

## THE GREATEST HOUSE AT CHELSEY

their lifetime, priceless things to their fellow countrymen, than to one who by his last will and testament thought more of his own wealthy family's wealth in hard cash. All we can say is that time has been on our side, and we made a bargain that has turned out a good one. At the time of his death this was by no means so certain, as is shown in Walpole's amusing letter, which, though it has often been quoted, is too good to omit.

"You will scarce guess," it runs, "how I employ my time, chiefly at present in the guardianship of embryos and cockleshells. Sir Hans Sloane is dead, and has made me one of the Trustees to his museum, which is to be offered for £20,000 to the King, the Parliament, the Royal Academies of Petersburg, Berlin, Paris, and Madrid. He valued it at fourscore thousand pounds; and so would anybody who loves hippopotamuses, sharks with one ear, and spiders as big as geese! It is a rent charge to keep the fœtuses in spirits! You may believe that those who think money the most valuable of all curiosities will not be purchasers. The King has excused himself, saying he did not believe that there are twenty thousand pounds in the treasury. We are a charming wise set, all philosophers, botanists, antiquarians, and mathematicians; and ad-