

who could have done better. It is likely that his success did spoil Walpole's writing because it turned him into a busy professional writer, whose work and social engagements absorbed all his energies. For after his Russian journey his mind was practically closed to fresh experiences. He had to use his imagination and he worked extremely hard at actual writing; his output was prodigious and he planned a tremendous schedule of work and kept to it. His leisure was filled with luncheon and dinner parties, week-ends with the notable, and lecture tours in America. But he failed to do justice to his considerable inventive talents by sufficient care and thought and by shrinking from new experiences, and we have here sufficient explanation of his failure to become a novelist of the first class. The novel *The Captives* on which Katherine Mansfield fell with such vigour is a good example of Walpole's failure to make the best of an excellent story and, on the whole, substantial characters. The careless and rapid reader is carried along by the story, but the more careful reader realises so often (as Katherine Mansfield points out) how many unconvincing touches and inconsistencies there are, how details which could bring life into the story are shirked. And in other novels there are sudden changes of direction for which no preparation is given. Take, for instance, Archdeacon Brandon's son in *The Cathedral*. He is shown as a misfit who has been sent down from Oxford, idling his time away in Polchester pursuing a publican's daughter. There is not one hint that his interests are literary or that he is in anyway a bookish person or has any interest in the arts. Then suddenly the plot requires that he go to London, so what do we find him doing but helping to edit a literary magazine. In books at least, young men down from the University often do start literary magazines and go to London for the purpose; so Walpole quite unexpectedly prescribes a like fate for this quite different young man.

I think we may say then that Walpole's failure was real; it was not merely in the eyes of jealous highbrows who envied his commercial success. Nor was his failure due to slickness or playing down to his audience. He did