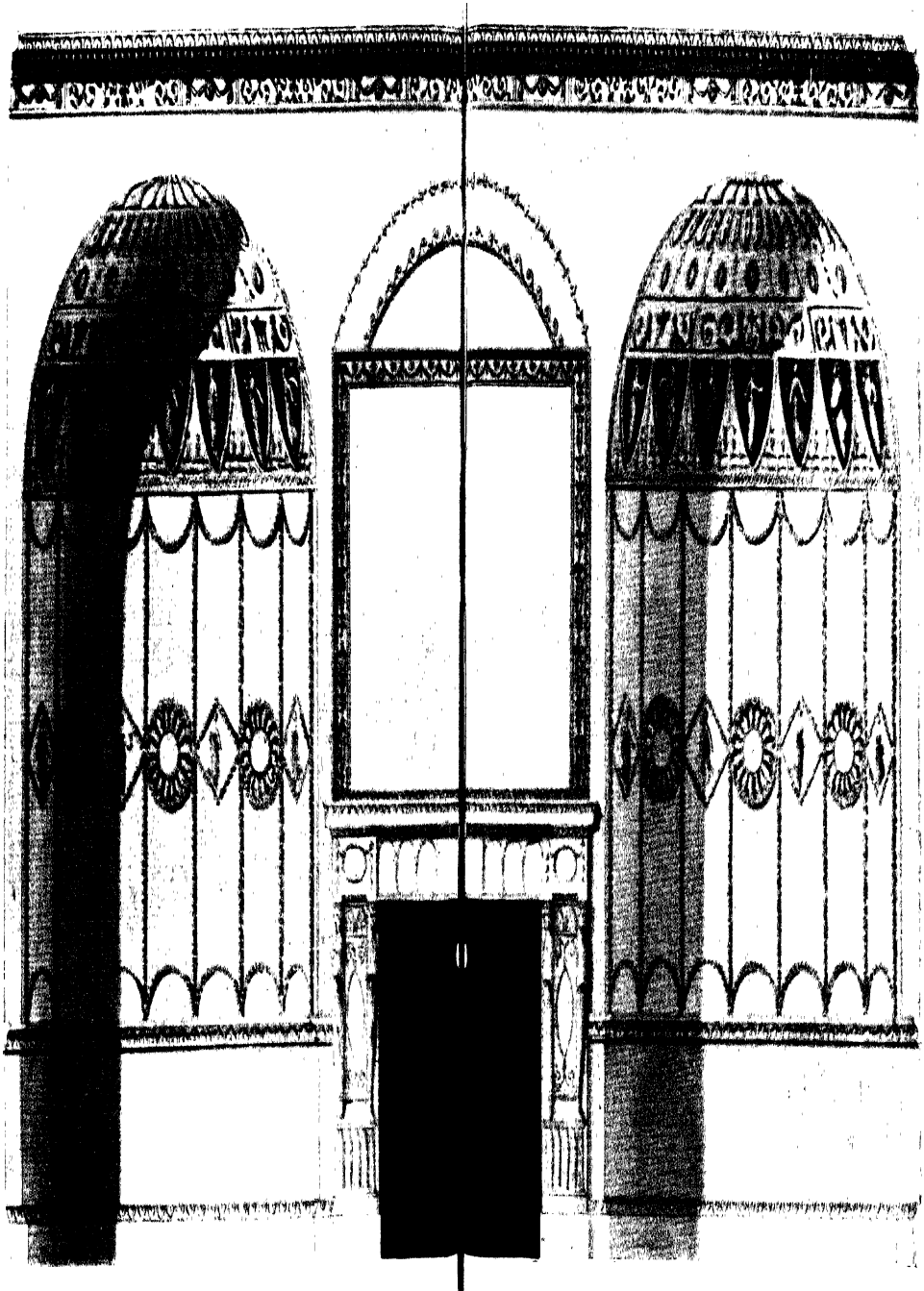
But in fact Walpole had changed his tune well before this later date, for suddenly in the autumn of 1773 he gives vent to uncompromising and repeated hostility upon the brothers' publication of the *Works*. Why exactly did this publication evoke such startling disapproval? It was the culminating offence to a sequence of factors. First of all, the Adelphi scandal had occurred to lower the Adam family's prestige, which had been too long in the ascendant and unchallenged. Walpole took exception to the scheme, which he considered a fraud upon the public, and the methods of the brothers' evasion from the consequences of their folly he found highly questionable and distasteful. To his mind the whole business project smacked of sharp practice and was, to say the least, ungentlemanly.

[1] *Anecdotes of Painting.*

Furthermore, he had begun to resent the role which the brothers were assuming to themselves as the arbiters of style and taste, a role which he was not averse to claiming as his own prerogative. Lastly, he read into the famous Preface a curmudgeonly attack upon the young James Wyatt, who the year before had completed the Pantheon (24) in a style which the world of cognoscenti decreed to be an improvement upon that of the Adams. Walpole himself dictated that "Wyatt has employed the antique with more judgment", while he held that the decorative style of Robert Adam had lately changed, and not for the better.

And so hereafter Horace Walpole seldom has a good word to say for Robert Adam, and nearly all his future references to the architect are tinged with bitter acrimony or frank dislike. Moreover, he did not hesitate, out of what he professedly considered the interests of true art, to undermine the architect's influence with people of position. The select Elizabeth Montagu, who in 1767 had written delightedly to her friends of Adam's work at her Hill Street house, dismissed him at Walpole's instigation and employed the services of James Stuart when she moved to Portman House. It was after a visit to this new town residence in 1782 that Walpole recorded the following well-known utterance: "It is grand, not tawdry, nor larded and embroidered and pomponned with shreds and remnants, and clinquant like all the harlequinades of Adam, which never let the eye repose a moment"—his weather eye, no doubt, abstractedly dwelling upon the linear complexities of Adam's walls and ceilings at Lady Home's house, just two doors off in the same square. And again, after a visit three years later to Carlton House, which Henry Holland was at this time beginning for the Prince of Wales: "How sick one shall be", he exclaims, "after this chaste palace, of Mr. Adam's gingerbread and sippets of embroidery!"

Amongst contemporary architects of Adam's acquaintance we may well look for criticism that will provide us with more scholarly grounds for adducing his short-comings. In the first place, we must remember that of those with whom he is known to have worked—and, indeed, of those whom he superseded—none spoke ill of him as a man or as an artist. Paine towards the end of his life referred to Robert and James as "those able and vigorous artists". Carr and Brown both wrote favourably of Robert in correspondence. Leadbetter mentions him only on one occasion and then dispassionately. Mylne, whom Adam succeeded at Northumberland House and at Wormleybury, remained on the friendliest terms with him, yet Mylne was described by one who knew him as a person of "austere manners, violent temper, and contempt for every art except his own and for every person but himself". James Stuart, as we have already mentioned, retained his confidence to the end. But the two major pundits in the architectural profession, with whom Robert is not known ever to have collaborated, were openly and avowedly hostile. They are Sir William Chambers and James Wyatt. Both made a certain amount of adverse criticism that merits analysis.



134 Colour design of a chimneypiece flanked by alcoves, by James Wyatt. From the original drawing in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

With Chambers Adam's relations seem always to have been difficult and strained. Chambers, a notoriously jealous man, may well have fed his resentment upon the inexpugnable memory that once, in early days, his plans for a seat for Lord Bective in Ireland had been rejected in favour of the younger man's. We have already quoted from Adam's letter to Lord Buchan in 1781, in which he stated that he had no influence at the court of George III and insinuated that this was due to Chambers holding the ear of the king. There exists, moreover, a letter from Chambers to Lord Grantham, written eight years earlier, in which Chambers quite unguardedly speaks his mind. Chambers, like Walpole, was greatly irritated by the publication of the *Works*, and it is clear that the tone of the Preface struck him—as it did others—as over-confident and bumptious. The Reverend William Mason, scholar, poet, and friend of Thomas Gray, was provoked by it to ejaculate: "Was there ever such a brace of self-puffing Scotch coxcombs?" and he even threatened to treat them to an Heroic Epistle. This is what Chambers wrote to Lord Grantham: "Messieurs Adam have lately published a book of their ornaments, with a preface, rather presumptuous, as I am told, for I have not yet read the book, in which they boast of having first brought the true Style of Decoration into England and that all the architects of the present day are only servile copyers of their excellence. I do not agree with them in the first of these positions, and can produce many proofs against the last—amongst others, Melbourne House, decorated in a manner almost diametrically opposite to theirs, *and more, as I flatter myself in the true style . . . of the Ancients.*"

In these last words of Sir William Chambers we detect precisely the same ring as in Walpole's pronouncement made the same year, that in the Pantheon "Wyatt has employed the antique with more judgment" than Robert Adam. Yet Chambers in his letter is claiming, quite naturally enough, that it is he who has interpreted the classical style of decoration in a chaster form than Adam, whose ornaments, on still another occasion, he alludes to as "filigrane toy work". But notwithstanding his advantage in having returned from Italy, after very extensive studies of Roman remains, three years before Adam, it was the younger man who first introduced the antique style to English interiors, at the same time evolving from it the distinctive form that goes by his name. Chambers, like most of his contemporaries, merely followed the principles established by Adam, so that by the time the *Works* were published the adoption of the style of the ancients was held paramount in interior decoration by the pro- and the anti-Adam architects alike.

How are we to appreciate the nice distinction made by Chambers (and Walpole) between the unchastity of Robert Adam's interpretation of the antique styles and the chastity of Chambers's or Wyatt's? It is extremely difficult, because so little of the ancients' decorative work is left to compare with the English eighteenth-century pastiche, of which Adam, Chambers, and Wyatt each claimed that his breathed the only true spirit of the antique.

As regards the two buildings which Chambers and Walpole quote respectively as containing greater purity of antique decoration than anything carried out by the Adams—namely Melbourne House (now Albany, Piccadilly) (138) and the Pantheon—both were decorated long after Robert Adam had begun working in this medium. The one was finished in 1770, the other in 1772. The one has long ago had its interior gutted, the other has disappeared altogether. But there do fortunately survive a few interiors by Chambers and Wyatt closely resembling those quoted examples, from which we may judge the issue. Somerset House embodies several ostensibly "ancient" rooms. At first glance all the decoration of these rooms seems to us strongly imitative of the Adam manner (135). Closer scrutiny will reveal that it is diluted with a French flavour, no doubt derived by Chambers from his schooling under Clérisseau in Paris, where he even made contacts with A.-J. Gabriel. These Chambers interiors are, in fact, far less purely antique than any executed by Adam. Chambers had merely copied the technique of interior decoration introduced by Adam—without, it is true, risking Adam's more extravagant complexities of Pompeian detail.[1] Instead he introduced detail of another and modern provenance.

The rivalry between James Wyatt and Robert Adam has become a legend. It was inevitable that this should be so, since Wyatt, by reason of his comparative youth, his versatility, and genius, sprang suddenly into the arc-lights of fashion and became the most serious competitor of Adam in Adam's own style. Yet the evidence for a reciprocal personal antipathy is slender and Wyatt's is based almost entirely upon a few uncharitable asides made by him at Adam's expense, and upon the defensive attitude adopted, on the younger man's behalf, by his champion, Walpole.

James Wyatt, the sixth son of a Staffordshire builder and timber merchant, was born a full generation later than Adam. As a youth he astounded his elders by a display of equal talents for painting, music, and architecture. A local landowner, Lord Bagot, took him to Italy in 1762, where he learnt designing from a pupil of Canaletto. Six years later he returned and set up in practice as an architect. He was soon elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, where he exhibited his designs for the Pantheon in Oxford Street (24), the opening of which caused such a huge sensation in 1772. The praise it evoked as a novelty strikes us, who may only judge its merits from old prints, as a little artificial. The brilliant world, of which Lady Mary Coke was only a slightly tarnished jewel, was beside itself with admiration. "I think it as fine as anything can possibly be", she wrote to a friend. "All the designs of the finishing beautiful and prodigiously well executed. . . . I think the architect seems a very ingenious man *and his designs I prefer to those of Mr. Adams.*" Even

[1] Joseph Farington, musing upon the low public estimate of Chambers's work some six years after his death, noted down in his diary: "an artist of less talent than Adam—and confined in his ideas to certain forms and embellishments to which he made everything submit".

Edward Gibbon unpursed his small, proud lips to praise it with unusual fervour. Boswell, rather surprisingly, was not this time so impressed, but then he hardly had an artistic eye. He conducted the great Cham of Literature to view this latest resort of *ton* and fashion, disparaging it a little provocatively but deliberately: "I said there was not half a guinea's worth of pleasure in seeing this place." The remark drew from Johnson the kind of retort his canny biographer wanted: "But, sir, there is half a guinea's worth of inferiority to other people in not having seen it." To Adam Ferguson, their companion, who unwisely expressed apprehension lest the new Pantheon would encourage luxury and idleness, the Doctor turned sharply and said: "Sir, I am a great friend to public amusements: for they keep people from vice. You now," addressing himself to Boswell, who this time got more from his hero than he had bargained for, "would have been with a wench, had you not been here—Oh! I forgot you were married."

But setting aside Johnson's irrelevant yet irresistible comments, there must have been certain qualities in the Pantheon, apart from its novelty, that induced people of artistic sensibility to remark that the young Wyatt "had employed the antique with more judgment" and that they preferred his designs "to those of Mr. Adam". The point is that they had begun to sense that Adam was overdoing his decoration, and a sudden opportunity for comparison with that of Wyatt's first essay in the same style confirmed their suspicion. The Pantheon is no longer left for us to set it against, let us say, No. 20 St. James's Square, which was built in the same critical year. But if we take other surviving examples of Wyatt's best work, such as Heaton Park and Heveningham (135), to compare with exactly contemporary work of Adam's middle period, notably Home House and the last rooms at Osterley, the answer is amply borne out. Wyatt, in his simplification of interior design in the 1770s, concurs in this one respect with Chambers, who of course belonged architecturally to the generation that preceded Adam. Wyatt did not follow Chambers's Palladianism, nor did he concern himself in this decade with extraneous influences, like the Piranesian or the French. Until he was immersed in the neo-Gothic out of indolence and a readiness to give the public what it wanted, he merely refined upon the Adamatic. Wyatt was not, like Adam and Chambers, a scholar and an eclectic, nor, like Holland, did he even aspire to be so. He was perfectly content to sip at the surface of one particular style at a time.

In his classical interiors Wyatt does not overcrowd his wall spaces. At Heaton, for instance, he is satisfied with quite plain panels, an isolated oval cameo plaque or an alcove on each wall. His ceiling designs are less fussy than Adam's of the same date: they show less gilding, less startling contrasts of colour. Yet his individual designs and arabesque patterns are all distinctly of Adam derivation. Even his Etruscan room at Heveningham [1] is copied from Adam's several examples—simpler though it be

[1] The Etruscan room at Heaton is entirely Biagio Rebecca's, who first worked under Adam, and is not Wyatt's.

and so possibly more truly antique in that the design follows the character and colouring of Etruscan vases. Wyatt may have boasted that he was moved to the experiment from his own studies in Italy, but again we must not forget that Adam in the sixties had been the first to initiate this rather unhappy form of decoration. It cannot be denied that, apart from a few superficial predilections—such as his tripartite openings with flat heads; his taste for saucer domes, semi-circular bays, and elliptical arches; then his reduction of the size and importance of the chimneypiece; his use of a much favoured scagliola imitating Siena marble; his ubiquitous fan lacing and radiating shell—Wyatt's constructional and decorative style is in all essentials an imitation of Robert Adam's.

Wyatt, furthermore, never showed the same care for finish as Adam. Except at Heveningham he is not known to have designed furniture for his apartments. His composition is often careless, his modelling insensitive, and his detail hurried. He was naturally a slap-dash person, unbusinesslike and terrible to employ. Himself possessing no power of application, his clients seldom succeeded in pinning him down to one job at a time. His indolence and growing intemperance so accentuated his artistic shortcomings that he finally allowed himself to be enmeshed in a facile Gothicism, and he became bored with the execution of serious undertakings. As a young man he had been invited to Russia by the Empress Catherine, but, such was the estimate of his worth, he was dissuaded from acceptance by a retaining salary guaranteed by a circle of rich and influential peers. At an early age he became the cherished protégé of George III to the extent of superseding Sir William Chambers in the Royal favour, a triumph that only made him autocratic and overbearing.

Horace Walpole had interpreted the Preface of the *Works* as intended to counteract the orientation of Wyatt. But nowhere in it is Wyatt mentioned by name and there were besides innumerable other imitators of the brothers' style of decoration. Mr. Anthony Dale in his *Life of Wyatt* has assumed on no apparent authority that the Adams were jealous of him as an interloper. On the contrary, there is some evidence that James Wyatt liked to think so. Farington records, on the authority of Benjamin West, that Wyatt told the king in 1804 "there had been no regular architecture since Sir William Chambers [who had died in 1796]—that when he came from Italy he found the public taste corrupted by the Adams and he was obliged to comply with it". The "he" must refer to Wyatt, for Chambers had returned from Italy before Robert was in practice, and if this remark be correctly repeated by West, then it reflects ill on Wyatt's content passively to submit to or, rather, to adopt a style that he despised. If Wyatt was the author of this remark, it is very possible that he was telling an untruth. On an earlier occasion (1794) *Farington's Diary* records: "Went to breakfast with Wyatt. . . . Bonomi was there. . . . Wyatt mentioned the unhandsome conduct of the Adams towards him, and the reports, which had reached the King's ear, propagated by them, of Wyatt's having received instructions from them and obtained

135 Somerset House, London: the Registrar-General's office. Architect, Sir William Chambers, 1776

136 Heveningham Hall, Suffolk: the Saloon with apsidal ends, designed by James Wyatt and painted by Biagio Rebecca (*circa* 1790)

drawings out of their collection." Farington's sole comment is, "The whole grossly unfounded"—whether the Adams' supposed unhandsome conduct or Wyatt's story of it he does not explain. We are left to form our own conclusion.

No little damage was done to Robert Adam's reputation by the choral carpings of his lesser known contemporaries. In 1779 appeared on the bookstalls a half-crown pamphlet entitled *The Exhibition*, signed by one "Roger Shanhagan, Gent." This was a pseudonym for Robert Smirke, senior, father of the Victorian Gothic architect and himself a disappointed dabbler in that branch of the arts. He was assisted in the compilation by William Porden, the builder of a short-lived Eaton Hall in Cheshire for Lord Grosvenor. It is noteworthy that Smirke, who had been employed on occasion by James Wyatt, was embittered with Paine and Adam, who had not thought fit to do the same. After distilling a shower of ineffectual vituperation of a personal kind upon Adam, the authors assail him for disregarding all architectural rules and they instance the lack of order, symmetry, and proportion and the general formlessness displayed in the Adelphi terrace. This shaft falls comparatively flat, and they go on to say, "While he aimed at elegance within, he covered the outside of his buildings with frippery", which is, of course, Walpole's old jibe about the soldier's trull, only dressed up in another guise. "Most of the white walls," they write, "with which Mr. Adam has speckled this city, are no better than Models for the Twelfth-Night Decoration of a Pastry Cook." There is nothing new in this criticism. They then turn to contrasting Robert Adam's failings as an architect with James Wyatt's excellences: "His [Wyatt's] ornaments are never of inelegant shapes, nor lavished with vulgar prodigality, nor too minute to be seen, nor so predominant as to engross our attention. We are never pained by lines violently contrasted, nor perplexed by a harsh opposition of glaring and discordant colours, but a timely repetition of the same form preserves Variety from Confusion, and one mild prevailing Colour softens every brighter Tint into its own sweetness."

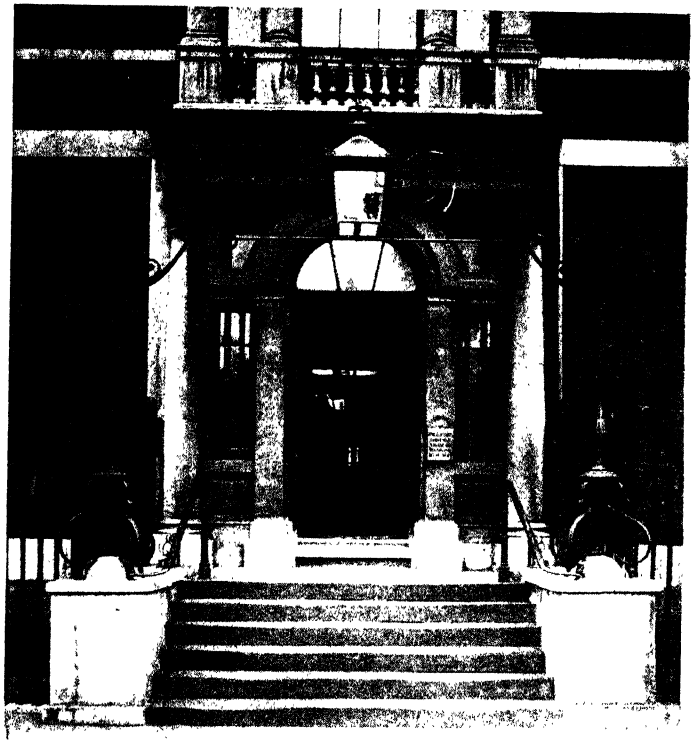
James Peacock, five years later, in *OIKIΔIA, or Nutshells*, returns to the same familiar charge against Adam for cheapening "his elevations with filigree work" and inveighs against "an excess of the puerile ornaments, as well as the emasculated proportions of the modern school . . . an excess of modern refinement and modern finery", and so forth.

No one need quarrel with the younger generation's deliberate reaction against the tastes of its immediate predecessors, and as an example we take this extract from the letter of a young architectural student, C. H. Tatham, to Henry Holland, four years after Robert Adam's death: "The late Messrs. Adams were the children of the arabesque, yet I do not scarcely recollect one instance in which they successfully employed it: it is a style productive of great fatigue to the designer, more to the artist, and an infinite expense to the purse of the employer—witness the Adelphi!" There is never any accounting for the swift passage of fashionable tastes,

and Adam would in his young days have recorded in similar words his reaction against the wastefulness of rococo decoration. But the disfavour, in which the brothers were held in academic circles generally, lasted far longer than a generation and gathered in intensity as the following century proceeded. James Elmes in the 1820s [1] compares the "finicking finish" of the Adams, the "confectionary" of their exteriors, the "impurity of their style", and the little variety and intricacy of their form with the superior qualities of the popular idol of his day—John Nash. Joseph Gwilt in his *Encyclopedia of Architecture*, published in 1842, and for long a standard work of great influence and repute, summarily dismisses Robert Adam in a manner in which no responsible historian to-day would dare to treat the memory of Sir Gilbert Scott. "It can scarcely be believed", he writes, "the ornaments of Diocletian's Palace at Spalatro should have loaded our dwellings, contemporaneously with the use amongst the refined few, of the exquisite exemplars of Greece, *and even Rome*, in its better days. Yet such is the fact, the depraved compositions of Adam were not only tolerated but had their admirers. It is not to be supposed that the works of a man who was content to draw his supplies from so vitiated a source will require lengthened notice." The "refined few"—such are the reversals of ephemeral style—were the Grecians, Stuart and Revett, who "had to contend against the opposite and vicious taste of Robert Adam". A not uninstructive sequel to the uncompromising denunciation is the fact that Gwilt's favourite pupil, J. L. Wolfe, became the life-long friend and champion of Sir Charles Barry, who did more than any other Victorian architect to mutilate with cynical precision some of the greatest of Robert Adam's masterpieces.

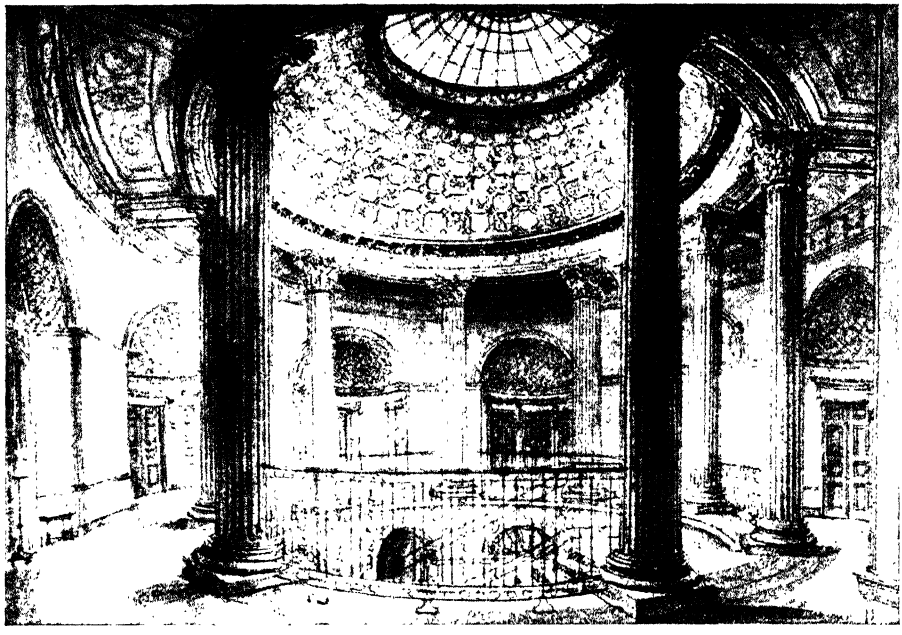
In estimating the criticisms levelled at Robert Adam by his contemporaries and posterity, we shall do well to turn to Sir John Soane's generous and fair assessment of his predecessor's character and achievements. As a marginal note to his copy of the foolish "Roger Shanhagan" pamphlet Soane inscribed: "The late Mr. Robert Adam was certainly a man of uncommon talents, of amiable disposition, and of unassuming manners, a friend to artists of every description", but he added laconically that he did not extend his charity so far as to engage the services of Messrs. Smirke and Porden. Soane, although twenty-five years Adam's junior, had of course known him personally. The same marginal note continued: "Mr. Adam also deserves great praise for banishing from interior decorations the heavy architectural ornaments, which prevailed in all our buildings before his time; although it will be admitted that he sometimes indulged in the extreme of fancy and lightness." On this charge he too could be justly censorious. In a subsequent lecture at the Royal Academy he again accords tribute to Robert Adam for having broken the talismanic charm which the fashions of George II's day had imposed upon architecture and for his having introduced from the ancients a light and fanciful style of decoration. This style, he said, soon became general, so that in the

[1] *Metropolitan Improvements*, 1828.



137 Gwydyr House, Whitehall. Architect, John Marquand, 1796

138 Albany (formerly Melbourne House), Piccadilly. Architect, Sir William Chambers, 1770



139 Wardour Castle, Wiltshire: drawing by J. C. Buckler of the staircase. Architect, James Paine, 1770–6

140 The Court-Room at the Bank of England (architect, Sir Robert Taylor, *circa* 1775). From a drawing by Thomas Malton

late sixties and early seventies "Everything was Adamatic, buildings and furniture of every description"[1]. But, he continued frankly, the Adamatic taste was not suited to exteriors, and, lastly, "the Messrs. Adam had not formed their taste on the best examples of antiquity". With these words we come back to the very same complaint that so much vexed Sir William Chambers. The pity is that Soane, who was as discerning a judge of architecture as Reynolds was of painting, did not qualify his statement that the Adamatic taste was not suited to exteriors. He could surely not have applied these objections to the exteriors of the early Adam—of the bold and chastely classical Mausoleum at Bowood, of Lansdowne House and Mersham-le-Hatch—or of the late Adam—the monumental Fitzroy Square block, the Register House and the University building at Edinburgh. It was no doubt the finical façades of Robert's middle period—the Adelphi and the purely speculative street buildings—that he had in mind. It was, moreover, these façades, just as it was the worst decorative excesses of the middle period, that his imitators slavishly copied so as to bring a kind of vicarious and undeserved discredit upon him.

George III was not perhaps outstanding for the profundity of his aphorisms, but, like his granddaughter after him, he was possessed of a royal shrewdness which at times fairly illustrated the state of mind of the average man. Speaking of modern architecture in the year 1800, he remarked, "I am a little of an architect and think that the old school is not enough attended to—the Adams have introduced too much of neatness and prettiness, and even Wyatt inclines rather too much that way"—an indictment that probably summarised his subjects' one common objection to the whole of contemporary building.

Thomas Hardwick in his *Memoir of Sir William Chambers* tells how at the end of George II's reign, just before the advent of Robert Adam, Taylor and Paine "nearly divided the practice of the profession between them". Robert Taylor, subsequently a knight, was born the year Queen Anne died and was educated as a simple stonemason under Sir Henry Cheere. He managed to visit Italy, returned from Rome as early as 1743, and was soon carving monuments for Westminster Abbey. Harleyford Manor (1755) in Berkshire and the Stone Buildings (1756) (17) in Lincoln's Inn Fields mark his first plunges into architecture. They were followed by a house in Piccadilly for the Duke of Grafton (now the Turf Club) and Asgill House at Richmond. Taylor's known buildings are rare and they are all planned on strictly Palladian lines. The planning of Harleyford Manor and Asgill House, for example, is based in each case on the polygonal model of Lord Burlington's famous prototype, Kirby Hall,

[1] Even the style of the silversmiths and makers of Sheffield plate was entirely revolutionised by the Adam brothers' designs. By 1770 rococo outlines and chasing were dismissed. The prevalent form of all vessels became classical and generally ovoid: the ornament comprised Adam garlands and foliage, rosettes, honeysuckles, fans, rams'-heads, and masks.

near Ouseburn. The long front of the Stone Buildings was described in the first chapter as essentially Burlingtonian in form and finish. A true Palladian, Taylor was rather less affected by the Adam revolution in his elevations and in his interior decoration than any of his generation. His great Court Room at the Bank of England (140), built in the 1770s, is his nearest submission to Adam influence. The quality of Taylor's work never declines from the high standard of classic perfection which he set himself. The façade of his Ely House, in Dover Street (20), is of faultless dignity, down to the sejant lion finials upon the beautiful area railings. The interior, from what we may still see of the massive vaulting and coffering left in the entrance passage, must have been of Roman conception and grandeur.

Taylor was unfortunate in leaving no spiritual progeny with the possible exception of Giuseppe Bonomi, who shows certain hereditary tendencies in the Roman handling of his masses. We do not know that Taylor was even acquainted with Bonomi, who was twenty-five years younger than he. This "truly amiable youth", to quote J. T. Smith, was petted by the eccentric old sculptor Nollekens, who took the trouble to instil into him the elements of art from frequent visits to private collections. Bonomi, who was a relation of Angelica Kauffmann, first came from Rome to England in 1767. He joined the staff of Robert Adam and spent many years under his direct influence, for it was not until 1784 that he set up in independent practice in London. One of his best works is the little known Mausoleum hidden amongst the bracken in the depth of the great park at Blickling. Outside a stalwart, simple pyramid, inside it comprises a chamber, circular, domed and resonant, with deep Roman recesses sheltering marble sarcophagi. In a modest way it may compare for sheer abstract excellence with Adam's Mausoleum at Bowood, and it is a simplified version of the Temple of Jupiter at Spalatro, depicted in his master's volume. Bonomi did work for the Duke of Argyll at Inverary and built Roseneath for him on the Clyde. He was held in high esteem by Reynolds, who, having nominated him for the vacant Professorship of Perspective at the Royal Academy, actually resigned from the Presidentship in protest because an "infamous cabal", headed by Chambers, outvoted him and elected Fuseli instead.

Taylor and Bonomi and to a lesser extent Chambers helped to preserve during the eighteenth century the thoroughbred Roman continuity of building.

James Paine, two years younger than Taylor, was also schooled in the matured Burlingtonian methods of building and as a boy knew no other. In his *Plans and Elevations of Noblemen's Houses* (1783) Paine refers to the rapid progress of architecture in Great Britain within the previous thirty years, which he attributes in the first instance to the great "encouragement" given it by the Whig lords Burlington, Pembroke, and Leicester. He built in the course of his seventy-three years a vast number of country houses, of which in his early days at least the majority were for Yorkshire

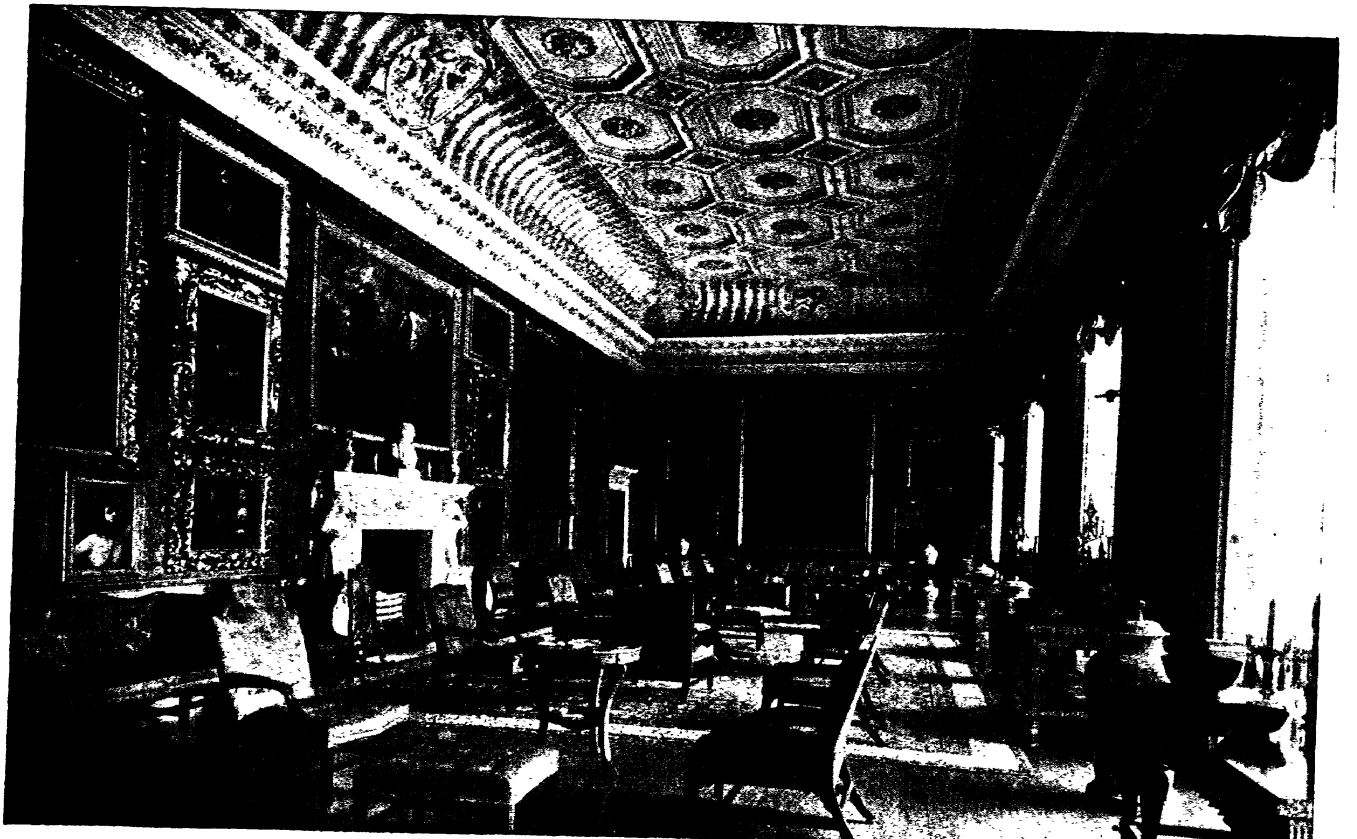
landowners. But Paine, not being possessed of the same strength of personality as Taylor, finally succumbed to the prevailing influence of Adam. Professor Geoffrey Webb assumes that he was, outside the Adam family circle, Robert's chief collaborator, but of this there is little evidence. We have seen how he relinquished Nostell Priory and Kedleston to Robert and James and we know that he held shares in the Adelphi speculation. But there is no recorded case where they built together. Brocket Hall (15) has been quoted as exemplifying Paine's transition from Burlingtonianism to Adamism during a twenty-three-year period. The best surviving example of his final style is Wardour Castle (1770–6), where his interior detail has by now become distinctly Adamatic—admittedly of a restrained sort—and he too has experimented in Pompeian arabesques. Even the constructional treatment of his apses and coffering closely follows the Adam methods, whereas the great stairwell at Wardour (139), a feature of extreme beauty, closely follows the design Robert was carrying out at the same time at Culzean Castle. A competent architect, he, in Mr. Sitwell's words, "never falters, never hesitates; it was not necessary for Paine to wait to be inspired". But his houses do not reveal an excess of imaginative forethought. His Thorndons, Worksops, and Wardours bear strikingly little relation to their surroundings, and, for aught to the contrary, Paine might never have visited the sites, but merely have supplied his perfunctory elevational designs from a distant office. The portrait of him with his son, by Reynolds, shows the features of a successful professional man, hardy, determined, and authoritative, but without the superimposed cast of intellect or fancy.

Lancelot (Capability) Brown was just one year younger than Taylor, one year older than Paine. He is so firmly established in his own particular niche of fame as not to need further reputation. A man of great genius, he gave a revolutionary turn to landscape layout, being the first person to bring whole sections of the countryside into the confines of his canvas. There was, in fact, no area too wide for his comprehensive schemes of betterment, no undertaking too vast for his inventive mind. He could literally move mountains. James Wyatt, who spoke positively well of few of his contemporaries, pronounced him a giant possessed of great ideas. Hannah More noted down a very revealing confidence: "He told me he compared his art to literary composition." She is recording how they stood together one balmy December afternoon on a hillside, she taking "a very agreeable lecture from him in his art. . . . Now *there*, said he, pointing his finger, I make a comma, and there, pointing to another spot, where a more decided turn is proper, I make a colon: at another part (where an interruption is desirable to break the view) a parenthesis—now a full stop, and then I begin another subject." One of these other subjects was architecture itself. In 1751 Brown was commissioned to build a new house at Croome for the 5th Earl of Coventry, which of course Robert was practically to redecorate only eight years later for the son, the 6th Earl. The first experiment at architecture manifested

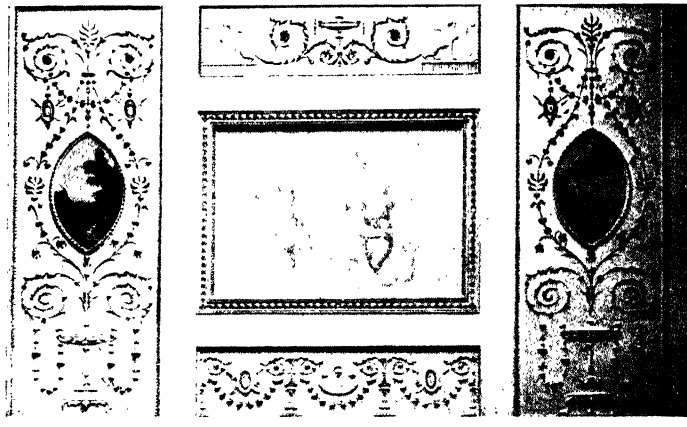
versatility, if little originality in planning and design. Finish is not a quality easily attained by an amateur, and Repton, who explicitly refers to the "many good houses built under his direction", confesses that his master had not had the elementary advantages of studying "those necessary, but inferior branches of architecture, better known perhaps to the practical carpenter than to Palladio himself". In his great picture gallery at Corsham Court, of a later date, Brown achieved a nobility of proportions that many a professional might well have envied. His triumph lies in the great vaulted ceiling, where the outlines of his famous artificial lakes are reflected in the series of repetitive scrolls around the coves. Though the detail of his ornamentation still clings to the previous reign—for Brown was essentially a child of the rococo age—the early influence of the neo-classical is beginning to assert itself in the broader basis of his designs. For by the time of his architectural maturity Capability had experienced the spell of Robert Adam, with whom he had been obliged to collaborate to some extent at Croome and whom he had certainly met at Bowood and Compton Verney when engaged upon the grounds.

With John Carr of York (born in 1723) we are coming closer to Adam's generation. He, no less than Paine, was schooled a Palladian, even acting as clerk of the works under Lord Burlington himself at Kirby Hall. Carr in his early years never looked away from Burlingtonian methods, and the several ceilings to his buildings in the city of York could be mistaken for designs by Inigo Jones or Wren schoolmen, for they are pre-eminently "solid, masculine, and unaffected", to quote Jones's favourite adjectives. Sprung from a long dynasty of humble masons, Carr had no opportunity of travel. An indulgent father ("Let the lad have a try" was his frequent exclamation, quoted by his son in after life) gave him every opportunity to prove himself. Like Paine he soon started to cover the northern half of England with country houses. His chief excellences lie in his clean masonry and in the practical character of his planning, in which his rigid utilitarian economy would allow no wastage of space whatever. His contact with Robert Adam at Harewood fairly revolutionised his work. Henceforward he lost the old robustness, which was his native characteristic, in favour of the new elegance which led him to adopt decorative motifs that he did not always properly understand. It was the familiar case of the cart-horse trying to ape the high-stepping gait of the thoroughbred racer. At Tabley Hall, which he began in 1761, we detect in the interior the first signs of this unnatural transformation. The garden front is a small edition of Campbell's Wanstead; but the entrance hall, though imposing in its way, is a clumsy impression of Robert Adam's Doric atria. The plaster medallions on the virginal wall spaces show a hesitant compromise in the thick early-Georgian ropes that frame them with an attempt at the graceful Adam technique at draping them.

By the time Carr was designing Denton Hall in Yorkshire and Norton Place in Lincolnshire in the 1770s he had assimilated in his own rough fashion the neo-classical style of decoration. His doorways and chimney-



141 Corsham Court, Wiltshire: the Picture Gallery. Architect, Lancelot (Capability) Brown, 1764



142 Woodhall Park, Hertfordshire: stair wall by Thomas Leverton (1778)

143 Woodhall Park, Hertfordshire: the Hall in the Etruscan style, by Thomas Leverton (after 1778)

pieces are no longer Palladian; his ceilings and friezes have devolved into pleasing but thin reproductions of the Adam kind. By the time he is building Farnley Hall near Otley even the Palladian shell has given place utterly to later forms of elevation, and the piano nobile, instead of being approached by a sweeping flight of steps, has descended to the ground floor. By the time of building Hackness Hall, near Scarborough, even the Adam influence is spent and there are signs of Greek Revival influence not only in the detail but in the construction generally and the broadening of the voids particularly. But long before the Grecian had universally established itself in the fourth and fifth decades of the nineteenth century, as the result of the renewed impetus given it by Sir John Soane and Decimus Burton, the Adam style was to run a course long enough to dominate a further generation, and thereafter not utterly to dissolve until the disintegration of the entire English architectural tradition in mid-Victorian times.

John Wood the younger, of Bath, was as good as, if not a better provincial architect than Carr. His Buckland House, in Berkshire, a superb country seat built in 1757 for the Throckmorton family, shows not a trace of the coming changes, whereas less than ten years later the interiors of his Royal Crescent houses in Bath were to be tricked by him in a distinctly Adam manner. It is astonishing how swiftly the Adam influence percolated to the provinces. It had, to take other examples, clearly dominated local men like Thomas Baldwin, who began the Bath Guildhall in 1768, and John Hobcraft, who built Padworth House, Berkshire, the following year; while in far away Norfolk the Ivorys of Norwich were already in process of decorating the staterooms at Blickling, where their ceilings were unmistakable copies, though of a flimsy and insensitive variety.

The younger architects of James Wyatt's generation positively and indeed avowedly surrendered themselves to the Adam style. The 1770s and 80s, in which they grew up and developed, were peopled by innumerable Adam copyists in spite of the fact that Robert had few professed disciples and was not, like Jones, Wren, Vanbrugh, or Burlington, in the eyes of his contemporaries the acknowledged leader of a school of architecture. On the contrary, he was the victimised creator whose original style was pirated by a host of rivals. So we get men of less calibre than Adam, like James Wyatt's elder brother Samuel, at Doddington and Hooton in Cheshire, John Crunden at Boodles Club, and Thomas Leverton at Woodhall Park, assuming all the classical idiosyncrasies introduced by Robert from Herculaneum and Pompeii. At Woodhall Park (143), for instance, Leverton's elevation alone could easily be mistaken for Adam's work. In the interior of Woodhall he has carefully followed Adam's example in a meticulous attention to detail. The grotesques of his wall panels, the radiating shells of his ceilings, the cross-banded veneers of his doors, the marble inlays of his chimneypieces are purely imitative, but as studied as those of Adam for Osterley or Kedleston. Leverton enlisted well-known artists for these purposes, such as Bonomi, Flaxman, and

James Parker.[1] Even the carpets to his special pattern were supplied from Moorfields and Axminster, and some of the furniture was of his own designing. He was an architect of considerable promise, but few other buildings can with any accuracy be attributed to him.

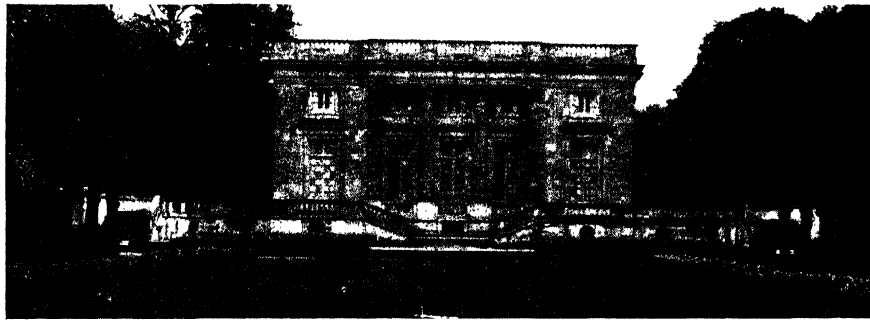
Henry Holland the younger was born in 1745, and at an early age began building in the Adam manner. His first successful house, Claremont, bears this out. So does his decoration at Broadlands (144), where the ceilings of the drawing-room and saloon have been mistaken for the work of Adam. Holland's father and Capability Brown were intimate friends and the young architect had married the daughter of the latter. He had therefore surely observed as a boy Adam's progress at Bowood, where the elder Holland and Brown were for a time working with him. But before he had embarked upon Brooks's Club Henry Holland spent two years in France, where he assimilated the strong Gallic influence that was to distinguish all his subsequent work and become more and more pronounced as his political sympathies with the French Jacobins developed. He was the confirmed friend of Charles James Fox and was a person to be reckoned with in Carlton House circles. Holland, unlike Adam, had little knowledge of archaeology and knew nothing of the antique, in spite of a cherished ambition to infuse Greek principles into his buildings, an ambition which Soane and Burton achieved, but he did not. Holland was, in fact, no originator. He subordinated his faculty for design to an adaptation of French standards of rich simplicity, so that his later interiors dwindled into modified copies of buildings, like Gabriel's Pavillon Français at Versailles, which had appealed to his majestic sense of decorative propriety. The result was that Holland effected a development rather than an advance upon the style of interior decoration brought about by Adam, and his Carlton House and Southill marked a step in this development. The sequel to this development was the banishment of constructional features in apartments in favour of extraneous subterfuges, like ornamental draperies, which in the Victorian era not only nullified the architect's functions but those of the cabinet-maker as well by submerging tables and chairs and almost every species of furniture under cascades of heavy materials.

It must not be supposed that many English architects of the late eighteenth century were deriving inspiration from France. Nor in the past had this ever been the case. It is true that two great houses dating from the close of the seventeenth century, namely Petworth and Boughton, whose noble founders had been impressed by the superior living of the court of the Roi Soleil, conveyed a faint flavour of French provenance. They were exceptions rather than the rule, and during the reigns of the first Georges[2] the cross-Channel exchange of architectural ideas tended,

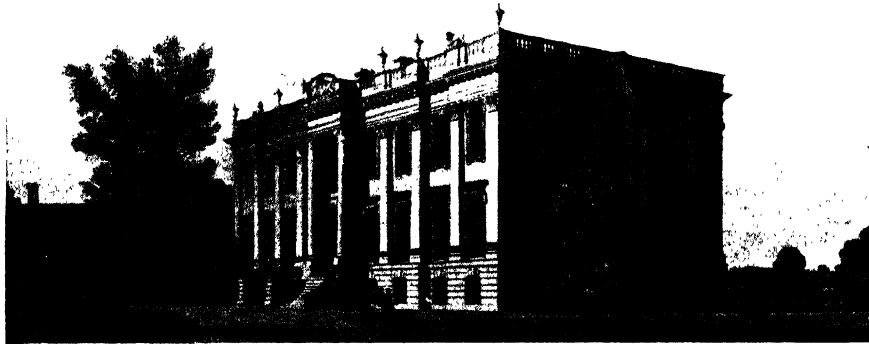
[1] James Parker, a pupil of Basire and one of Alderman Boydell's engravers for his *Shakespeare*, carried out the engravings room at Woodhall.

[2] The English cabinet-makers, on the other hand, had been greatly influenced by French designers since Daniel Marot, until the change wrought by Adam (see Chapter IV).

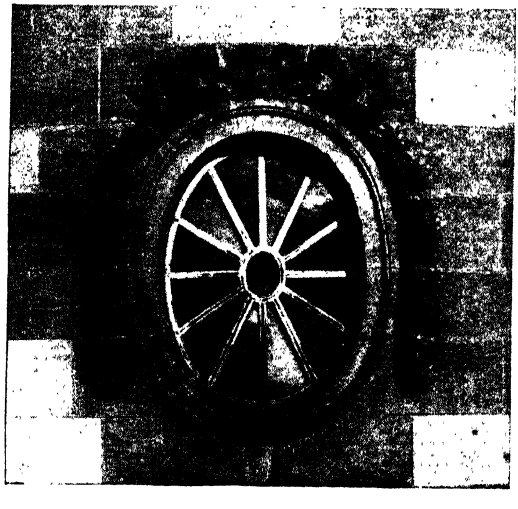
144 Broadlands, Hampshire: the Drawing-Room. Architect, Henry Holland, Jnr., *circa* 1770 (*Country Life* photograph)



145 Petit Trianon, Versailles. Architect, A. J. Gabriel, 1762–4



146 Easton Neston, Northamptonshire: built by N. Hawksmoor in 1702



147 Petit Trianon: oeil-de-boeuf window (1762–4)

if anything, to be the other way round. A dawning interest in the English Palladian version of building became noticeable in France. Whereas, for example, in the reign of George I, Volumes I and II of the *Vitruvius Britannicus* had merely provided a title-page in French as well as in English, Volume III, issued early in the reign of George III, supplied a whole French translation side by side with the English text. When Sir William Chambers's first edition of the *Treatise of Civil Architecture* was published in 1759, the names of several members of the French nobility appeared in the subscription list. In fact, ever since Voltaire's visit to England in the 1720s there had grown in France a keener interest in English ways of life and in English schools of art, and above all architecture. By the reign of George III so renowned were English country-houses that enterprising French architects included these islands in their grand tours. Clérisseau, who we know came to England with James Adam, stayed in this country until his return to Paris in 1768. Lhuillier, his pupil, was in England until the following year; and Goudouin until three years later. Since the 1760s and 70s witnessed the flood-tide of the Adam influence, the French visitors could hardly fail to take note of the new style of the buildings rapidly appearing in these islands. We find, for instance, that François-Joseph Belanger, during a visit to England in 1766, recorded in his sketch-book detailed drawings of Robert Adam's Bowood as well as of Inigo Jones's block at Wilton. His seeming interest in the Bowood innovations did not, however, prevent him straightway designing on his return to Paris a pavilion for the Comte de Lauraquais at the Hôtel de Brancas in a stately style that Robert Adam had at this time discarded as old-fashioned and quite out of date. Not until the late seventies did his designs of elevations for Bagatelle, and not until the late eighties of walls and ceilings for the courtesan, Mlle. Dervieux, distinctly but belatedly echo in their vertical and linear treatment the Adam style. France was, for once in a way, not in the van of a spirited artistic movement.

Let us remember that Robert Adam's coequal in France was an old man who had been born in the previous century. We refer to that great artist in the cosmopolitan hierarchy of all time, Anges-Jacques Gabriel. In the sixties and early seventies Gabriel's star was by no means on the wane, but at this time of his life his inspirations were still derived from the traditional sources of his youth. Consequently, as the recognised leader of his profession in France, the official "Premier Architecte de Louis XV" tended to perpetuate a mode of seasoned excellence that reflected the best traditions of the previous reign. Gabriel, who was an eclectic and had been a student of foreign architecture, produced buildings that combined the styles of Mansard and Robert de Cotte, in which he had been schooled, with the styles of the English Palladians. He was therefore slow to assimilate the advanced neo-classical methods which were being so freely promulgated across the Channel.

Thus the Petit Trianon (145), which was built by Gabriel between 1762 and 1764, though in France deemed to be of a novel style of architecture,

combines many ingredients of composition that are derived from outworn English sources. These ingredients were in the eyes of the up-to-date contemporary from Great Britain of archaic type that he would term even pre-Palladian and associate with the country houses of Queen Anne's reign. Indeed, a glance at the unexceptionable elevations of the Petit Trianon reminds us of, let us say, Easton Neston (145) in Northamptonshire, that dates from 1702, or of Appuldurcombe House in the Isle of Wight, from 1710. To appreciate the comparisons we have only to look closely at its component parts—the horizontal skyline balustrade, the slightly projecting centrepiece, the mitred surrounds to the attic windows, the architraves to the first-floor windows, the stone terrace and perron down to the gardens. Again, the oeuil-de-boeuf windows in the basement (147), draped with swags of ribbons and husks, are in the rococo manner of James Gibbs—features readopted fifty years later by Henry Holland and considered by him a novelty. They were of course no more novel than the reintroduction in the early twentieth century of the undigested "Louis Quinze" style by the Edwardian architects of the Ritz Hotel.

On entering the Petit Trianon, would the informed contemporary from England, aware that the decorations were imposed between 1765 and 1768, notice anything inside that struck him as much more up to date than the exterior? The window openings on the stairs are what Ripley had contrived for Wolterton Hall in 1736. The chimneypiece in the grande salle à manger, with its heavy rams'-heads on the jambs, would shock him as uncouth and the bunches of grapes unrestrainedly naturalistic. The prominent female mask over the chimney glass in the grand salon constitutes a piece of decoration which no one in England since William Kent's day had thought permissible. Only in the boudoir of Marie Antoinette (37) would the Englishman familiar with the Adam style recognise features that he considered modern. This apartment, which was the latest to be decorated, is the only one that faintly echoes the neo-classical spirit which Robert Adam had for the past ten years been propagating at home. Here the carved grotesques of the wooden wall panels show the tentative influence of their prototypes at Shardeloes and Osterley. Though thoroughly French in feeling, as is only proper, they and other Adamatic details in this room, notably the lamps, the urns, the griffins, and the scrolling foliage on the marble chimneypiece, prove that at long last the rebirth of the neo-classical age in France is near at hand.

The little garden Belvédère close by shows more than an unconscious influence of the Adam style, particularly in its painted stucco grotesques. But this pretty toy was erected as late as 1778–81 by Richard Mique, who had succeeded Gabriel in the directorship of the Académie Royal d'Architecture. Its near neighbour, the monopteral Temple de l'Amour, with saucer dome, by the sculptor Deschamps, begun the same year as the other, could, if come upon unawares transplanted to a Capability park at, say, Croome or Compton Verney, easily deceive us into thinking it Adam's own handiwork.

Of the men belonging to the generation immediately following Robert Adam's there is one who more than any other modelled himself upon the master and who at the same time developed a style more individualised, more sumptuous, and more exotic. He, a compatriot of Adam (whom we do not know that he ever met), left no recorded building in these islands. This mysterious, self-expatriated artist was Charles Cameron. There is no mention made of him in either the *Dictionary of Architecture* or the *Dictionary of National Biography*.[1] Little is known of his early life, but, like Adam, he was the cadet of a respectable Scottish family. Like Adam, he went as a young man to Italy to study classical architecture at the source, for there are drawings of his done in Rome and dated 1764, now preserved in the Leningrad Museum. On the back of a portrait of him taken at Rome in the late sixties he is briefly described as "Lord Bute's Agent", and so, again like Adam, he was patronised by that nobleman. From 1767 to 1772 he exhibited drawings at the Free Society and the Society of Arts. In the last year Cameron published *The Baths of the Romans, explained and illustrated. With the restorations of Palladio corrected and improved*, and on the title page described himself as "Architect". The book, in the same way as Robert's *Ruins of the Emperor Diocletian's Palace*, took the form of the budding architect's introductory trade card. It made his reputation. In 1779 Catherine the Great was so impressed by it that she lured him to Russia. Cameron, who unlike Wyatt suffered from no misgivings or inflated self-valuation, gladly accepted. He was then aged about thirty-nine. Until the death of the empress he retained her unbounded confidence and esteem. With her successors he was not to be quite so blessed.

"À present", Catherine wrote in 1779, "je me suis emparé de Mister Cameron, écossais de nation, Jacobite de profession, grand désinateur, nourri d'antiquités", whom on other occasions she describes with her usual fervour as "cette tête fermentive". His summons to Russia coincided with Catherine's strong personal reaction against the heavy baroque of her reigning architect, the Italian Rastrelli. Above all things building was her prevailing mania and delight. "Catherine pardessus tout aimera la bâtisse", she wrote of herself naively. "La fureur de bâtir est chose diabolique, cela dévore de l'argent et plus on bâtit, plus on veut bâtir, c'est une maladie comme l'ivrognerie." Was there ever such an opportunity for a personable young architect whose tastes coincided with a lavish patron's? Catherine learnt to relish the restrained classicism of the handsome Scotsman, who had thoroughly assimilated the style of his greater compatriot. At the royal palace of Tsarkoe Selo Cameron was given an entirely free hand. It is here and notably in the Cameron Gallery extension that his best work was to be found. At Pavlovsk, in spite of the beauty of his isolated achievements, he was to endure the mistrust of the Grand Duke Paul and Marie Federovna, and the active

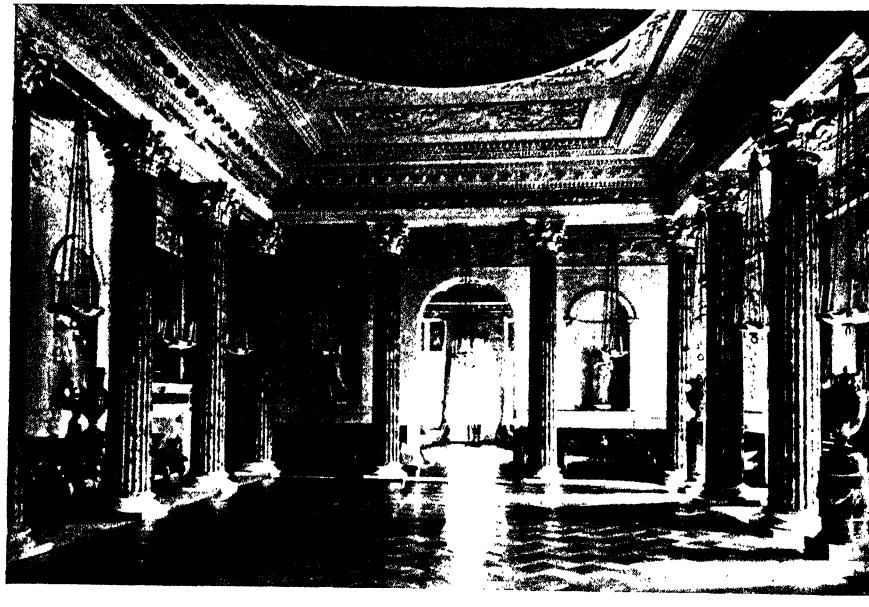
[1] But see *Charles Cameron*, by Georges Loukomski, Nicholson and Watson, 1943.

interference of his rival, Brenna, was apparent throughout. In 1800 he was back in England. By this time Robert Adam was dead. In 1801, however, he had returned to Russia and was engaged chiefly upon administrative works of a lesser consequence. He died in 1812.

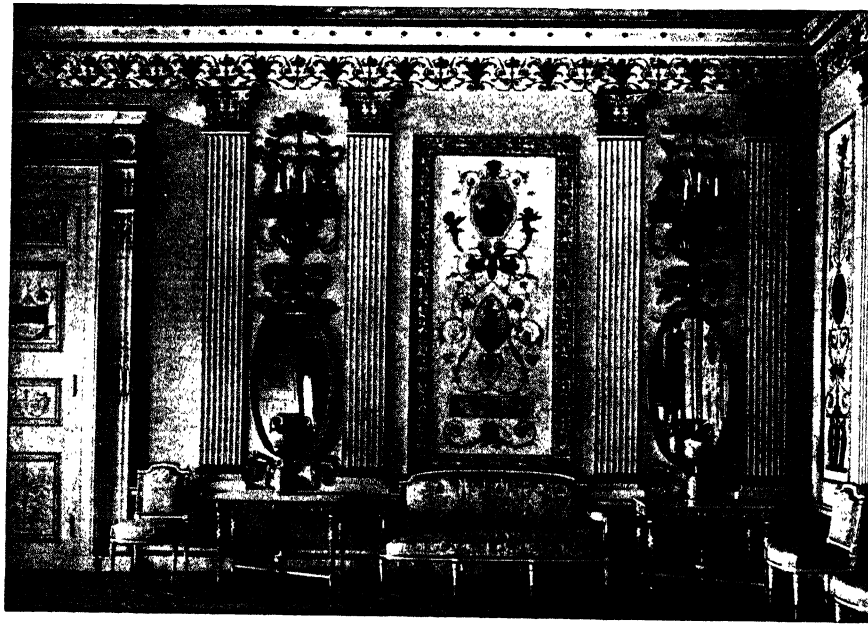
The influence of Adam's earlier, and so better, decorative work upon Cameron is very perceptible. M. Loukomski in his book makes an observant comparison between Cameron's so-called Grecian Hall (1780) (148) at Pavlovsk and Robert Adam's famous hall at Kedleston (1760). In the former the handling of columniation, ceiling design, and wall niches offers a fair estimate of Cameron's imaginative adaptation of Roman methods, and shows no falling away from Adam's restraint and sustained quality of workmanship. As flights of decorative achievement the green dining-room and the Salle des Arabesques at Tsarkoe Selo (149) are even more masterly than Adam's superb apartments at No. 20 St. James's Square. The plaster reliefs on the walls of the one room are bolder, freer, and more original; the arabesques of the other less stylised and even more elegant. Catherine in 1781 speaks of her eleven new private rooms at Tsarkoe as "plus ou moins de Raphaelisme" and of Cameron as "grand admirateur de Clérisseau. Aussi les cartons de celui çi servent à Cameron à décorer mes nouveaux appartements ici et les appartements servent au superlatif." Cameron admits too that he has relied upon Palladio's famous drawings, which Lord Burlington years ago had brought to London from Vicenza, and it is precisely the Palladian virility introduced into his own decorative compositions that distinguishes him from Adam, who was at pains to banish this influence. But in spite of the derivative sources of inspiration, Cameron's strong personality is forcibly expressed in the elongated lines, the small capitals to his columns, the floral garlands of his frescoes, the "Wedgwood"-like medallions in high relief (formulated through his close studies of the antique), and the parquetry floors of rare woods. Adam would have envied the polychrome materials he applied with such skilful lavishment. In the use of his adopted materials, the agate and porphyry for his entablatures, the mauve and pistachio porcelain for his columns and columnettes, the ormolu for his capitals and ceiling inlays, and the milky glass for his walls, Cameron's sensuous genius was free to revel in sources of dream-like quality unknown to the sombre lands of western Europe. We may well wonder whether Adam's love of intricate linear display, that sometimes nauseated his contemporaries and has frequently irritated posterity, might not have fared better through the exotic mediums that imperial Russia of the eighteenth century was able to provide.

If we regard the incursion of the Adam style beyond the confines of eastern Europe [1] as a brilliant, schismatic movement, necessarily destined

[1] Just *within* the north-eastern confines we come across isolated patches of almost pure "Adam". In Sweden the Rosendal Slott and above all Gustav III's exquisite little Pavilion at the Haga Slott (132), where Olof Tempelman in 1788 decorated the rooms in arabesques, are two examples. Tempelman's Pavilion hardly falls short of the Petit Trianon in delicacy of conception and execution.

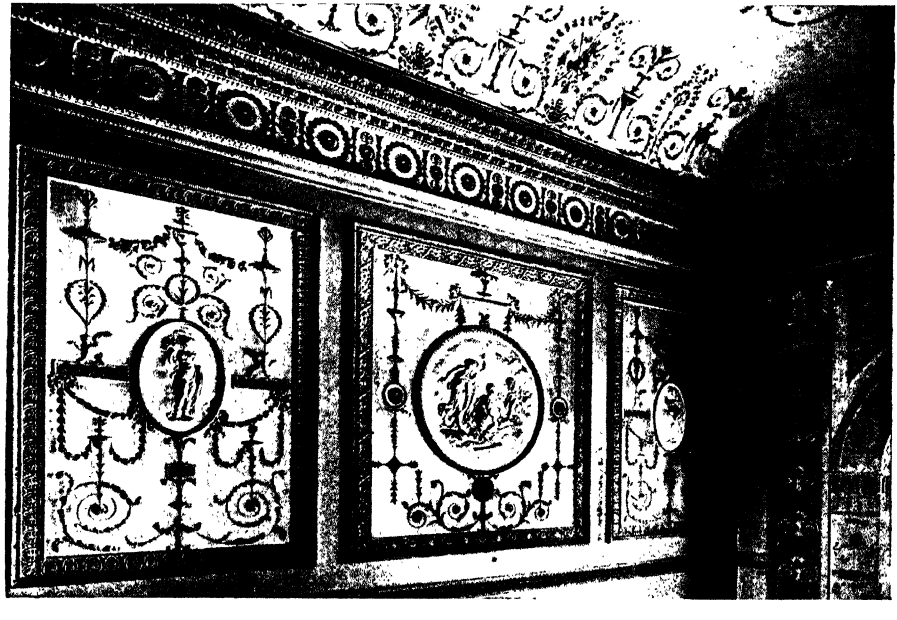


148 Pavlovsk Palace, Russia: the Grecian Hall (1780) by Charles Cameron for Catherine the Great, inspired by Adam's hall at Kedleston (cf. fig. 90)



149 Tsarkoe Selo Palace, Russia: the Salle des Arabesques (*circa* 1780), by Charles Cameron, described by the Empress Catherine as "plus ou moins de Raphaelisme"

150 Powerscourt House, Dublin: ceiling (*circa* 1774) under the direct influence of Adam. Architect, Robert Mack, 1771–4



151 No. 17 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin: staircase wall of arabesque design

to bear little fruit, such was not the case at the western extremity of the Continent and still less so on the other side of the Atlantic. It is a far cry from London to St. Petersburg and Dublin (further still to Salem, Massachusetts), and in the eighteenth century Russia and Ireland (the Americas were then quite beyond the pale) were, culturally speaking, about equidistant from the English capital. In those days Ireland was only the more accessible because a sprinkling of its great landowners derived the larger part of their fortunes and their social pleasures from England. For them the recognised money and marriage markets were to be found in London.

So it was that a few of Ireland's prosperous landowners came to visit the London office of the Adam brothers. But it is not known that the brothers ever considered it necessary to visit Ireland and their patrons' estates. In 1770 the first Lord Bective consulted Robert Adam upon the rebuilding of his seat at Headfort, County Meath. The introduction was probably brought about through Lady Bective's father, the Honble. Hercules Rowley, who, five years previously, had employed the architect to design him a country house, called Summerhill, in the same county, and a town house in Mary Street, Dublin. The elevation of Headfort, as carried out, was appropriately plain and unadorned, which coincides with Robert's principles throughout his middle period. Even so, a comparison with his surviving drawing for it shows that Lord Bective simplified it still further. Robert's plans too were altered in some particulars. The saloon, perhaps the most highly decorated of any Irish apartment belonging to the second half of the century, very closely follows the original scheme. Robert's drawings for the ceiling are carefully coloured. They show a pale green ground, the plaster ornamentation being in white. His drawings of the walls likewise provide an apple-green ground; of the doorcases a cream and buff. The mahogany doors themselves are made to have a vertical partition in the middle and were so carried out. The surrounds of the fireplace are of Pietro Bossi inlay. Headfort is without question the best example of a country house in Ireland that was actually built to Robert Adam's designs. Another and lesser example is the addition, in the castellar style, which lends it an academic interest, to Castle Upton, County Antrim, for Lord Templetown in the early 1770s.

Until the Adam period Ireland had produced a mere handful of indigenous architects of repute. Francis Bindon, who died in 1765, was one of them. He had been the builder of Bessborough in 1744. The most eminent of the early Georgian architects in Ireland was Richard Castle, who was, of course, an expatriate from Germany and not Irish at all. He built, between 1725 and 1751, a number of country houses, of which Bessborough, in County Wicklow, and Carton, County Kildare, where he died, are the finest. They are pre-eminently notable for their lavish decoration in the rococo manner, which transcended anything done in England at this date.

In the 1770s the Adam influence was beginning to make itself felt in

Ireland. In Powerscourt House, Dublin, built between 1771 and 1774, we have an unusual instance under one roof of the pre-Adam decoration in process of being superseded by the Adam. One Robert Mack is given as the architect, and the elevation is still what we would term distinctive Palladian. So too inside are the doorcases and the thick turned and carved stair balusters in mahogany, two to each tread. But in the actual ceiling over the staircase there dawns a mutation from the Irish rococo into faint-hearted classical idioms. Finally, upon the staircase landing, the walls are embellished with full-blown classical arabesques in stucco (157), only a little clumsier in outline than Adam's own at Shardeloes. The ceilings of the dining-room and drawing-room (150) of this house are, for practical purposes, unrefined reproductions of the developed Kedleston or Bowood type. Henceforward we come across Dublin street houses decorated in the mature Adam style by the score, first in the St. Stephen's Green area and then all about the city.

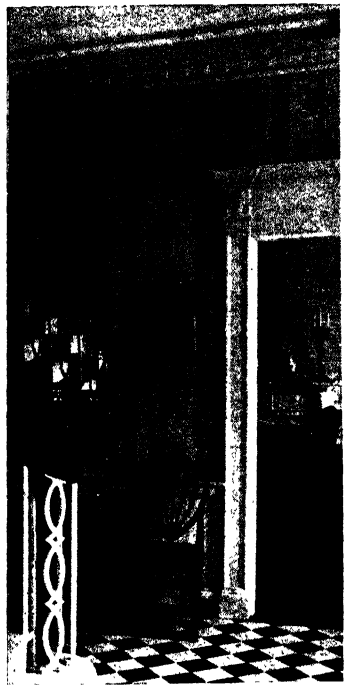
The Adam influence soon spread in this decade into county this and county that. In 1773 Michael Frederick Trench, esquire, built himself in Queen's County a seat which he named after his mother-in-law. This amateur architect contrived at Heywood a dining-room which is a fine example of the Adam style as modified by James Wyatt. Very simple and restrained, the wall panels are decorated with central circular fans, of which the execution proclaims them to be only a little provincial. This same year an unknown architect began the neighbouring seat at Abbey Leix for Lord Knapton. The decorative motifs here are clearly derived from Adam's middle period and their quality is of a fairly high order.

In 1779 Thomas Cooley began to build his ambitious but not very inspiring block for Lord Caledon. Before Nash added his extremely interesting annexes with their saucer domes, Cooley's building must have been dull indeed. It is redeemed, however, by his original decoration of the saloon (153) and boudoir. The first follows Adam's favourite pattern for his Doric entrance halls and may be compared with that at Chandos House in London, with a perceptible Hellenic flavour intermixed. The boudoir is even more interesting on account of its ceiling and frieze. In the centre of the ceiling is a circular medallion, perhaps by William Hamilton, who painted "History" for Alderman Boydell and the panels of Lord FitzGibbon's coach, and certainly more masculine than any panel by his master, Zucchi. The frame of the medallion is of deep chocolate, interrupted by scarlet panels with white tripods in relief. The cornice and frieze are of tortoiseshell with white reliefs. The ceiling is slightly vaulted, recalling Leverton's saloon at Woodhall Park.

Ten years later Lord Waterford was redecorating Curraghmore, likewise in the Adam manner now universally accepted. But at Castlecoole, in County Fermanagh (152), Lord Belmore at fantastic cost was engaged upon building from the designs of James Wyatt a seat that is one of the glories of Ireland and for sheer abstract beauty the most successful composition of that architect to survive. Castlecoole, though still within the

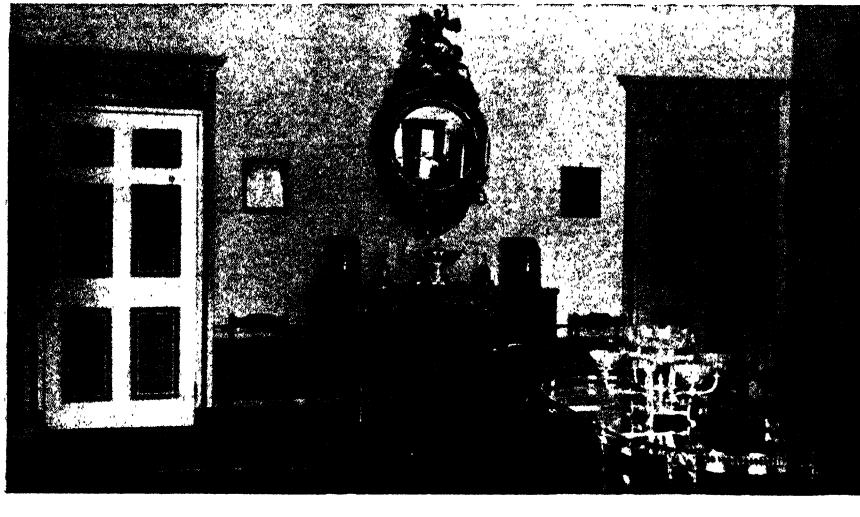
152 Castlecoole, Co. Fermanagh, Ireland. Architect, James Wyatt (1789)
(*Country Life* photograph)

153 Caledon, Co. Tyrone, Ireland: the Saloon, designed by Thomas Cooley, 1779
(*Country Life* photograph)



154 Pingree House, Salem, Massachussets: interior by S. MacIntire

155 Peirce-Nichols House, Salem, Massachussets: chimneypiece by S. MacIntire (1801)



156 Harrison Gray Otis House, Boston, U.S.A.: interior by Charles Bulfinch (1795)

prevailing Adam sphere, evinces the first signs in Ireland of the impending change-over from Roman to Grecian principles of architecture. A side issue, worthy of note, is that the plasterers employed at Castlecoole all came from the workshop of Robert Adam's great collaborator, Joseph Rose. In the 1790s and throughout the Napoleonic Wars the two most fashionable architects in Ireland were Francis Johnston, a native of Armagh, and Sir Richard Morrison, the son of a Cork surveyor and the pupil of James Gandon. Both these men tended more and more to build in what they believed to be the medieval or Tudor styles.

As we have indicated, the Adam influence did not stop short its western movement with Ireland. It was soon to cross the Atlantic and establish itself in North America. The year 1775 was made memorable in British imperial history by the outbreak of the War of American Independence. Until this date the sturdy conservative colonials continued to build houses in a style long considered out of date in the mother country. Their façades frankly reflected in rude, yet robust, fashion the features of a rustic Queen Anne. The interiors of these pre-Revolutionary dwellings were still designed in separate units, each motif being treated by itself without relation to the general composition. Only on the eve of the Revolution do we begin to sense the adumbration of coordinated treatment and a more resolved articulation of the units.

As an example of the earlier Queen Anne type, there is the little Moffatt-Ladd House, built in 1763 by Captain John Moffatt, in Portsmouth, overlooking the Piscataqua River. Its bolection-moulded wainscoting, stalwart fireplaces, and exquisitely turned stair balusters find their prototypes in the middling-class Wren houses of our own provincial towns. As an example of the transitional small house, there is the no less nostalgic Lee Mansion at Marblehead, dating from 1768. Even so, the carving of its pine overmantels carries along the tradition of Grinling Gibbons. As an instance of how far American ideas of architecture were behind the times, Thomas Jefferson, whom Americans rightly claim to be the Lord Burlington of his generation, started to design in the following year his ambitious seat of Monticello upon the overworked theme of the Villa Capra. The American Chiswick House was actually carried out in the last decade of the century and was not even regarded as an anachronism when completed in 1809. Again, Thomas Malton's print of the Provost's Lodge, at Dublin, itself an exact copy of Burlington's London house for General Wade, inspired Charles Bulfinch to produce a replica of it in his Ezekiel Hersey Derby Mansion in 1795.

Charles Bulfinch (1763–1844) had, in spite of what we have just said, been the first to introduce the Adam style into New England before this date. A man of education and some means, he made the grand tour to Europe between 1785 and 1787, visiting England, France, and Italy. In our country he had ample opportunity of studying the Adam brothers' work at first hand. On his return he fulfilled a brilliant career in which his versatility found virgin field for free indulgence. Briefly, his architectural

practice may be divided into three phases, during each of which he followed a different style. The first was his Adam phase of Colonial—of which his State House, Boston, was the outcome—to be followed by the Post Colonial and, lastly, the Greek Revival. With the first phase only we need be concerned here, and in the Harrison Gray Otis House at Boston (156), built by him in 1795, we see practically for the first time a full display of all the familiar Adam motifs—in fanlights, doors, stairs, and chimneypieces—barely tempered by a touch of individual genius.

If Bulfinch is to be accredited with the inauguration of the Adam style in the United States, Samuel MacIntire was the man who, in following suit, evolved out of it an Americanised version that was as distinctive and original as Cameron's version through Russian mediums. The son of a humble joiner in Salem, MacIntire (1757–1811) lived all his life in his home town, never went abroad, and may never even have left the State of Massachusetts. He began work as a carver and did not later forsake the craft, of which he remained a consummate master. Perhaps the very first of his buildings was the Nathan Read House (demolished in 1857) in Essex Street, Salem. Whereas the material of his later houses was brick, this was of wooden weatherboarding. An unpretentious square block with a portico, the interior of the Nathan Read House contained doorways and chimneypieces that were unmistakably Adam, and obviously derived from English builders' text-books, which had for some time now been finding their way across the Atlantic. And, indeed, this building was begun in 1793, one year after the publication of a special American edition of Pain's *Practical House Carpenter*, which was to exercise a tremendous influence upon New England building. It was followed in 1806 with the publication by an American architect, Asher Benjamin, of *The American Builder's Companion; or a New System of Architecture, particularly adapted to the present style of Building in the United States*, a work that spread still more rapidly the Adam precepts that MacIntire had largely popularised.

If the derivation of the Nathan Read House was primarily academic, that of MacIntire's later houses became increasingly inspired. The Peirce-Nichols House (155), decorated by him in 1801, is one of the noblest houses in all New England. It is possibly MacIntire's masterpiece. Utterly gone is the primitive uncouthness that made the Moffatt-Ladd House so delightfully archaic. Here the treatment is altogether flatter: classical images in low relief are quite happily blended into the structural composition of the whole. The doorheads, with their delicate festoons of native plants, the spidery elliptical fanlights and the Doric friezes treated to a vernacular genus of paterae, resembling sunflowers, between the triglyphs, are integrally Adam yet essentially MacIntire. At Pingree House (154), Salem, the same individualised quality of detail is in evidence, down to the beautiful stair balusters, of a twisted ribbon pattern—a refreshingly novel variation of the Chippendale vogue.

In England and Scotland, after Robert Adam's death and until the reign of the fourth George had opened, the Adam style, in spite of per-

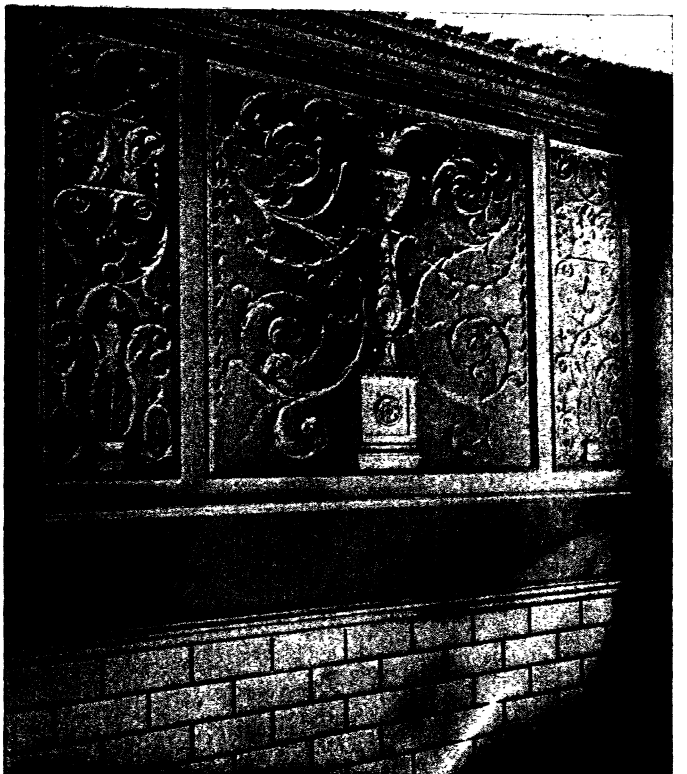
sistent detraction by the critics and the silent march of Grecianism, did not seriously falter. It was still, above all, the popular style. Large country houses of Adamatic character continued to spring from the landscape, like Jeffrey Wyatt's Dinton Park, Lewis Wyatt's Willey Park, and Bonomi's Roseneath on the Clyde. Large town houses, like Gwydyr House in Whitehall (137), and small detached villas of the kind mass produced by John Papworth at Cheltenham reproduced the main elements of the Adam prototypes. Civic buildings, like the ballroom to the Athenaeum at Bury St. Edmunds, the Guildhall at Salisbury, and the Assembly Room behind the Red Lion at Shrewsbury—all finished after the turn of the century—were considered suitable because they followed Robert's drawing-room style of the 1770s. Churches, like Cockerell's at Banbury, Plaw's at Paddington, and countless others throughout the provinces, that did not adopt fantastic Greek or Gothic forms, adhered to the Adam style. Whereas in literally thousands of streets in London, Edinburgh, Dublin, and the county towns row after row of flat-faced, featureless houses, relieved by a single "Adam" fanlight or a portico, with inside an "Adam" stairway, an "Adam" grate, or just an "Adam" frieze, echoed fainter and fainter, even into the 1830s and 40s, the dwindling call of the age of elegance.

## APPENDIX

# THE ADAM COLLABORATORS

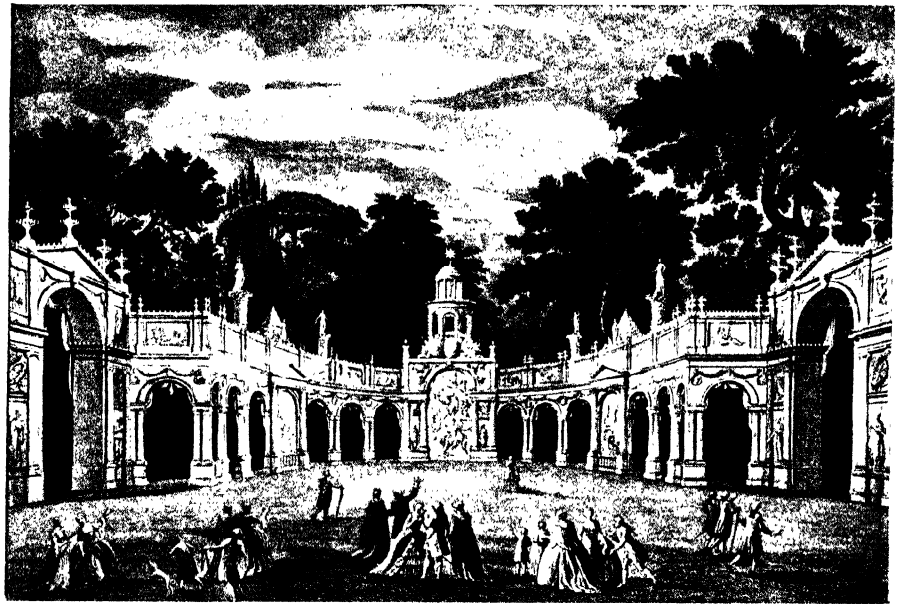
IN the famous letter of 1763 to Lord Kames upon his principles of building Robert Adam wrote: "Painting and sculpture depend more upon good architecture than one would imagine. They are the necessary accompaniments of the great style of architecture; and a building that makes no provision for them, and does not even demand them as necessary adjuncts, I would at once pronounce to be wretched." It cannot be gainsaid that Robert carried this precept into practice, for he saw to it that his own buildings were copiously adorned with paintings and sculpture of a sort. But it may in truth be objected that he did not, with few exceptions, enlist the very greatest contemporary artists in these two mediums. It is apparent that most of them were of only second-rate ability. Their creations were, we suspect, expressly subordinated to his own architecture and were regarded by him rather as "necessary adjuncts" of mere decorative value than as "necessary accompaniments" of a commensurate quality. The paintings which he lavished upon his ceilings and walls were the works certainly of talented decorators, like Angelica Kauffmann and Zucchi, who by no stretch of the imagination can be termed great artists. In several instances we know that Adam went beyond indicating the exact location for their paintings in relation to his architecture and even outlined with his own hand upon canvas the kind of landscape and figures he wished composed to suit a particular apartment. The statuary for his chimneypieces and entablatures formed part of the background furnishings of his designs, and masons like Carter and Wilton were commissioned to execute it. In the same way the statues with which he filled his alcoves at Croome, Kedleston, and Syon were usually indifferent casts from the antique, and even the genuine pieces exhibited in the galleries at Lansdowne House and Newby were rather the subjects than the objects of those apartments.

There is little doubt that Adam regarded his painters and sculptors in the same light as his large army of bricklayers, carpenters, plasterers, plumbers, and even cabinet-makers—as good and enduring instruments in the fulfilment of the greater art, his architecture. He was fully satisfied so long as these people were accomplished craftsmen. Like a great conductor, he drilled and directed his orchestra throughout the architectural symphony. Adam's conduct has provoked adverse criticism from specialist connoisseurs who have expressed resentment at his humiliating treatment of the sister arts and at what they consider his inadequate appreciation and choice of them. But these protagonists of painting and sculpture are themselves at fault in thereby conniving at the implication that several mediums of the arts can ever combine in forming one integral



157 Powerscourt House, Dublin: staircase wall. Architect, Robert Mack, 1771–4

158 Abbey Leix, Queen's County, Ireland: interior decoration (*circa* 1773). Architect unknown



159 Robert Adam's Design for an Illumination and Transparency for Queen Charlotte in honour of King George III's birthday, 1762. From the *Works*

160 "Interior View of the Ball-room in a Pavilion erected for a Fête Champêtre in the garden of the Earl of Derby at The Oaks in Surrey, the 9th June, 1774." From the *Works*

composition, except at the expense of the lesser mediums. They should rather acknowledge that nothing more first rate in painting and sculpture than a few productions by Kauffmann and Zucchi, Carter and Wilton were sacrificed by Adam in the cause of architecture.

Mrs. Montagu, at the time Robert Adam was working upon her house in Hill Street, wrote as follows to the Duchess of Portland: "Mr. Adam came at the head of a regiment of artificers. . . . The bricklayer talked about the alterations to be made in a wall, the stonemason was as eloquent about the coping of the said wall; the carpenter thought the internal fitting-up of the house not less important; then came the painter, who is painting my ceiling in various colours, according to the present fashion." The painter to whom she refers was probably not the house painter, but the artist Biagio Rebecca, and we must remember that clients at that time would commission an artist to produce pictures for their new houses just as we to-day would order a firm to provide wall-papers. The results would be summarily rejected if they failed to please. Lady Shelburne's Diary gives an unequivocal account of her husband taking her one afternoon to Zucchi's, Cipriani's, and Zuccarelli's "and some other people employed for our house in town", including Ince and Mayhew, the cabinet-makers. They first called at Zucchi's, "where we saw some ornaments for our ceilings, and a large architecture picture painting for the ante-chamber, with which, however, my Lord is not particularly pleased". It was doubtless not accepted. At Cipriani's, however, they were more impressed with "some beautiful drawings", and Lord Shelburne instantly ordered a whole series to be copied for Lady Shelburne's dressing-room.

The fashion that Robert Adam had introduced into the smart world of George III's subjects was a cult of the antique. Consequently his collaborators had to be proficient at imitating and reproducing as far as their knowledge allowed what the ancients had imposed upon their buildings. So we have Sir John Soane a generation later, in a lecture to his art students, praising Adam for the introduction of "the light and elegant ornaments, the varied compartments" in his ceilings, "imitated from the Ancient Works in the Baths and Villas of the Romans". Soane appreciated that these ornaments were soon applied by Adam's artificers "in designs for Chairs, Tables, Carpets, and in every species of furniture. To Mr. Adam's taste in the Ornaments of his Buildings and Furniture, we stand indebted, inasmuch as Manufacturers of every kind felt, as it were, the *electric power* of this Revolution in Art."

The following bare sketches are of some of Adam's manufacturers of every kind of applied art, collaborators in his great architectural themes, men and women whose names have been referred to in the text but whose personalities otherwise are not touched upon.

*Francesco Bartolozzi* (1727–1815), the son of a Florentine goldsmith, was early instructed in drawing by Ignazio Hugford, an English artist established at Florence, who impressed upon him the need for detailed

anatomical study. He next learnt the art of engraving from Joseph Wagner at Venice. Encouraged by Dalton, George III's librarian, then in Italy buying pictures for the royal collections, Bartolozzi came to England in 1764 and was soon appointed engraver to the king with a pension of £300 a year. In 1768 he was elected a Royal Academician on the grounds of his being an artist, and indeed amongst Lord Shelburne's cash accounts is noted the payment of £21 to Bartolozzi, described as "painter". His great love of the antique and passionate reverence for the ancients endeared him straight away to Adam, for whose Spalatro volume he was the chief engraver of the plates of views and of bas reliefs. He became a staunch friend of Cipriani and was greatly encouraged in England by Angelica Kauffmann. Easy-going, good-natured, and improvident, he made large sums of money, which he promptly spent. He was addicted to snuff-taking in large quantities and to drink. In 1802 he left England for Lisbon, where he eventually died. Bartolozzi did a great deal of work for Alderman Boydell, the celebrated print publisher who practically ruined himself in the cause of art. Bartolozzi's many beautifully designed benefit tickets are well known. He is supposed to have invented the art of red chalk engraving. His granddaughter was Madame de Vestris, the opera singer.

*Matthew Boulton* (1728–1809) was, in Wedgwood's words, "the first and most complete manufacturer in England in metal". A man of immense commercial sense and versatility, his life's activities may be divided into four periods. The first was the manufacture of hardware; the second the production of artistic ornaments in Sheffield plate, silver plate and ormolu; the third collaboration with James Watt in the invention of the steam engine; the fourth coinage improvement. The son of a trinket maker, he entered his father's business and invented at the age of seventeen an enamelled buckle. He married in succession two sisters, both heiresses to a large fortune. In 1762 Boulton opened his Soho works, where he combined the activities of merchant and manufacturer. Here he engaged upon the production of artistic objects copied from drawings and antique vases, which he borrowed from rich and noble collectors through the help of his wife's cousin, Elizabeth Montagu. His plate and especially ormolu rivalled those of the best continental makers, but Boulton found that their manufacture did not pay, and so he abandoned it. In fact, science attracted him rather than the arts, and in the 1770s he rejected a scheme of the Adam brothers that he should establish an ormolu factory in the Adelphi. To Boswell, questioning him about his commodities during the steam engine period, Boulton replied: "I sell here, Sir, what all the world desires to have—Power." He was the friend of Erasmus Darwin, Priestley, and, of course, Watt, and was the nucleus of the Lunar Society. Wedgwood described him as "ingenious, philosophical, and agreeable".

*Thomas Carter* (d. 1795), of the firm under his name in Piccadilly, was throughout the second half of the eighteenth century the chief rival to Joseph Wilton as a purveyor of marble chimneypieces. Adam employed him at Mersham-le-Hatch, Bowood, and Lansdowne House. His ac-

counts exist for work done by him to Adam's design for Lord Shelburne, dated 1768, 1769, and 1770, his charge for the ante-room chimneypiece at Lansdowne House amounting to £113 11*s*. 5*d*. He must be regarded as a mason, chiefly in marble.

*Giuseppe Ceracchi* was a Roman and we hear of him modelling a bas relief in the Adams' patent mastic composition—a mixture of cement and oil—for a house in Portland Place.

*Giovanni Battista Cipriani* (1727–85), painter and etcher, was born at Florence of good family and was a fellow pupil with Bartolozzi at Ignazio Hugford's school. In 1750 he met Sir William Chambers and Wilton at Rome and five years later accompanied them to England, where he worked happily with Bartolozzi. When the 4th Duke of Richmond opened to the public his Gallery in Whitehall, Cipriani was put in charge of the school of drawing. Like Bartolozzi, he too was made a foundation member of the Royal Academy. He died at Hammersmith and was buried at Chelsea, where Bartolozzi erected a monument to his memory. Cipriani was talented and prolific. As well as providing numerous wall panels, usually in grisaille, for Syon, Lansdowne House, and other Adam buildings, he restored the Verrio paintings at Windsor, decorated the panels of Wilton's royal coach for George III and a commode for Mrs. Montagu at Portman House. Horace Walpole referred to him as "that flaming scene-painter", but when he used colour the results were cold and far from flamboyant. He chiefly excelled with his monochrome panels of children and was a tolerable draftsman.

*Charles-Louis Clérisseau* (1722–1820) was primarily a water-colour draftsman and secondly an architect. Born in France, he went to Rome in 1753, where he became acquainted with Wincklemann and met Robert Adam during his Italian tour. He accompanied Adam on the expedition to Split in 1757 and was one of several to illustrate the architect's subsequent volume upon the ruins of the Emperor Diocletian's palace. It has been claimed that Adam was the pupil of Clérisseau, but James Adam's references to him in his Journal do not convey this impression. James, the younger brother of Robert, was in Italy between 1760 and 1763, and was accompanied on a number of travels by Clérisseau, who clearly was in his employ merely as his draftsman. On one occasion at least James records how "Clérisseau took this opportunity to talk to me of his situation and seemed to dread the uncertainty of his share of the designs [for a publication James then had in mind] when to make sure at all events I agreed to give from the end of those months he had received at Venice, one hundred and fifty zechine per annum, and to take 12 designs per annum at 12 zechine each, for which he is to answer all commissions, direct the engravings, and deliver the original drawings". Clérisseau may have first visited England with James Adam on the latter's return in 1764. He was involved in the brothers' bankruptcy over the Adelphi project and left for France. There he published the *Antiquités de France* and *Les Monuments de Nîmes*. In 1783 he was appointed architect to Catherine of Russia.

*Gavin Hamilton* (1730–97) came of ancient Scottish lineage and went to Rome in 1742, where, apart from short and infrequent visits to Scotland, he remained for the rest of his life. As a painter he had little imagination, but was a careful and scholarly designer. He had a great reverence for the antique, and Goethe remarked that posterity owed him a debt for widening the field of inspiration from which painters drew their subjects. Hamilton's best known pictures were of Homeric epic scenes taken from the *Iliad*. He seems to have acted as a sort of purveyor of antiques, somewhat on the lines of the celebrated dealer in Rome, Thomas Jenkins, and supplied Lord Shelburne with much of his sculpture for the gallery at Lansdowne House. In his correspondence with Lord Shelburne he refers to several works of art which he himself had bought from Robert Adam when he was in Rome. Hamilton discovered the Barberini Venus, which was eventually bought by Mr. Weddell for his gallery at Newby.

*William Hamilton* (1751–1801) was born in Chelsea and when very young, according to Antonio Zucchi, went to Italy, possibly at Robert Adam's suggestion, where he spent several years in Rome. He was certainly a pupil of Zucchi and his earliest pictures are of architectural subjects. Later he was employed upon Boydell's *Shakespeare*, earning £200 for each illustration. In his turn Hamilton encouraged the young Flaxman, of whom he held a high opinion. The framed scenes of landscape ruins in the circular saloon at Kedleston were painted by Hamilton.

*Julius Caesar Ibbetson* (1759–1817) was a landscape, marine, and figure painter. At Kenwood the unfinished wall decoration of terra-cotta coloured panel borders with small oval medallions were by his hand.

*Angelica Kauffmann* (1741–1807), of Swiss parentage, was introduced when a girl by Raphael Mengs to Winckelmann, who at once fell in love with her. He described her as "a young person of rare merit", kept up a long correspondence with her, and had considerable influence upon the development of her mind and tastes. In 1766 Lady Wentworth brought her to London from Rome. She took the frivolous English society by storm and for a long period was the rage. Angelica and Mary Moser were the only two women to be foundation members of the Royal Academy. In spite of her intolerable prudery Angelica was a flirt, and the chief victims of this propensity were Nathaniel Dance and Fuseli; her friends, however, supposed that the true object of her affections was Reynolds, who admired her art but declined to propose to her. In 1767 her social ambitions allowed her to be completely taken in by an adventurer, the bogus Count Frederick de Horn, whom she married. After four months she discovered that he was no more than a Swedish valet, and left him. In 1781, after her husband's death, she married Antonio Zucchi, but the marriage was hardly a success. He predeceased her, and she lived the rest of her life in Rome. In 1788 she formed a romantic attachment with Goethe, who for a time was fascinated by her wit, her earnestness, and her charm.

Angelica was, with her husband Zucchi, the most prolific of all Robert Adam's collaborators, and she worked for him at many of his houses, including Syon (the red drawing-room), Saltram, Home House, Chandos House, and 20 St. James's Square. At Broadlands and Stratford House she likewise did decorations. Her fellow artists and contemporaries were almost unanimous in lavishing undiscriminating praise upon her art, in which they saw a revival of the Hellenic ideal of painting. Hoppner was alone in thinking that she had, on the contrary, corrupted the public taste in painting. Many of her portraits, however, have a facile charm in spite of her atrocious figure drawing, for an excessive delicacy prevented her ever studying from the nude. As a decorator she was more satisfactory and extremely successful. Farington estimated that in England alone she had made £14,000 and Zucchi about £8,000.

*John Baptist Locatelli* came from Verona. J. T. Smith says that he was occasionally employed by Adam as a stone-carver, and he almost certainly executed a marble chimneypiece at Harewood.

*Michele Angelo Pergolesi* (d. 1801) published at intervals between 1777 and 1792 decorative designs of panels for painted or stucco arabesques, friezes, chimneypieces, furniture, and silver plate. Adam Heaton, writing in 1892, without any authority whatever stated that Pergolesi "beyond doubt, was the acknowledged author of most of the beautiful details of Adam's works" and so promulgated an erroneous and damaging theory that had persisted until Mr. Bolton's day, whereas a study of the Adam drawings in the Soane Museum should have dissipated it long before. Pergolesi certainly claimed that he "had the honour of designing and painting rooms, ceilings, staircases", just as C. J. Richardson, indeed, and plenty of other imitators of the Adam style, succeeded in doing. He speaks of his designs having been in "the Etruscan and Grotesque style", but Robert Adam in his *Works* claims to be the originator of the one, and we have sufficiently shown how he reintroduced the other style into England. It is quite possible that Pergolesi worked for Wyatt and even for Adam at Syon, but there are no references amongst the Adam documents to his having done so elsewhere.

*Biagio Rebecca* (1735–1808) was of Italian descent, but lived in England and died in London. As an impecunious schoolboy he began painting fruit that he managed to pilfer. In 1771 he was made an Associate of the Royal Academy. He had great skill and versatility and a remarkable gift for imitating antique bas reliefs. Some of his work shows greater creative ability and a higher approach to art than that of the majority of his compatriots in England at this time. He worked at Somerset House (for Chambers), at Windsor Castle, Audley End (certainly for Adam), Heaton and Heveningham (for Wyatt), where in 1797–9 he executed the arabesques in the saloon, at Montagu House on the door panels, and at Harewood and Kedleston (for Adam). Mrs. Montagu writes of his chiaroscuro panels at Montagu House: "They are indeed exquisitely done and much surpass what they are meant to imitate. . . . He is a wonderful master of light

and shade, and draws very finely. He asks 80 guineas for the four pictures over the doors. . . . He promises to make them resemble basso relievos in white marble." Rebecca was a slightly ridiculous person, fond of practical jokes of a poor kind. On one occasion he put on a paper star to attract the notice of George III. He would stick paper drawings of half-crowns on the floor for the pleasure of watching elderly statesmen stoop to pick them up. At Audley End he painted a black kettle on Lady Howard de Walden's white satin chair and at a tea party carried round painted buns and cakes on a tray.

*Joseph Rose*, the stuccoist, was evidently held in the highest esteem by Adam, and at times the quality of his achievements, especially at Syon, is unsurpassed in stucco duro even by artists of the Renaissance or ancient Rome. Of all the Adam collaborators it is noteworthy that Rose was wont to be paid independently by Adam direct, instead of having his bills, like those of the other collaborators, examined and approved by the architect before submission to the client for inclusive settlement. Even the bills of Zucchi, the artist, had to be approved and signed by Adam in this way. Rose worked for Adam at Harewood, Hatch, Nostell, Newby, Syon, Kenwood, in Mansfield Street, St. James's Square, and Grosvenor Square; for Wyatt at the Pantheon, Beaudesert, Ridgeley, and Castlecoole; for John Hobcraft perhaps at Padworth, and for other architects. It is apparent from his interesting notebooks, compiled between 1766 and 1773, that Rose worked to his own as well as others' sketches, there being several samples in colour, ink and wash, marked "Mr. Rose's desine". He is furthermore credited with the entire building of Sledmere in Yorkshire.

*Michael Henry Spang* was a carver of more than average ability. The figures on the acroteria of Spencer House are his. For Adam he executed the reliefs on the Admiralty Screen at Whitehall, the monument (dated 1762) to James Thomson in Westminster Abbey, and several of the marble chimneypieces at Kedleston. He was a beautiful draftsman to whom was attributed a real eye for "anatomical truth".

*John Voyez* was another carver who, according to Josiah Wedgwood, "had been two or three years carving in wood and marble for Mr. Adam" before his employment at the potter's Staffordshire works.

*Josiah Wedgwood* (1730–95), an exact contemporary of the Adam brothers, affords like them a remarkable instance of the business man of high integrity and public spirit making a large fortune out of the arts because an enlightened public demanded them. To the lead given by Robert he owed his immense success, and his manufactures were the outcome of Adam's decorative requirements. Josiah was a thirteenth child and at an early age apprenticed to his eldest brother, who had inherited a small family business in the pottery line. This brother was irked by Josiah's unrestrainable tendencies to experimentalise. They never left him, and found outlet all his life through a variety of channels, whether in improving means of road and canal communications or in founding and endowing educational establishments. His fascinating correspondence

reveals many such divergent interests. A cure for the common cold absorbed him at one moment. He writes to his partner, Bentley, that he has discovered "by the papers that an ingenious gentleman has found out the cause of this disorder—that it is owing to miriads of little flying Porpentines in the air, many of which he caught upon a treacled Kite let fly for that purpose", and so he must indulge his own scientific researches in this direction. Medical experiments, sometimes of a drastic kind, he would perpetrate upon his own family. He treated his young daughter for wind: "I have given her cyder that blows the cork up to the ceiling."

Until 1758 Wedgwood worked at pottery manufacture under Thomas Whieldon. He became determined to improve upon the clumsy crockery productions of his day by the sheer influence of a cultivated taste and a wide knowledge of the applied arts. By 1762 he was in a position to rent the Burslem Works and soon was appointed potter to H.M. the Queen. He made purity of material and finish of form his objectives. During the sixties he perfected his black basalt and his cream-coloured wares, introduced marbled and variegated wares, and experimented in every kind of colour—terra-cotta, cane, bamboo, brick-red, chocolate, and sage green.

In spite of his constant researches Wedgwood followed fashions set by Adam and his collaborators, rather than originated them, and we read of him writing to Bentley as follows: "Marbling with gold is hissed universally, so we must have no more done in that way." Yet he took the greatest pains to employ the best artists versed in the antique. In 1773 he had opened the famous works, which he named Etruria. There he discovered how to manufacture jasper, and the goods he turned out were immensely varied—medallions, plaques, scent bottles, busts of famous people, tea and coffee services. In 1774 he provided two dinner services for Catherine of Russia, one consisting of 952 pieces on a cream ground and depicting English views. His English manufactory gained immense prestige all over Europe, and contributed to the eclipse of the French manufacturers, who used previously to "come over to London, picked up all the old whimsical ugly things they could meet with, carried them to Paris, where they mounted and ornamented them with metal, and sold them to the Virtuosi of every nation, and particularly to Milords d'Anglise, for the greatest rarities".

Wedgwood's work combined beauty with utility. Flaxman's monument to him in Stoke-on-Trent church records that he "converted a rude and inconsiderable manufactory into an elegant art and an important part of national commerce".

*Joseph Wilton* (1722–1803) was the son of an ornamental plasterer. He was early in France working under Laurent Delvaux at Nivelles. In 1744 he was at the French Academy under Jean Pigalle. Three years later he went with Roubiliac to Rome, where he was patronised by William Locke and Sir Horace Mann. In 1755 Sir William Chambers brought him back to England with Cipriani, and when the Duke of Richmond

opened his gallery in Whitehall he was made its director of sculpture. He was later appointed state coach carver and sculptor to the king. From 1790 to his death he was Keeper of the Royal Academy. We have seen how immediately on Robert Adam's return from Italy his design for a monument to Wolfe was rejected in favour of Wilton's. Wilton did most of his work for Chambers, who was his early protector. His marble chimneypieces at Osterley are all very highly finished. On the death of his father he succeeded to a large fortune, and his daughter married Sir Robert Chambers, Chief Justice of Bengal. Wilton, like many of his fellow artists, was over anxious to be considered a gentleman of quality, and his social aspirations made him slightly absurd. The special silver trumpet he used, with which to spirt water in an affected manner upon his clay model whenever he was doing a portrait bust of royalty, caused merriment in his profession. Artists enjoyed comparing Wilton's excessive deference to royalty with the boorish behaviour of the sculptor Nollekens, who on one occasion greatly startled King George III by taking an enormous mouthful of water, which he sprayed from a distance over his model with a "thunderous sound".

*Francesco Zuccarelli* (1702–88) was born in Tuscany. He began with historical painting, but later worked upon decorative landscapes with small groups of figures, and these are the pictures by which he is best known. He settled at Venice, where he was patronised by the British Consul, Smith, through whom he came to England on a five-year visit to be scene painter at the Opera House. Between 1752 and 1773 he was in England again, becoming a foundation member of the Academy. On his return to Italy he was reduced to indigence. There are paintings of Zuccarelli at Windsor Castle and in the Glasgow Gallery: also in the dining-room at Kedleston are several decorative landscapes with small figures by him. He was a friend of Canaletto, who is known to have added architectural features to his landscapes on occasions. Zuccarelli persuaded Richard Wilson to leave portrait painting for landscape painting.

*Antonio Zucchi* (1726–95) was the son of Francesco Zucchi, a Venetian, and brother of Giuseppe, who accompanied James Adam on his Italian tour and set up later as an engraver in London. Antonio studied architectural drawing and perspective with his uncle, Carlo Zucchi, who was a scene-painter and historical painter. He also learnt from Fontebrasso and T. Amicomi. Antonio certainly became acquainted with both Robert and James Adam when they were in Italy, and may have travelled with them as well as his brother Giuseppe. He became an Associate of the Royal Academy and exhibited pictures of ruined temples. He married Angelica Kauffmann in 1781 and returned with her to Italy. Zucchi, with his wife, did an enormous amount of decorative work for Robert Adam at Osterley, Kenwood, Luton Hoo, Harewood, Kedleston, Saltram, Newby, Mersham, and the Adelphi. At times Adam himself gave the ideas and even more than a rough outline of the decorative composition he wanted Zucchi to carry out.

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(The numerals in heavy type refer to the *figure numbers* of illustrations.)

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