

An Introduction to the History of the Wallace Collection

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Although the collection of objets d'art at Hertford House bears the name of Sir Richard Wallace, much of it, of course, was inherited from his father the 4th Marquis of Hertford (1).

The 4th Marquis, in fact, can be said to have 'founded' the armoury in the Wallace Collection by purchasing a large quantity of oriental arms in the last decade of his life, from 1860 onwards. These were installed in his *chateau* at Bagatelle in Paris (2) where he lived until his death in 1870.

In these acquisitions, the 4th Marquis was following the prevailing fashion for 'orientalism,' which was linked with the Romantic movement which swept through France (and, indeed, Europe) in the middle and later part of the 19th century.

Wealthy and cultured men created oriental rooms or displays in their great houses, hanging the walls with Eastern arms, armour, paintings and tapestries, to conjure up the spirit and mystery of the East. As well as oriental arms and armour, therefore, the 4th Marquis collected paintings of Eastern subjects (such as this by Vernet) (3), and a vast and varied assortment of oriental bric-a-brac, including such unusual rarities as a cloth-of-gold elephant caparison (which, incidentally, gave rise to the legend that he kept a tame elephant at Bagatelle!).

Such collections were assembled almost entirely for their decorative effect; the rich sumptuousness of oriental weaponry (4), often scorned by collectors of European arms and armour (both then and now), was precisely what was admired and sought after by the orientalists.

The top sword of these three, its jade hilt richly inlaid with diamonds and rubies set in gold, was the personal shamshir of Tippoo Sultan, one of the most powerful of the Indian princes towards the end of the 18th century. The 17th century Persian blade bears an inscription to this effect, and his personal badge: a tiger, counterfeit damascened in gold. Tippoo eventually grew so powerful that he was able to rebel against the British Raj and, after a long and bloody war, met defeat and death at Seringapatam in 1799.

The middle sword, too, has a history; richly decorated (its hilt mounts being of pure gold, and its grip of ivory), it was the personal sword of Ranjit Singh, founder of a Sikh dynasty in the Punjab in the early years of the 19th century. Its blade also is 17th-century Persian. The lower sword belonged to the Nawab Vizier of Oudh (1731-1775), and is an excellent example of the rich Lucknow enamelling on silver that was so highly prized by Indian princes and European collectors alike.



By the very nature of its formation, such an armoury would tend not to contain the earlier, plainer and (to our modern eyes, perhaps) finer pieces. The Wallace Collection is fortunate, however, in possessing at least one early blade the quality of which is probably unrivalled anywhere in the world. This (5) is a late 15th-century Persian dagger, with a grip of jade richly inlaid with gold, and its magnificent blade encrusted with gold in a design of jackals and hares (6). As befits work of such high quality, it is signed by its maker, and is only spoilt by the addition of a circlet of green glass stones, probably set in the 19th century and illustrating the annoying habit of Victorian collectors who seem often to 'gild the lily' with such additions.

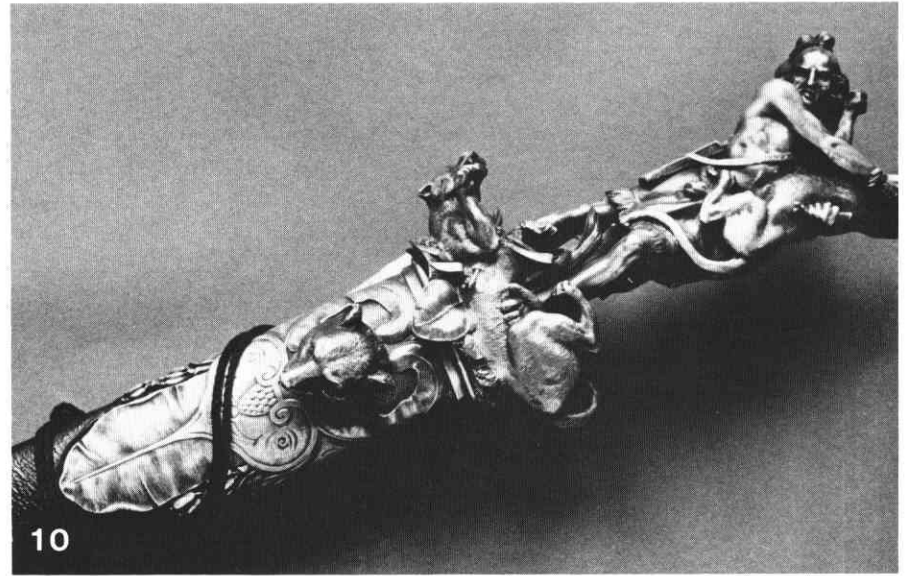
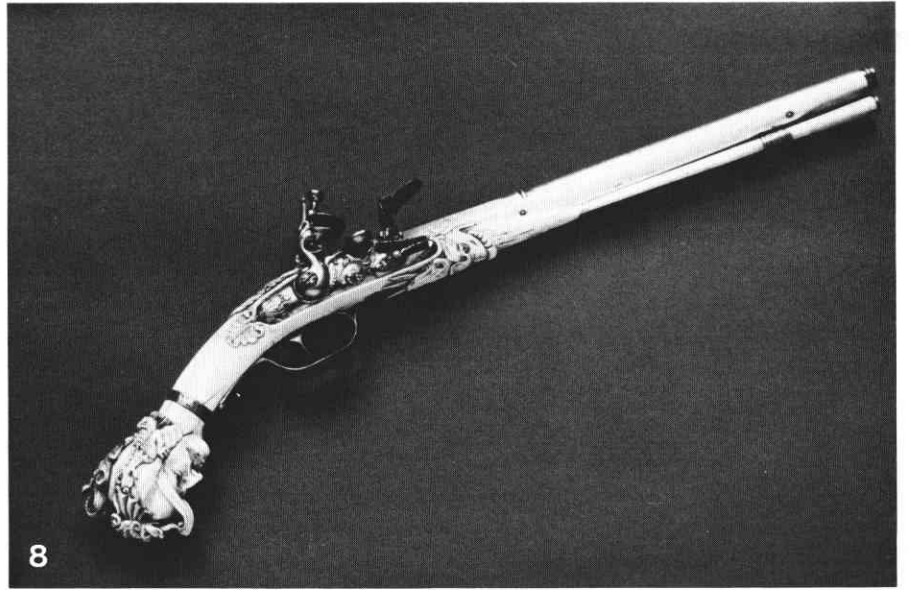
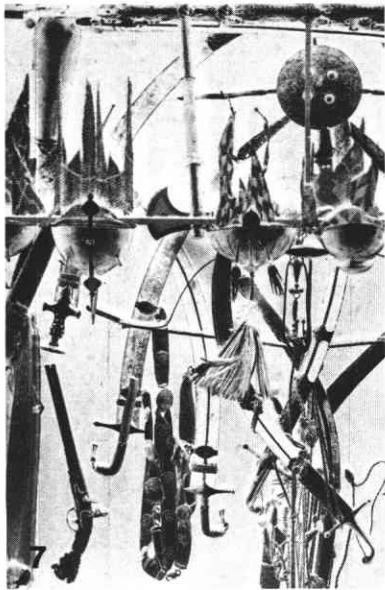
In 1865, the 4th Marquis exhibited his oriental arms and armour in the Musee Retrospectif in Paris; in this (7) rather 'washed out' sepia photograph of his display can be seen the outlines of two objects which do not seem to fit in at all with the material surrounding them. They are possibly the 4th Marquis's earliest foray into European arms, being (8) Dutch ivory-stocked flintlock pistols, made in Maastricht in about 1660. The carving, especially of the butts (9), is of the highest quality.

Not oriental, but very indicative of 19th-century taste, is this (10) hunting knife, given to the 4th Marquis by his close friend the Emperor Napoleon III, who was a frequent visitor to Bagatelle and, indeed, at one point a keen collector of fine antique arms and armour, also. It was made in about 1860, and the hilt (cast and chased, in silver) depicts an American Indian struggling with a mountain lion.

Lord Hertford died at Bagatelle in 1870, without a legitimate son to inherit the title and family estates, which as a result passed to a second cousin.

He left his personal fortune, properties and art collections in London and Paris to his illegitimate son (11), Richard Wallace, at that time also living in Paris.

Mr. Edge is the Armourer to the Wallace Collection.



In the midst of the Franco-Prussian war, with the Prussian army laying siege to the city, Richard Wallace spent in excess of 2½ million francs on philanthropic works, including the founding of a hospital. For these altruistic deeds he was created a Baronet in 1871.

Sir Richard had married earlier that year the mother of his 30 year old son; now, as the excesses of the Commune raged through Paris, the Wallaces left France and determined to settle in England. Much to the chagrin of the French authorities, moreover, they decided to take their collection of art and antiquities with them.

Hertford House (12), seen here as 'Manchester House' in 1816 (before being renamed after the Hertford family), needed considerable renovation and alteration to accommodate the collection and to provide a suitable residence for Sir Richard and Lady Wallace. While this work was being carried out, much of the collection was loaned to the newly opened Bethnal Green Museum (13) for exhibition, where the common, ordinary folk of London could come and marvel at the magnificence of treasures not usually available for public inspection. In the three years that the collection spent at Bethnal Green (from 1872 until 1875), an estimated 5 million visitors saw it.

Meanwhile, the building works proceeded steadily, and by 1875 the facade of Hertford House resembled what we see today (14). Alterations included extending the building to provide extra galleries for the display of Sir Richard's ever-increasing collection, and also the refurbishment of the private rooms intended for living accommodation. This included the provision of a Smoking Room (now gallery 4) for Sir Richard's personal use; the walls were decorated with Minton tiles decorated in the Orientalist taste so fashionable at the time. This photograph of the room (15) was taken in 1900 after Hertford House had become a public museum; very appropriately, the room was made into the Oriental armoury (transferred from its original location on the 1st floor). The Minton tiles made in imitation of Turkish and Persian mosque tiles can be clearly seen, together with the elaborate mosaic floor.

Unfortunately, in 1937 this room was 'vandalised' by the then-current Director James Mann, (later Sir James Mann), presumably in reaction to what was seen as the worst excesses of Victorian taste. He made the room what it is today (16); however, at the far end of gallery 4 a tiled alcove, once a cupboard, escaped destruction, and has survived to show us how superb the 19th-century *decor* of the Smoking Room must once have been.

Impressive and uniquely overawing as this 19th-century system of display must seem to us now, there is little doubt that from a practical point of view Sir Richard's Oriental armoury as shown here (17) (in a photograph taken in 1897) could never be reinstated in a public museum. This modern view of the Oriental armoury in gallery 8 on the ground floor (18), shows the efforts that have been made in modern times to maintain the atmosphere of opulent richness in a gallery where, for reasons of maintenance, security and ease of viewing, the majority of the exhibits must be kept behind glass. Despite the requirements and strictures of the 20th

century, Hertford House today still retains its atmosphere of opulent luxury, whilst being a 19th-century collector's collection *par excellence*, displayed as its 19th-century owner would have wanted.

By the time Sir Richard Wallace moved to London, however, he possessed not only an Oriental armoury, but a European one as well, displayed in the same way (19) as the rest of his collection.

In 1871 he had purchased the entire collection of arms, armour and Renaissance decorative art of the comte de Nieuwerkerke (20), who had been 'Surintendant des Beaux Arts' for Napoleon III (himself, at one point, a keen collector of arms and armour). Wallace paid £60,000 for the whole collection.

One of the most impressive items in that collection must have been the late 15th-century Gothic war harness for man and horse (21), made for a member of the von Freyberg family and kept in their castle in the Bavarian Alps until it was sold, together with all the other family arms and armour there, in the eighteenth century.

This photograph taken in 1900 shows the armour as Wallace would have seen it, with a horse caparison of black and yellow vertical stripes. This was removed (probably in the 1930s) and replaced by a totally inauthentic fringe of leopard skin fur around the edge of the bard; at the same time, the horse was replaced with one fixed in a more dramatic pose (22).

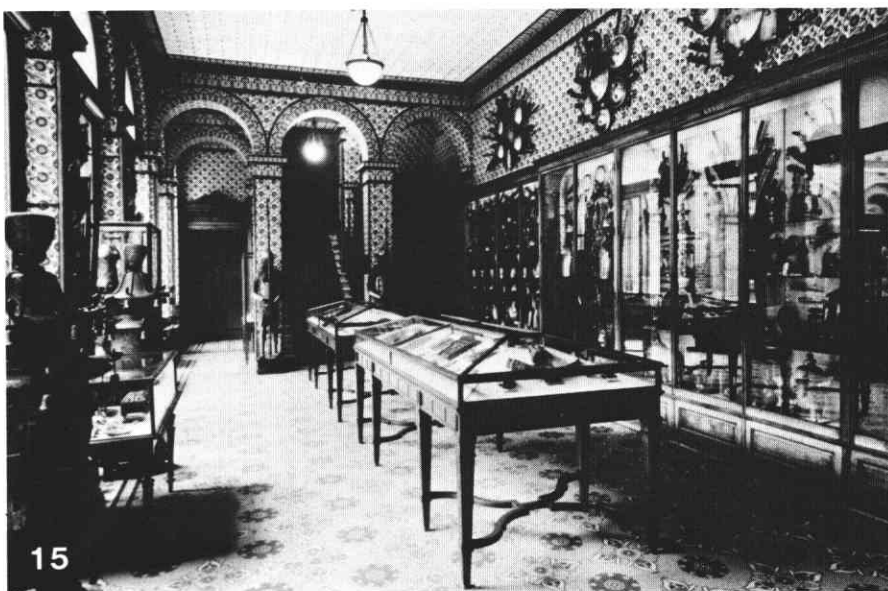
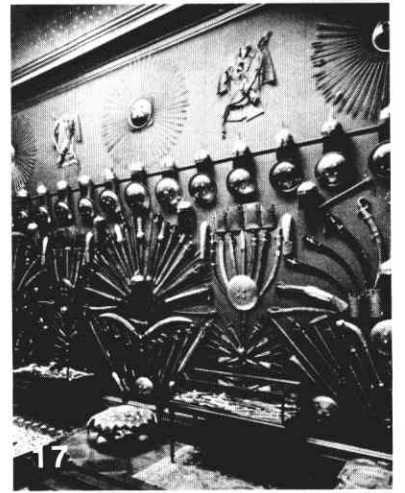
(I can assure you personally that the days of the 'dinky' leopard skin fringe are DEFINITELY numbered! !)

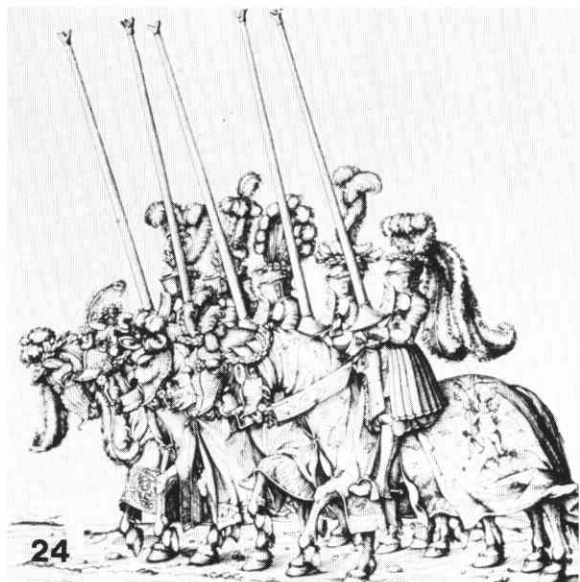
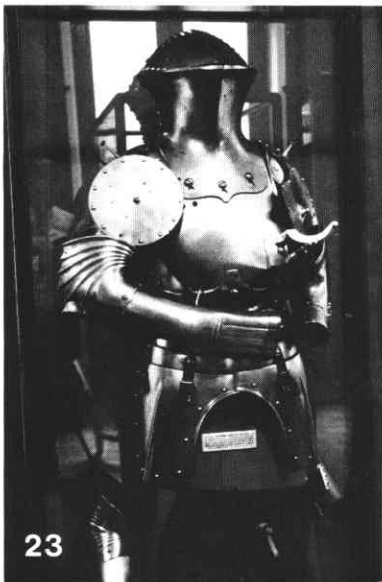
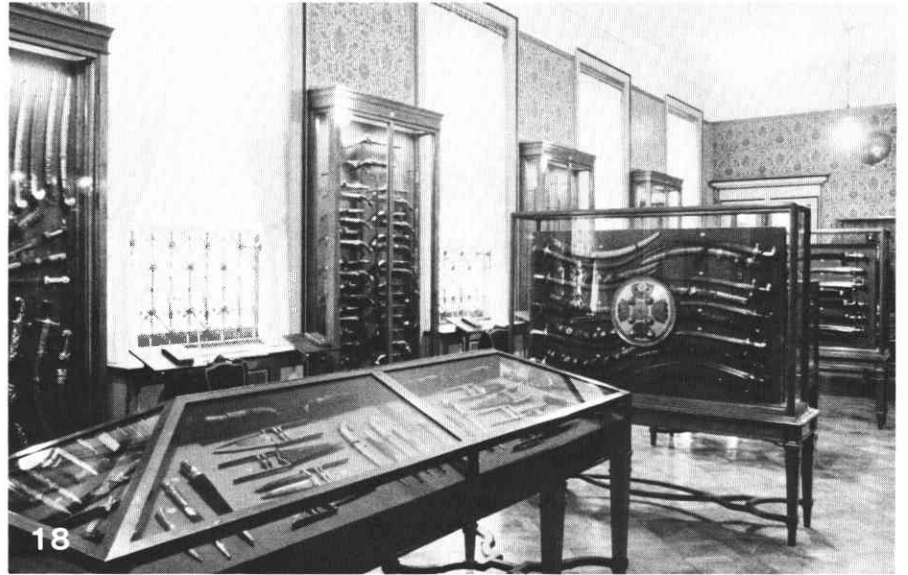
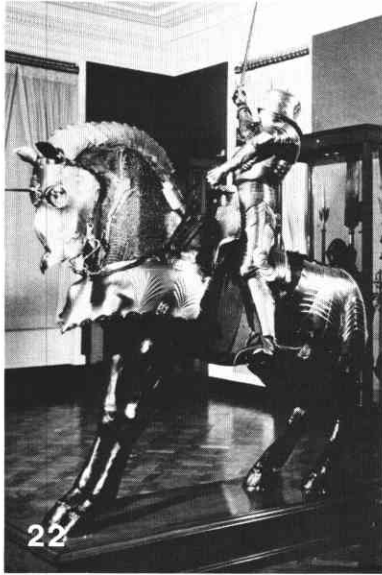
This purchase of medieval as well as Renaissance artifacts, weapons and objets d'art serves to illustrate Sir Richard Wallace's taste for rather earlier, more historically orientated material, as well as an appreciation of the craftsmanship and skill required to work in metal, that most stubborn of all mediums, to create objects that combine the very ultimate in artistry with pure functionality — as one can see in this (23), an armour for the German joust known as the Stechzeug. The Wallace Collection is famous for its richly decorated parade armours and weapons, but this is beauty of a different kind: beauty of form, beauty of function, requiring skill in the making, and above all, skill in the use, of such a juggernaut of the early 16th century.

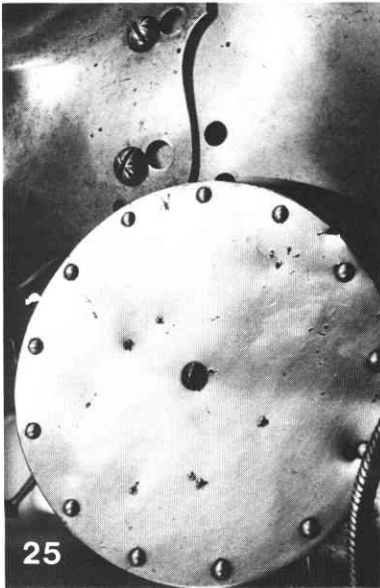
The aim was to unhorse one's opponent or shatter lances in the attempt; when one considers that this armour weighs 96 lbs., a fall must have been a very unpleasant experience indeed. This (24) contemporary woodcut by Hans Burgmeyer is taken from a series known as the 'Triumph of Maximilian,' and shows the lances, tipped with three-pronged heads called coronals, that could have been used in the Stechzeug.

Bearing this in mind, here (25) on the besague of the armour, there can plainly be seen the simultaneous strike marks of a coronal lance head striking full-on with all three prongs. From the other gouge marks and gashes on the helmet and breastplate, it is clear that this armour has seen considerable use.

The comte de Nieuwerkerke was, of course, a 19th-century collector, and in common with his contemporaries,



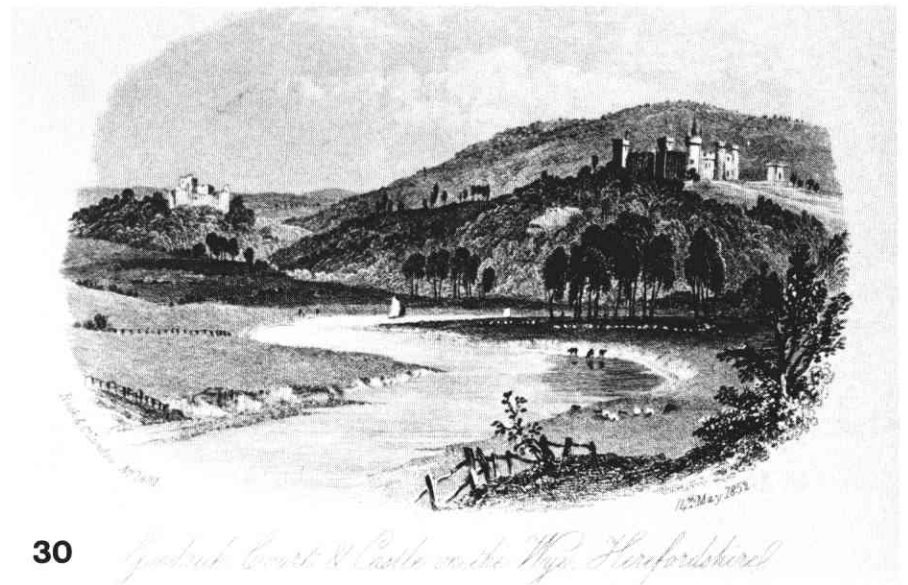
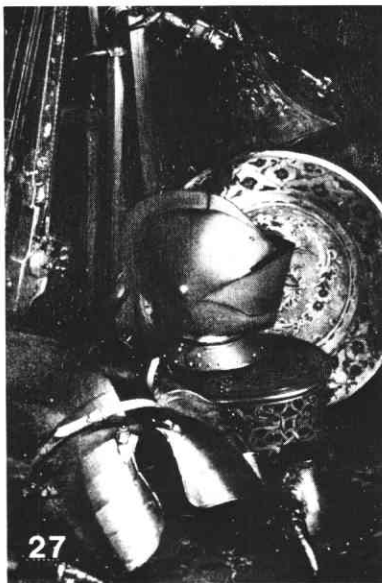


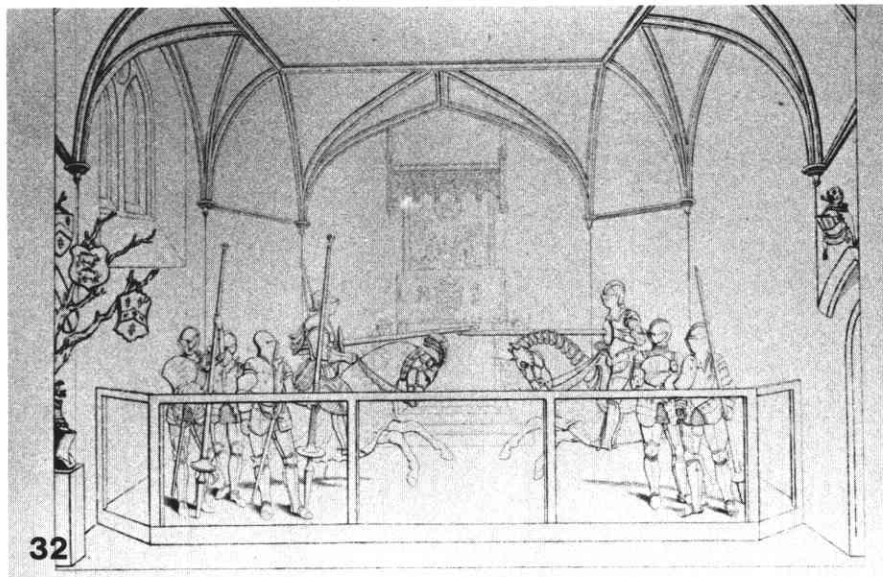
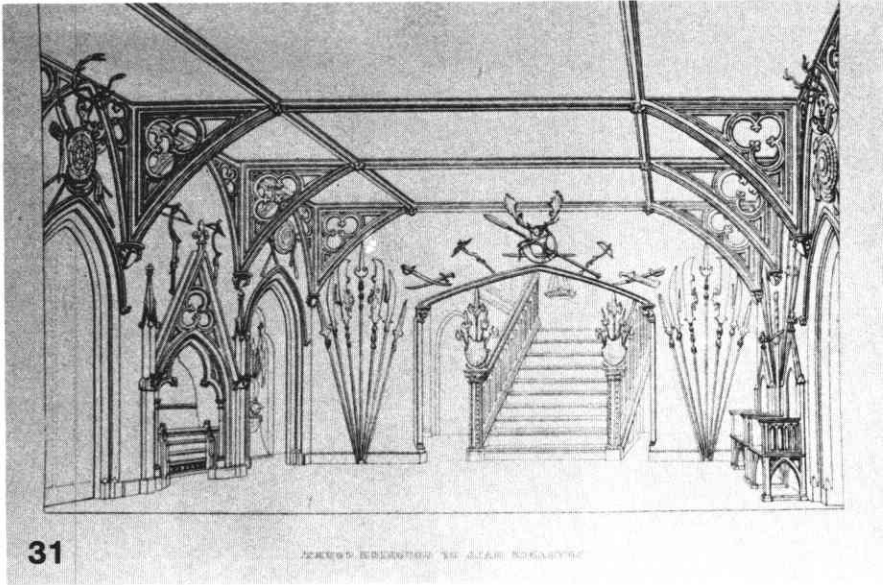


displayed his possessions in a typically 19th-century way. This (26) painting by Antoine Vollon, dated 1868, showing a jumbled assortment of rich arms and armour piled in casual profusion in a corner of the comte de Nieuwerkerke's *salon* in Paris, is painted with such precise attention to detail that we can actually identify all but two of the objects portrayed. The majority, of course, are now in the Wallace Collection; for example, in the middle of the picture (27) there is a close-helmet which is recognizable as number A188, etched and fully gilt, originally part of an armour made for the Emperor Maximilian II in about 1560 (28). Underneath its reinforce the gilded surface is as bright and pristine as the day it was made.



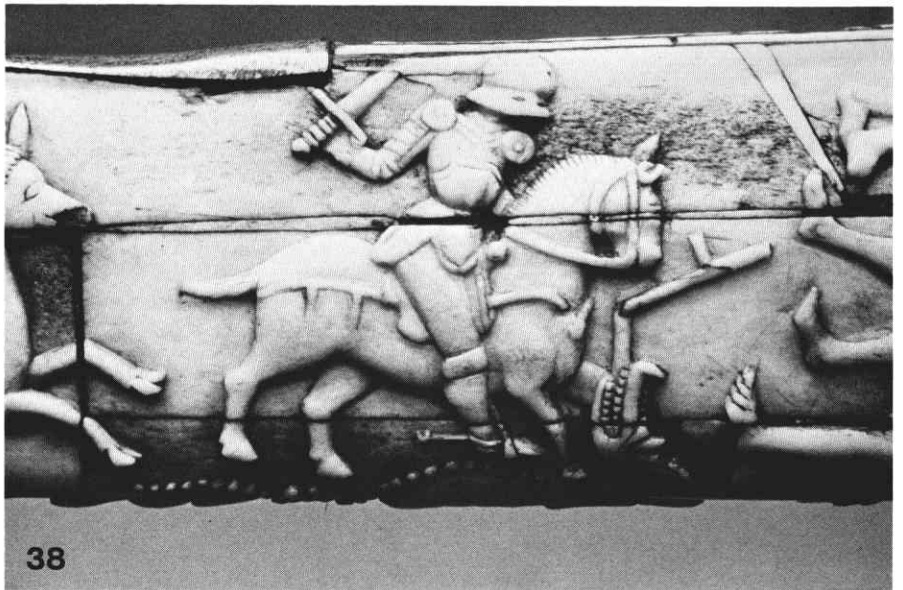
In the same year as he purchased Nieuwerkerke's collection, Sir Richard Wallace also paid £73,000 for the best part of Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick's collection. Meyrick (29) has been described as the father of English arms and armour collectors. At the height of the 'Gothic revival' in England, he built himself a stately country house, Goodrich Court (30), complete with panoramic views over the valley and an ancient ruined castle (built especially for that purpose!). Goodrich Court, alas, was demolished in the 1930s, but (31) this engraving of its entrance hall gives one some idea of the character and mentality of its owner. Various rooms in the house were set aside for the display of dramatic *tableaux* (32) such as this, using genuine armour and weapons mounted on dummies. The knight on horseback on the left is wearing a 'socket,' correctly strapped to his leg to protect the upper thigh (19th-century collectors frequently misunderstood the purpose of these pieces of armour, and were occasionally known to strap them to the arm as shields!). The fluted pattern on this socket identifies it as A300, circa 1470, (33) now hanging on the wall in gallery VII of the Wallace Collection. A lithograph apparently exists which shows the other socket in gallery VII, mounted (totally erroneously) as a shield on the arm of A21, the Gothic war harness for man and horse, while it was in the hands of the







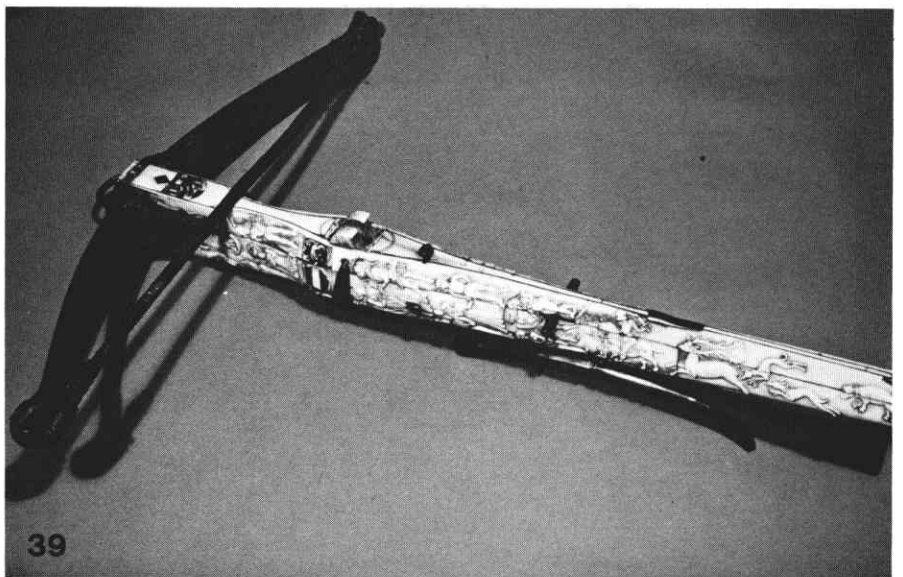
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SCULPTURE OF AN IVORY CROSS-BOW

37



Come luste, ye knaves, and get me straight awase into my hatching-case
 Delighted to have made your acquaintane I'm sure
 Aye, let's get out of this smoky place, for Goodrich, he!
 Gramercy for thy courtesie, Mr Doane - 't would please me hugely to greet thee at the Tower.

dealer Monsieur Pickert, before entering Nieuwerkerke's collection.

In 1830, Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick commissioned Robert Skelton to produce a lavishly illustrated set of volumes describing the history of "Antient Armour." The 'illuminated engravings' with which it was illustrated were based on items in Meyrick's possession; (34) the shield below this rather fanciful portrait supposedly depicting the 'Duke of York' is quite clearly A309 (35) in the Wallace Collection. This German 'bouched' shield, circa 1500, was recently cleaned and has now regained (36) much of its former glory.

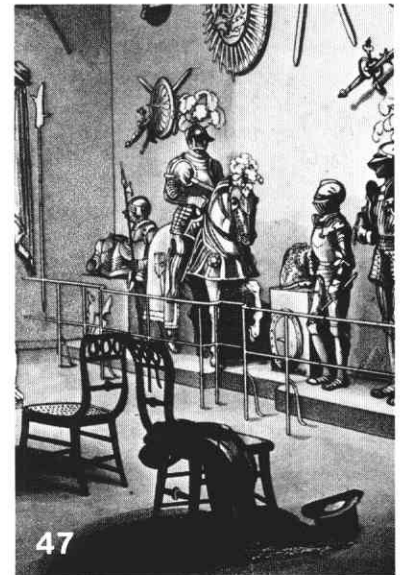
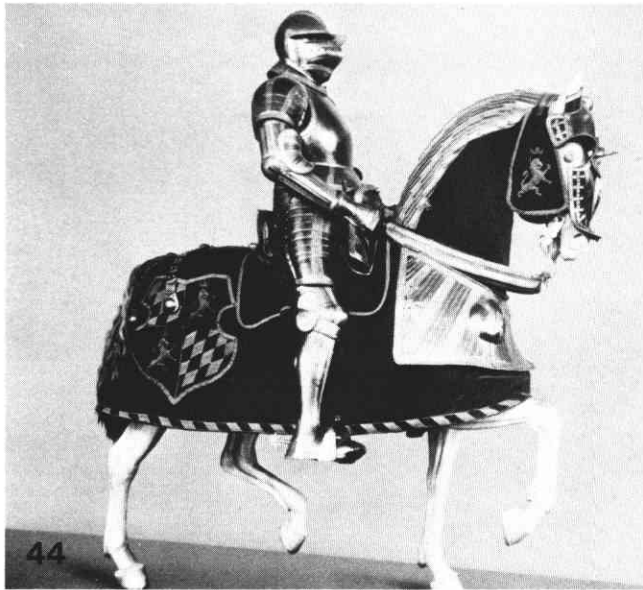
Skelton also produced a series of very accurate line engravings of some of Meyrick's arms and armour, which have proved invaluable in identifying or confirming a Meyrick provenance for an item in the Wallace Collection. Compare this 'George and the Dragon' (37) with the corresponding detail on the tiller of the Wallace crossbow A1032 (38). This weapon is one of the finest mid-15th century crossbows in existence (39); the tiller is entirely sheathed in plaques of staghorn, carved and polished to resemble ivory. It bears the coat of arms of the Fels family, and comes from the Tyrol.

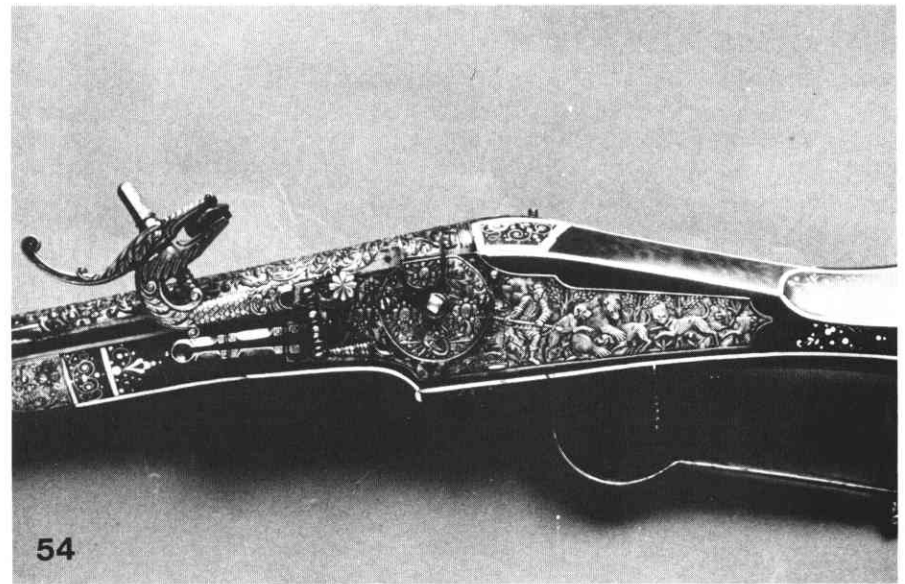
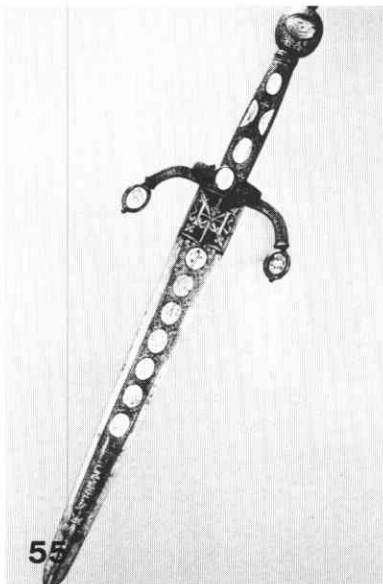
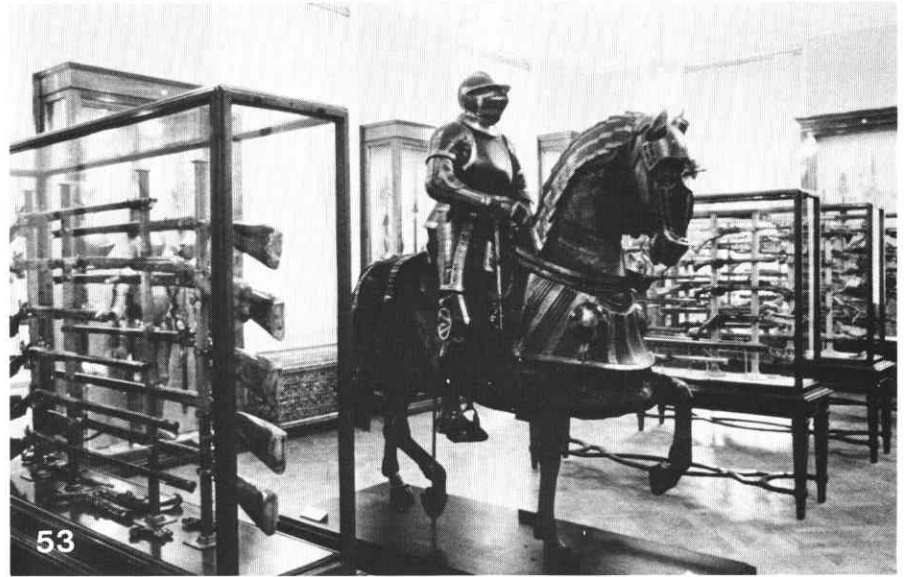
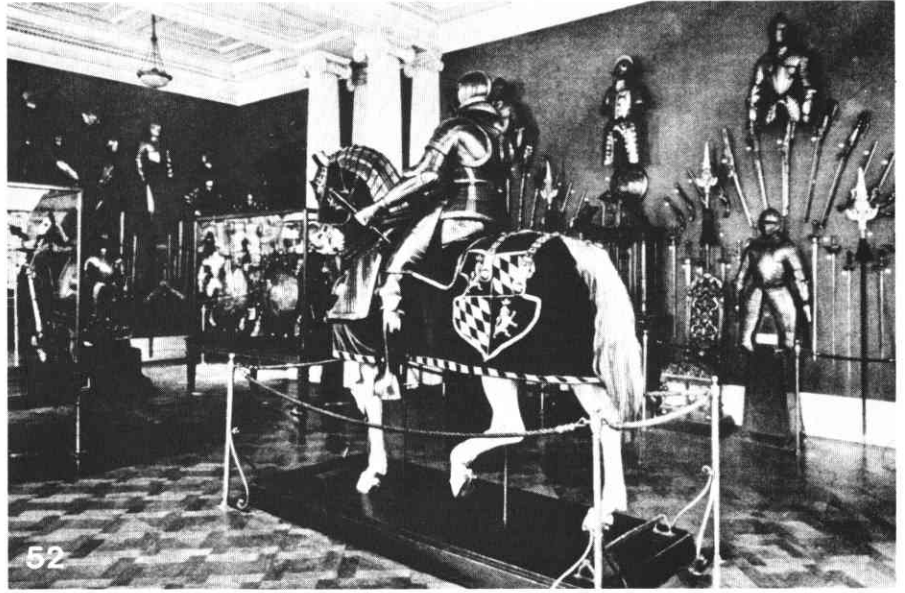
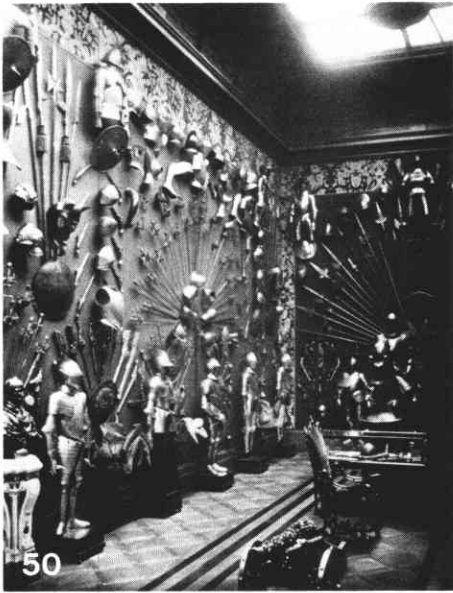
It, and other arms and armour from Meyrick's collection at Goodrich Court, was exhibited at the 1857 Art Treasures Exhibition in Manchester. The 4th Marquis of Hertford exhibited over forty of his paintings at the same exhibition, but could have had no idea that the arms and armour from Goodrich would eventually join his paintings on display at Hertford House nearly twenty years later.

(40) This cartoon from 'Punch' magazine (October 31st, 1857) shows the armour being packed up for its return journey back to Goodrich Court, after the exhibition had closed. You would think that none of the pieces would actually be identifiable (it is, after all, just a humourous cartoon), but if one looks carefully at the suit in the middle of the picture (41), the unusual nature of the armour ('puffed and slashed' to resemble the fashion of clothing in Germany, 1520-30) is immediately apparent. It is almost certainly number A28 in the Wallace Collection; what clinches this identification is the fact that Meyrick's armour is wearing a smooth-surfaced close-helmet that does not match the rest of the armour — and it is a matter of record that A28 entered the Wallace Collection with just such a mis-matched head piece. By 1900 (42) a more appropriate ribbed and fluted helmet had been found for it, and it can now be seen (43) in the galleries today, looking much as it was originally, in the days when it was actually worn and used.

Some of the items that passed from Meyrick to Wallace have a long and distinguished provenance. (44) This armour for man and horse was made by Hans Ringler of Nuremburg, and is dated 1532 and 1536. It was made for (45) Otto Heinrich, Count Palatine of the Rhine (1502-1559), who kept it in his castle of Neuburg, on the Danube, where it remained until Napoleon seized it, and brought it back with him to Paris. After Napoleon's defeat and downfall in 1815, it passed into the hands of the (inevitable!) dealers, and (46) was exhibited here, at the Oplotheca Exhibition, in 1816. Looking more closely at this engraved print of the exhibition







(47), it will be seen that the horse has a cloth caparison, which matches that drawn by Skelton (48), who produced this engraving of the armour after it had entered Meyrick's collection. This illuminated engraving (49) (also by Skelton, and used by him in the "Antient Armour" book based on Meyrick's collection), shows no such caparison. By the time this (50) photograph was taken of the horse and man, at the far end of Sir Richard Wallace's European Armoury at Hertford House, in 1897, it looks much as it does today. In more detail (51), a close-up photograph of the armour reveals it to be holding (somewhat incongruously) a swept-hilt rapier. By the time the Collection had passed into the hands of the nation, and been reorganised as a public museum, the armour (52) had been deprived of its incongruous rapier, and was established as the centre-piece of the new European Armour gallery on the ground floor of Hertford House. The lay-out of the galleries in 1900 was certainly impressive to look at, with the arms and armour hung in 19th-century style trophies around the walls, but it was hopelessly impractical for a modern museum. In 1984, therefore (53) you will see Otto Heinrich (number A29 in the Wallace Collection) here, in the centre of gallery five, no less impressive for being surrounded by glass showcases.

Many of the Wallace Collection's finest pieces, such as this wheel-lock gun (54), made in Munich in about 1620 by the master craftsmen Daniel Sadeler and Hieronymus Borstoffer, were part of the previously established collections of (in this case) the comte de Nieuwerkerke, or Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick. However, Sir Richard Wallace was also buying individual items on his own initiative; sometimes very successfully, as in the case of (55) this dagger, purchased at auction for the sum of 12,500 francs. The comparatively high price was due to the dagger's distinguished provenance; it and its companion rapier were a gift to Henry IV of France from the City of Paris, on the occasion of his marriage in 1600. The pair became separated when Napoleon I took a liking to the rapier, and formed the habit of carrying it with him in his carriage when he went on campaign. It is now in the Musée de l'Armée in Paris.

Other purchases, however, were not quite as successful. This (56) "early example of the blunderbuss" as it was once described, is Saxon circa 1590 — or at least, the stock and wheel-lock mechanism are Saxon, circa 1590; the barrel in fact taken from an Austrian Heavy Dragoon carbine of about 1780, and the entire fore-end of the gun has had to be replaced to accommodate it. (57) You can plainly see the join, and the slightly different colour of the bone inlay of the two sections. The decoration has, in fact, been very accurately matched, and under other circumstances the 19th-century work would probably have gone unquestioned. Modern techniques of analysis have the last word, however; in an X-ray taken of the entire stock, the fore-end was shown to have been made of a totally different material to the rest of the gun.

Many of the Wallace guns were bought from Frederic Spitzer, who had his own workshops and craftsmen producing composite items like this blunderbuss. Complete fakes were made, but most of the Spitzer guns in the Wallace Col-

lection are in fact constructed of original parts usually redecorated to correspond with his clients' taste for costly embellishment.

Sir Richard Wallace (58), seen here in the last years of his life, died in France at Bagatelle, like his father before him, in 1890.

His personal fortune, the estates and properties in France and England, and his collection of arms, armour, objets d'art, paintings, sculpture, metalwork, porcelain and furniture, all passed to his wife, Lady Wallace (59).

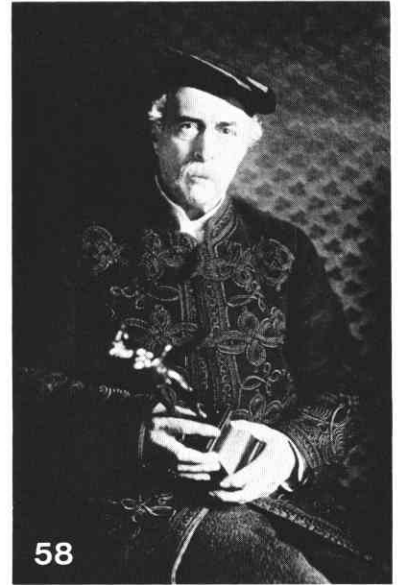
It is to her that we owe our thanks for the Collection as we know it today, for although it was Sir Richard's earnest hope that his collections would eventually form the basis of a permanent museum, nothing had been accomplished towards this end by the time he died. When in 1897 Lady Wallace passed away, it transpired that in the terms of her will her husband's wishes had been respected, and that all the works of art on the ground and first floors of Hertford House had been bequeathed to the nation, and were to be installed in a separate museum for permanent display to the public. In the event, the government was able to purchase first the lease and then the freehold of Hertford House itself, and the Collection could thus be displayed in its original and proper setting.

The Museum was opened in 1900, after the work of converting it from a private residence to a public building had been done. The armour galleries (60) were built where originally the stables, coach-house and servants' quarters were situated (61); the first floor galleries where the armour was originally displayed were then, and still are, used entirely for the display of furniture and pictures.

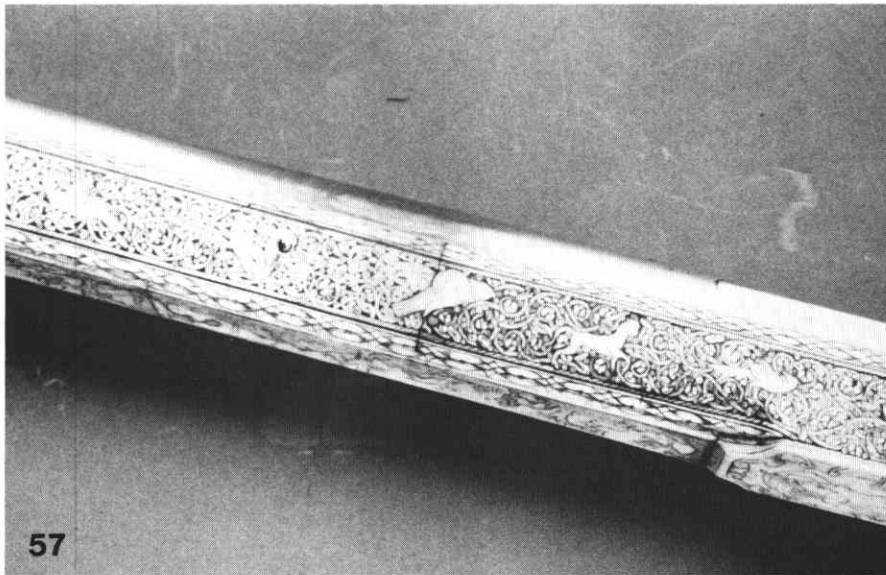
The contents of Hertford House today, however, represent approximately only one third of the total left to his wife by Sir Richard when he died. As much again was housed in an apartment in the rue Lafitte in Paris, not to mention all the eighteenth-century sculptures still at Bagatelle, the contents of the country houses at Sudbourn and on the Wallace estates in Ireland, and, of course, all those works of art in Hertford House that were not actually on the ground and first floors. Lady Wallace left all this (which represented, in 1897, a fortune of nearly one million pounds) to her husband's secretary and her constant companion in the last years, John Murray Scott (62). He was also made executor of the will, and was appointed Chairman of the first Board of Trustees administering the Wallace Collection as a national museum. He stripped the house of everything not specifically mentioned in the will; even the lamp brackets! It is almost certain that many objets d'art and valuable personal mementoes and relics of the Hertfords that should have remained in the Wallace Collection, nonetheless found their way into Murray Scott's own personal collection, or were sold off to swell his already considerable fortune. Traditionally, he is supposed to have argued that the early 19th-century presentation guns (63) (numbering over a dozen, mostly by such royal gunmakers as Boutet or Le Page) should be regarded as 'obsolete firearms' rather than 'works of art,' and should not therefore be included in the museum. Fortunately for us, his arguments did not prevail,



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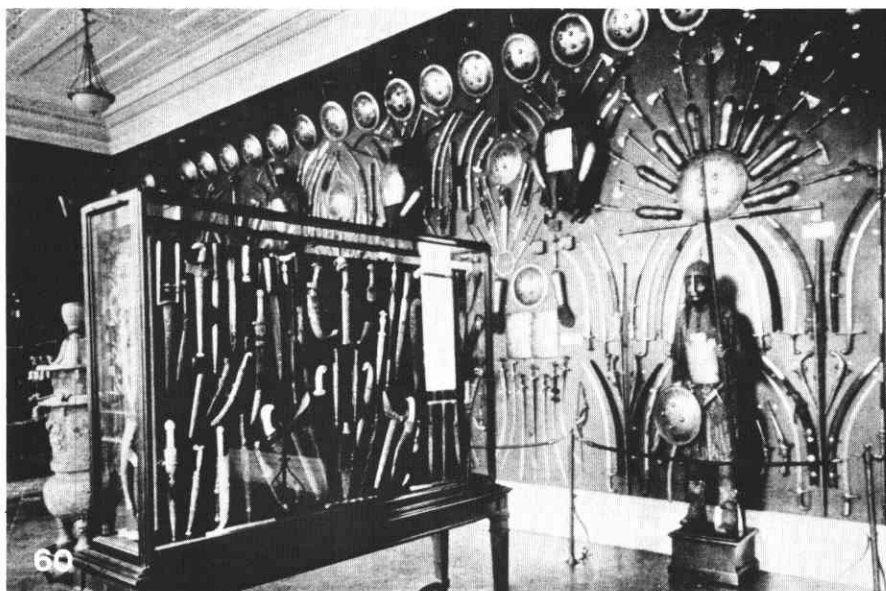
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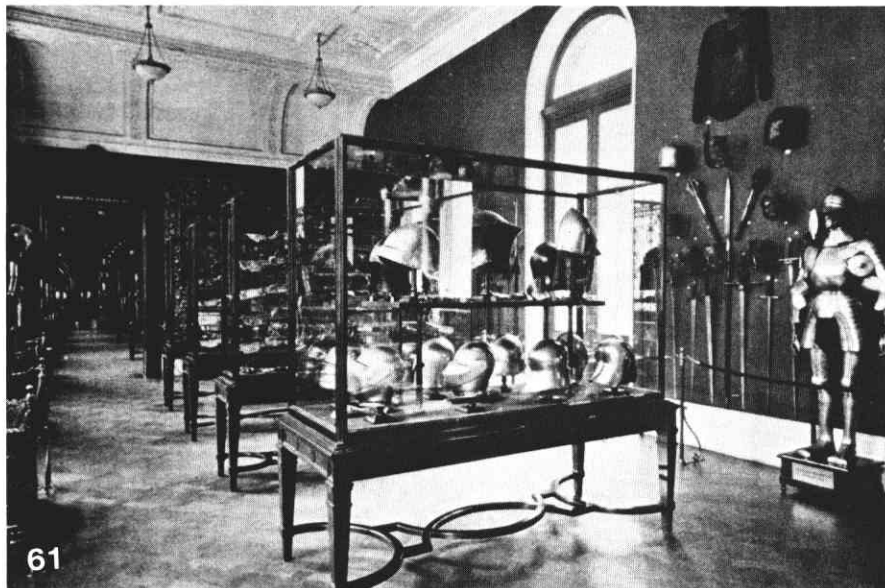
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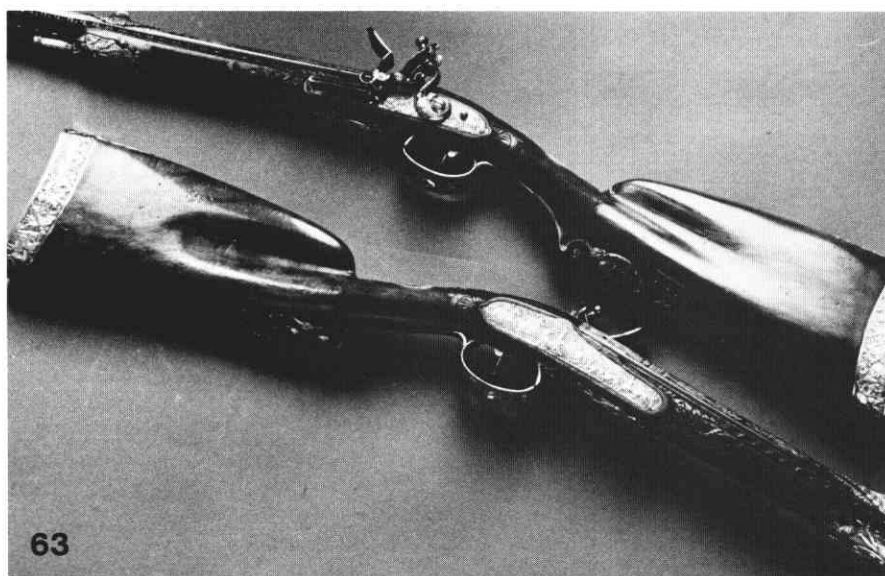
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and the guns can still be seen, preserved for all time in the galleries of the Wallace Collection. These are a pair of flintlock sporting guns made in 1805 by Nicholas Noel Boutet; one bears the arms of Charles IV of Spain, and the other those of his supplanter Joseph Bonaparte (who had obviously taken a fancy to this gun and appropriated it for his own use!).

Since its opening in 1900, the only major threats to the existence of the Wallace Collection have been from an entirely different quarter; namely, the threat of damage or destruction in times of war. (64) In 1918 the danger from Zeppelin raids became so intense that the entire collection was crated up and stored for safety underground, in Paddington tube station. In the Second World War, it was decided that London itself was too dangerous a place for

storage, and so the contents of Hertford House were moved (65) to Hall Barn in Beaconsfield for safe-keeping. This (66) certainly seems a more appropriate setting than an underground railway station! The helmet visible in the foreground is No. A179 (67), a French cuirassier helmet, circa 1635. On the night of September 18th, 1940, at the height of the blitz, Hertford House did, in fact, sustain bomb damage (68); a German high explosive bomb utterly destroyed the front lawn, flowerbeds, and boundary railings! Hertford House itself, however, remains today as gracious a building as it was in the 19th century and before.

More recently, the most significant development at the Wallace Collection has been the installation of full air-conditioning, and the complete redecoration and refurbishment of the entire building, emphasizing the rich opulence of



63



19th-century taste. To this end, the entrance hall now boasts a 19th-century-style (69) trophy of arms, comprising weapons previously kept in store, for lack of space to display them properly in the public galleries. Further trophies utilising material presently in store are planned for the future (70), copying as far as possible the designs and even the content of trophies such as these, laid out by Sir Richard himself in his Oriental Armoury prior to 1890.

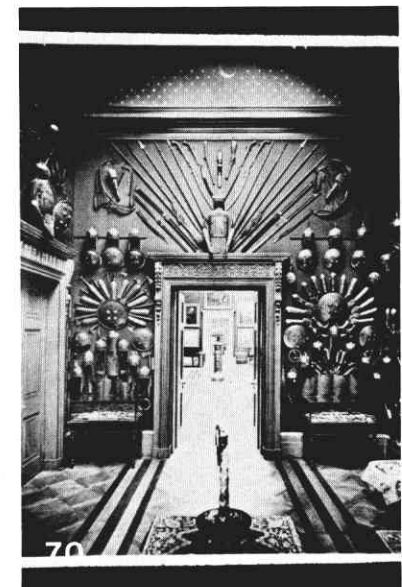
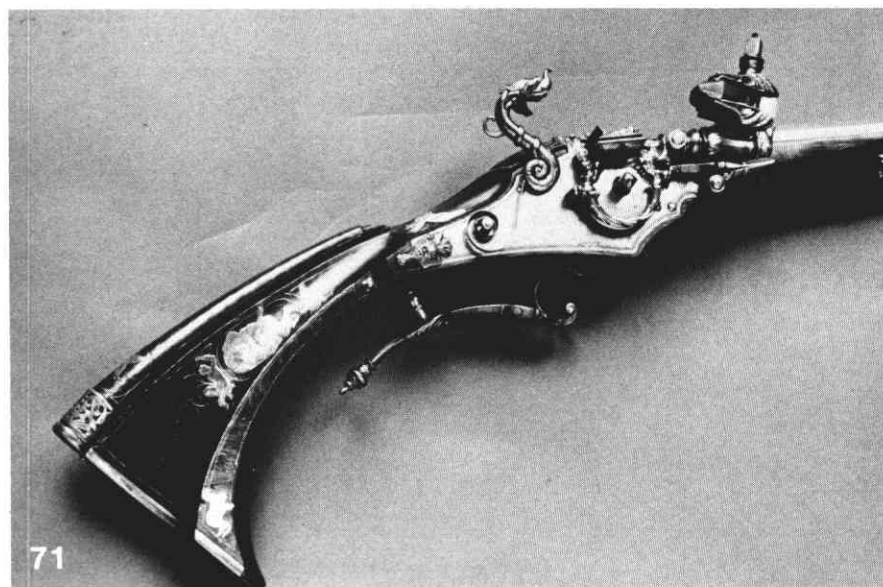
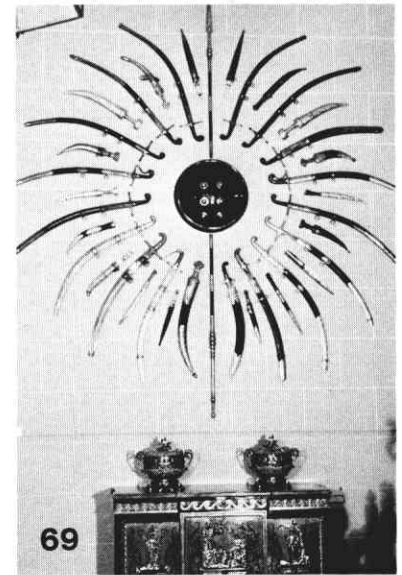
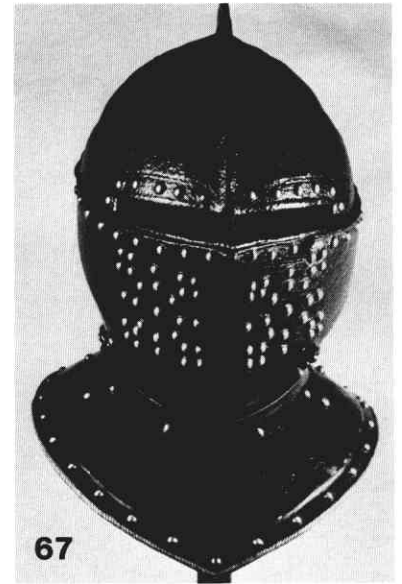
Whilst keeping the 19th-century 'feel' of the collection, Hertford House has now been brought firmly into the 20th century. Within living memory, the erotic scenes inlaid in silver on the stock of this (71) fine combined match-and wheel-lock Italian gun (circa 1620) were apparently covered with black masking-tape, so as not to corrupt and deprave the morals of the visitors (!). The masking-tape has gone

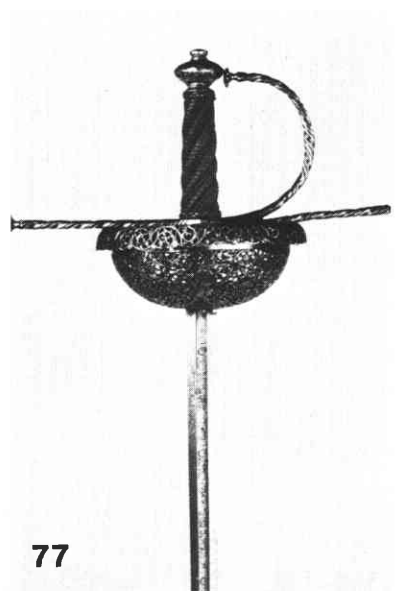
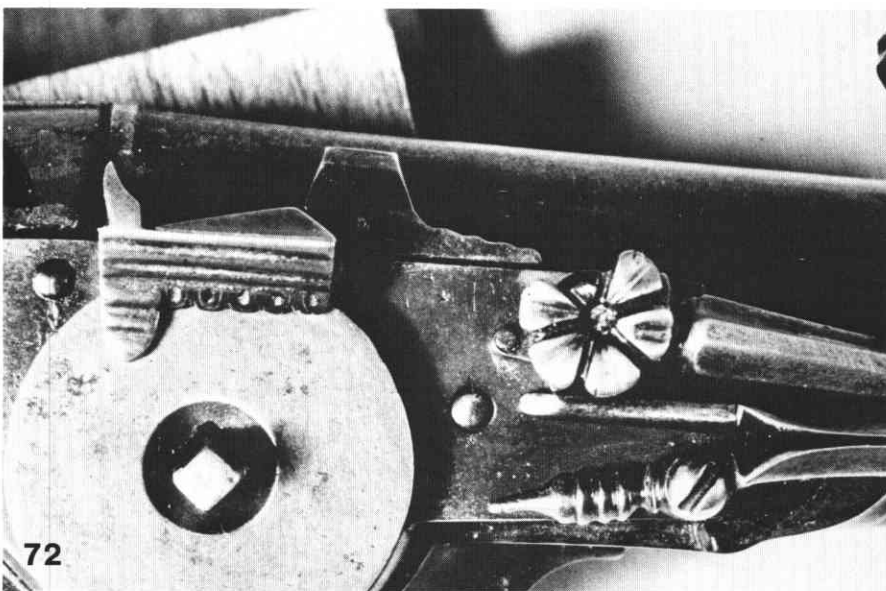
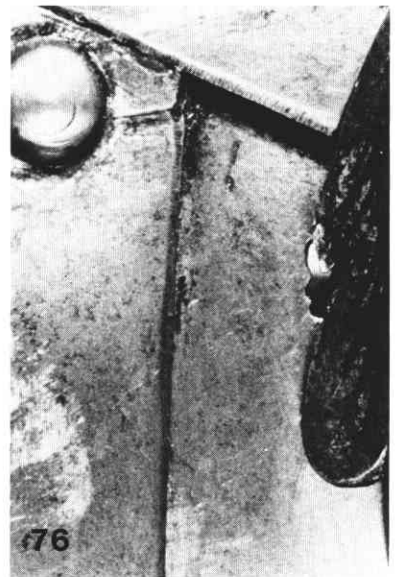
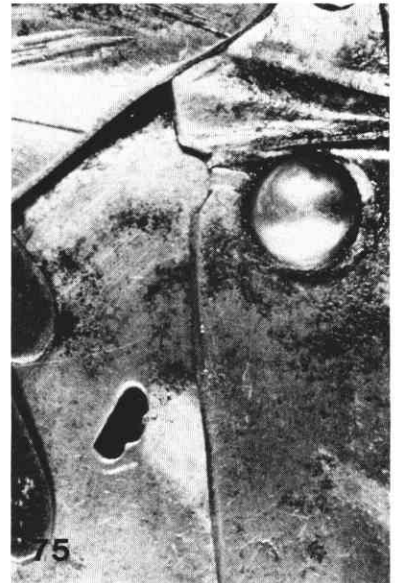
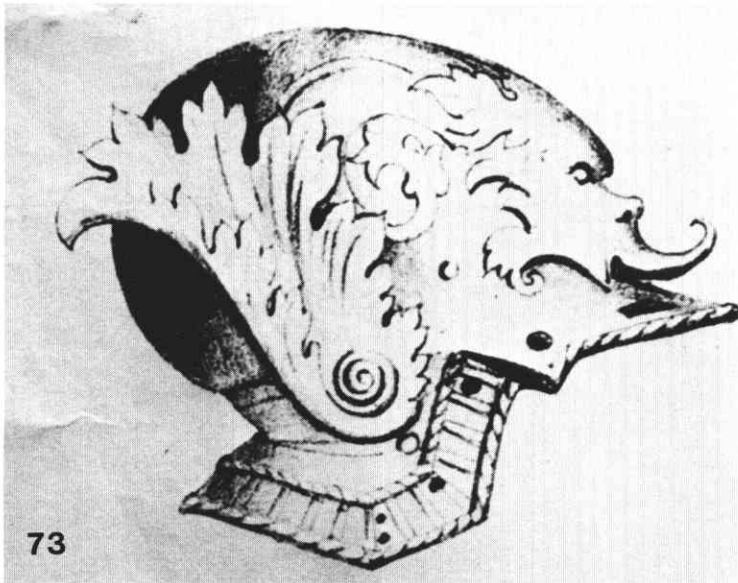
now, of course, and the scenes which may once have titillated Louis XIII of France (traditionally the original owner of this fine weapon), are now revealed for all to be corrupted and depraved by!

Although the collection has been fully catalogued for many years, new discoveries are still being made. This (72) pistol also was once the property of Louis XIII, but the initials of its maker (F * P, perhaps for Francois Pomerol), stamped very faintly on the lockplate, were only noticed six or seven years ago. Another of Louis XIII's guns, by the same maker, is in the Musee de l'Armee in Paris.

Through continuous research and study, discoveries continue to be made. This (73) illustration of a fine 'parade casque' offered for sale by auction in an Oxenham's sale (19th April, 1841), can be identified as number A105 in the







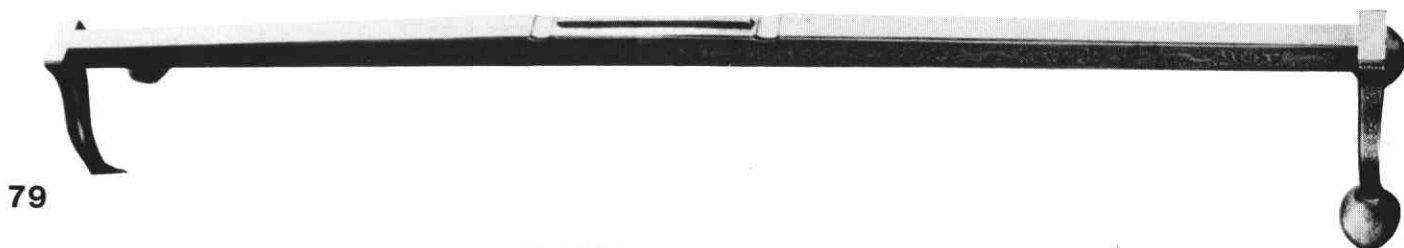
Wallace Collection. However, the 'wings' of both the illustrated helmet, and the original (74) when compared with other helmets of this type, seem to be facing the wrong way; the 'feathering' on the wings of all other known examples is to the rear, and not facing forward, as here. Careful examination of the helmet in 1983 revealed a tiny keyhole slot in the skull (75) intended to engage with a small projecting lug on the bottom edge of each wing, to locate them properly in position. Further examination revealed that one wing was in fact a very old replacement made to match the original; the one original wing, however, had had its lug broken off in antiquity, and the restorer could have had no idea which way round the wings were supposed to go. When in 1983 the wings were changed around, (76) the little break on the bottom edge of the original wing, where its lug had once been, was found to correspond exactly with the keyhole slot in the skull. The helmet now looks much as it did in 1520, when the Augsburg master-armourer Koloman Helmschmied finished making it.

It can be seen, therefore, that although the Wallace Collection is a static one, it is not by any means stagnant! Of course, the fact that we are not allowed, by the terms of the bequest, to add anything or to dispose of anything in the collection does have its minor frustrations. This (77) fine cup-hilt rapier was sold by auction at Christie's in London,

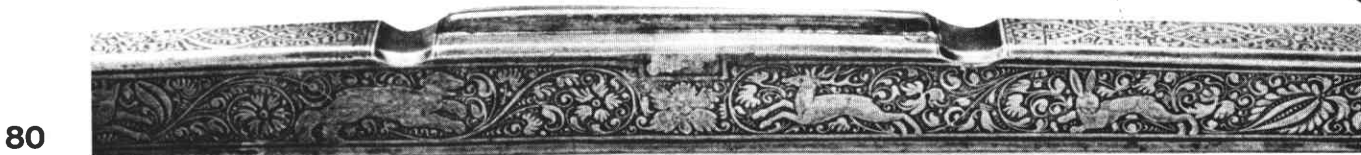
Lot 21, on 2nd November 1983. The 'main gauche' dagger originally made *en suite* with it in mid-17th-century Italy is here (78) in the Wallace collection, No. A825. They will never now be reunited.

The work of extending our knowledge, and through that knowledge our appreciation, of this magnificent collection continues, however. Mysteries still remain to be unravelled, even though the Collection as it stands today has been in existence, and open to study, for over a hundred years. (79) What, for example, was the original purpose of this richly etched (and originally parcel-gilt) unknown object? The style of the decoration is German, (80) late 16th century. Mr Kenneth Lynch, a Californian collector and expert in the field of antique tools, recently suggested that it might be a form of 'chevelet' (from the French, meaning 'little bridge'), for use in an armourer's workshop. This would seem to be borne out by the fact that its feet are struck on the underside with sharply chiselled teeth, designed to grip the surface that it stands on. Is it, then, just such a form of bench anvil, for the shaping of metal by some unknown, long-dead master craftsman?

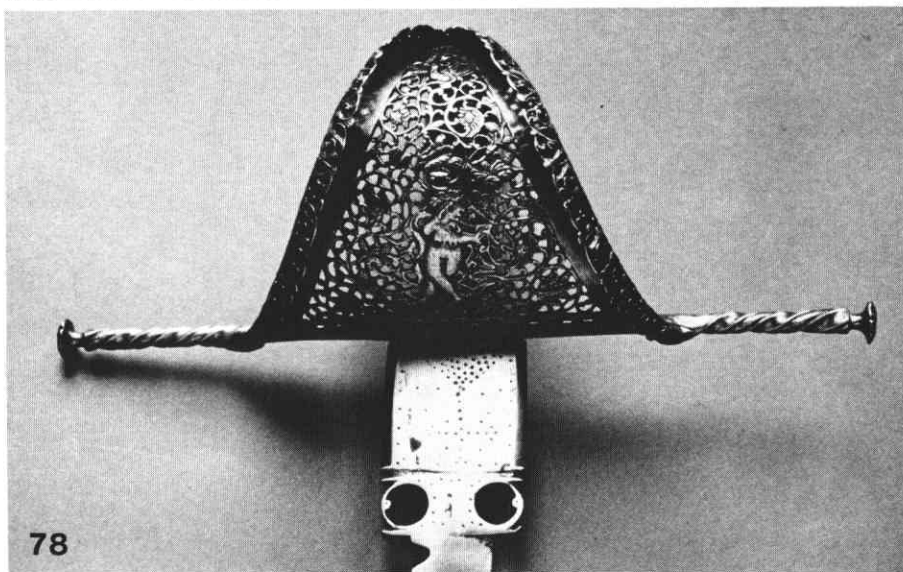
If you, who are reading this now, eventually visit the Wallace Collection at Hertford House, Manchester Square, in London, perhaps *you* will solve the mystery . . . or find another one, for future generations to wonder at!



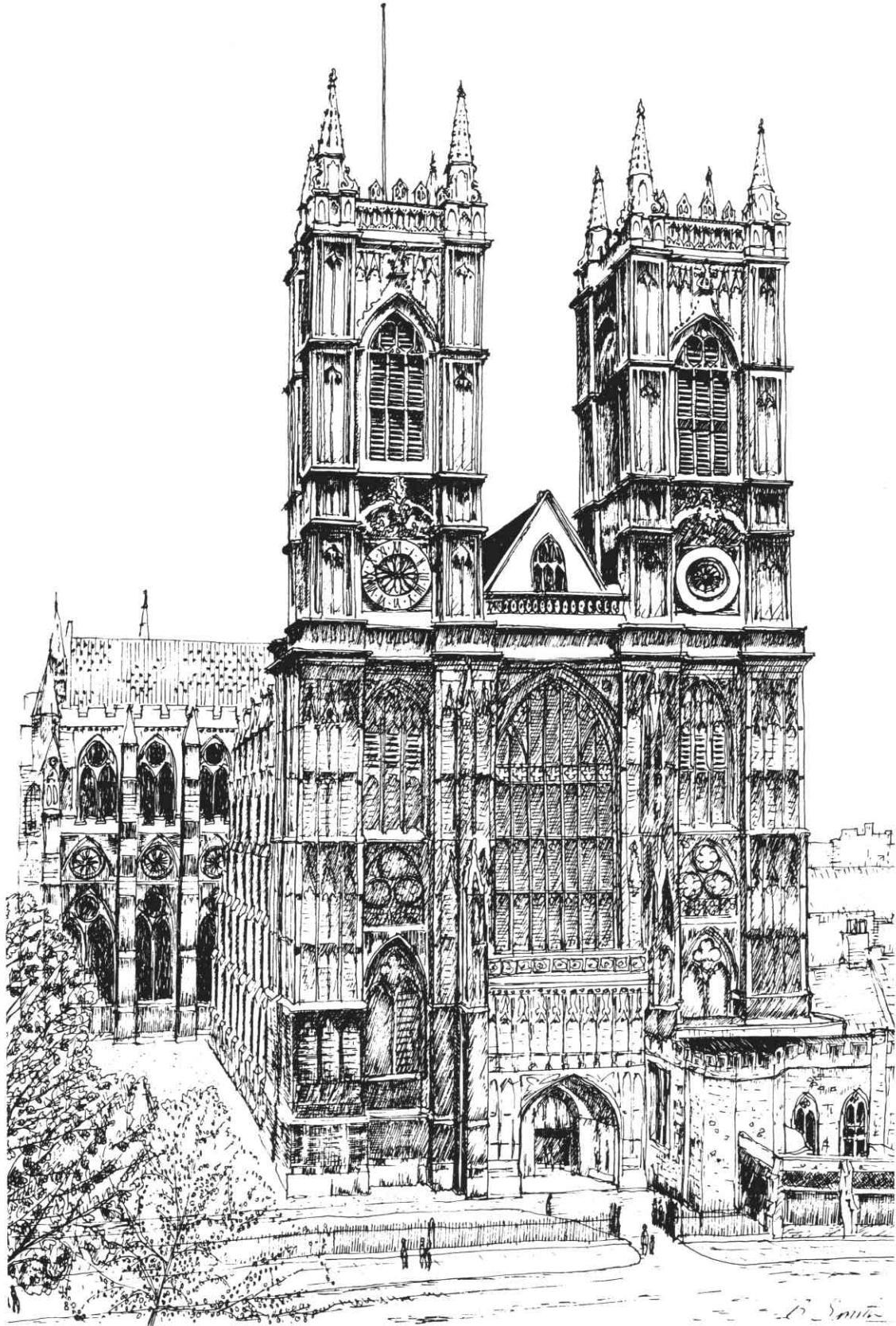
79



80



78



Westminster Abbey