

HOLLAND HOUSE: A LITERARY SALON

A THESIS

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We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under
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PREFACE

I have made a study of Holland House, foremost literary salon in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London: its history; its host and hostess during the time of the third Lord Holland, who was born in 1773 and who died in 1840; its relationship to the times; its literary and political influence; and a limited number of its habitués, including Dr. John Allen, Sydney Smith, Samuel Rogers, Henry Luttrell, Thomas Moore, and Lord Byron. Lord Holland was a literary man respected for his artistic and political judgment, and Lady Holland was a brilliant influence as a London hostess.

I have concluded with a study of Lord Byron in relation to Holland House. His humanitarian, literary, political, and religious views before he joined the Holland House Circle I have presented to show how they received emphasis through and were enhanced by association with men and women of similar opinions such as he found in Holland House.

Byron, whose name was destined to excite the public and to outshine all other names in the Holland House Circle, has inspired continued study of his genius, his personality, his place in politics and literature, his lasting contributions. In 1942, just two years after the severe bombing of Holland House, where Byron was often a guest when it was shaping itself

for its pre-eminent place in society, a contemporary interest in the study of Byron was evidenced by an article in The Times Literary Supplement (London), in which we read:

. . . open thy Byron in these days . . . the poet who died . . . fighting; who perished, as Englishmen have recently perished, for Greece; whose works are full of protestation against the very sort of devilry which now disfigures the German name; who immortalized the sufferings of Bonnivard and of all prisoners and captives of that kind since.¹

And now as recently as 1957 this recurring interest in the most romantic figure of the nineteenth century is again shown in the publication of a three-volume biography of Byron by Leslie A. Marchand.

Too often the interest in Byron has been more in his vices than in his virtues. It is my hope that this study will help the reader to think of Byron as a champion of freedom--a liberator of the spirit. Today is a time when we may well be reminded of his passionate desire that each generation might bequeath to the future belief in liberty:

The day will come which democracy will remember all that it owes to Byron . . . From him dates the sympathy of all the true-hearted among us for this land of liberty, whose true vocation he so worthily represented among the oppressed.²

To the members of my committee I am grateful. To Dr. Beach, I am indebted for her selfless and painstaking efforts

¹Saturday, June 6, 1942, p. 283.

²Guisseppi Mazzini, "Byron, Poet of the United Nations," Saturday Review of Literature, XXV (July 25, 1942), 10. (A guest editorial drawn from an essay titled "Byron and Goethe," published in London almost 100 years before July, 1942.)

in checking the mechanics of the thesis. To Miss Walker, I owe my sincerest appreciation for her understanding human qualities, her wisdom, and her day-by-day inspiration.

Without the patience, the understanding, the guidance, and the incomparable instruction of Dr. Autrey Nell Wiley, the Director of my thesis, I should never have completed it. Through her, more than a decade ago, my interest in Byron and his association with Holland House was aroused. It was due to her and her periodic reminders that I was unable to forget my unfinished task. Because of her interest and concern I was inspired to resume my study. To her go my sincere regard and deepest gratitude.

Yolande Tyler Layfield

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CHAPTER I

HOLLAND HOUSE

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

"A Moving and . . . a Tragic Sight"¹ was the demolition of Holland House in progress during January, 1954. This historic Kensington Mansion of Jacobean architecture, neither ancient nor handsome but venerable for age and appearance,² had long been unique as the one remaining important country house in the heart of London. On a site overlooking the Southern Pentlands and the Surrey Hills and on a level with the Stone Gallery of the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, it had lingered in its huge, richly timbered grounds, rising "from Kensington High Street up the slopes of Notting Hill,"³ a mile and a half from Hyde Park. Enveloped by the metropolis, it had "preserved its picturesque and narrow landscape, upon which Addison looked . . . and where a successive throng of authors, politicians, and statesmen, fair women and graceful men" had "shone in its gay circle, and passed away."⁴

¹The Illustrated London News, January 9, 1954, p. 49.

²"Holland House," from Dickens's Household Words, The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art (New York: 120 Nassau Street, 1854), XXXII (June, 1854), 222.

³The Illustrated London News, January 9, 1954, p. 49.

⁴Eugene Lawrence, "Holland House," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, XLVIII (1873-1874), 436.

In early times the land on which it stands belonged to the De Veres. While a soldier in the army of William the Conqueror, Aubrey de Vere, a native of Holland, visited his property. He afterward became a monk and, upon his death, left his land to the Church.¹ Later when it passed from the Church to the Crown, the land was leased by Edward VI to Sir William Paulet, who later surrendered his interest to Queen Elizabeth in payment of a debt to the Crown. The queen, in turn, granted it to Lord Burghley, and from his trustees the land, known as Abbot's Kensington, was eventually bought by Sir Walter Cope, who, in 1607, added land and began the structure first known as Cope Castle.² Completed in 1614, it was constructed of brick and embellished with stone and stucco. A turret of three stories rose in the center, with a porch in the lower part.³ Before its completion, James I occupied it for a short time and complained of its being cold and uncomfortably draughty.⁴

Cope's daughter and heiress, Isabel, married Henry Rich, subsequently first Earl of Holland. Sir Henry was the son of Robert, third Baron, created Earl of Warwick by James I in 1618, and Lady Penelope Devereaux, Sir Philip Sidney's

¹"Holland House," Eclectic, XXXII, 226.

²Ibid.

³Mrs. A. T. Thomson, "Holland House and Its Inhabitants," Living Age, XIII (May, 1847), 245-248.

⁴E. Beresford Chancellor, "Holland House and Its Memories," Fortnightly, CXII (October, 1934), 416.

celebrated "Stella." He had been knighted in 1610, created Baron Kensington in March, 1622, and raised to the Earldom of Holland in 1624. Favored by King James, he was appointed gentleman of the bedchamber to Charles, Prince of Wales, to whom he was devoted and for whose marriage with Henrietta Maria of France he negotiated in 1624.¹ It was thought that the king's favoritism, which promoted Henry's rapid rise in honor and fortune, might be attributed to his handsome appearance and winning manner, qualities which "were more frequently the source of sudden preferment under James than at any other court in modern times."² On March 9, 1648, however, Sir Henry, wearing a white satin waistcoat and cap trimmed in silver lace, was beheaded because of his efforts for King Charles, who had been executed earlier that same year.³ But already he had made Cope Castle, known later as Kensington House until 1655, "a center of hospitality and splendor."⁴ He had enlarged it by adding two wings and two arcades, causing a part of it "to resemble in its outline the first half of the letter H."⁵ "Ten arches, fifteen feet high inside, extend from the porch to the front of the two wings, their roofs forming the terraces

¹Earl of Ilchester, The Home of the Hollands (New York: Dutton, 1937), p. 21.

²Ibid., p. 10.

³Princess Marie Liechtenstein, Holland House (London: Macmillan and Company, 1874), I, 5.

⁴Chancellor, loc. cit., p. 416.

⁵Thomson, loc. cit., p. 245.

to the first story. The balustrades which surround them represent the fleur-de-lis, part of the arms of the Rich family."¹

Kensington House had become historically significant during the Civil War as a frequent meeting place of all disaffected Members of Parliament. Rich, it seems, was a person who wavered in his politics and in his loyalty to Charles I. At one time, upon being coldly received in an offer to rejoin the King's party, he had returned to Parliamentary forces, and on August 6, 1647, he permitted the Members of Parliament driven from Westminster to meet General Fairfax at Holland House.² After Rich's execution in 1648 his mansion served as headquarters in 1649 for both Fairfax and Lambert, later general of the army, and possibly Cromwell.³ Its association with the liberal attitudes of its owners began when Rich's widow, upon being allowed to resume the occupancy of her property, dared to patronize players and to encourage theatrical performances in her house when the Puritans closed the public theatres.⁴

¹Ibid.

²The Journal of Elizabeth Lady Holland, 1791-1811, ed. Earl of Ilchester (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1908), II, 63.

³Chancellor, loc. cit., p. 417.

⁴Lady Holland, op. cit., p. 64.

Holland House remained in the Rich family for four generations. During that time it was occupied by Sir John Chardin, a well-known traveler in Persia and a French protestant who fled his country because of religious persecution; by Sir Anthony Van Dyck, the great painter; and by William Penn.¹ Lady Holland speaks of Van Dyck's residence at Holland House and so does Sir James Mackintosh.² But Mackintosh produces no authority, and the fact is not referred to in any recent biography of the painter.³ Princess Liechtenstein tried in vain to prove the period of his residence to have been two years when, it has been assumed, he painted the fine portraits of the Earls of Warwick and Holland.⁴ Ilchester says that there is no authority for including Penn either, although he concedes the possibility of his occupancy.⁵ In 1689 Holland House was almost sold as a Royal residence for King William III, who went to see it but who chose instead Kensington Palace, at that time Nottingham House.⁶

Holland House had been the principal place of residence of the second Earl of Holland, also Earl of Warwick, in

¹Liechtenstein, op. cit., I, 26.

²Lady Holland, op. cit., II, 62.

³Ibid.

⁴Op. cit., I, 29-30.

⁵Op. cit., p. 21.

⁶"Holland House," Eclectic, XXXII, 228.

1673. Charlotte, the widow of his son and successor, married Sir Joseph Addison, her son's tutor, in 1716.¹ That the marriage was a happy one is doubtful. Addison's wife never succeeded in leaving off a condescending attitude toward him, and the young Earl of Warwick was a "disorderly young man whose morals Addison had attempted to reclaim."² It was in what later became the dining room of Holland House³ that Addison died, and it was to this room that he, as he lay dying, called his stepson that the young man might see how a Christian could die.⁴

During the reign of George the Second, Holland House was leased in 1746 to Henry Fox, son of Stephen Fox, for the low rental of one hundred eighty-two pounds, sixteen shillings, and nine pence a year.⁵ At this time Fox was in need of a residence after his romantic marriage to Lady Georgiana Caroline Lennox. His courtship had been disapproved of by Lady Caroline's parents, the Duke and Duchess of Richmond. The Duke, a grandson of Charles II and the Duchess of Portsmouth, and his Duchess, the eldest daughter of an earl, both proud of their lineage and social position, did not favor

¹Ilchester, op. cit., p. 320.

²Lady Holland, op. cit., II, 65.

³John Fyvie, Noble Dames and Notable Men of the Georgian Era (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1910), p. 175.

⁴Lady Holland, op. cit., II, 65.

⁵Fyvie, op. cit., p. 175.

their daughter's marriage to a man not only of a lower station but of a questionable reputation, a man eighteen years older than she. Forbidding the romance, the Duke and Duchess arranged for a suitor of their own choice. When, however, a time was set for a formal introduction, Lady Caroline, who had cut off her eyebrows so that she would not be presentable, did not meet the young man. Not being seen at all was more desirable than being seen with no eyebrows.¹ Left alone, she eloped with Henry Fox. Despite the anger of her parents and despite her separation from them, she and Fox were secretly married in May, 1744. After the birth of her first son Stephen, however, she received her parents' forgiveness. Following the reconciliation, Lady Caroline was created Baroness Holland in 1763, and a year later Fox was raised to the peerage of Baron Holland.² In 1768 he purchased Holland House from William Edwardes, who had inherited the property from his uncle, Edward Henry Rich, Earl of Warwick and fourth Earl of Holland. Thus the title of the proprietor of Holland House became Baron Holland instead of Earl of Holland, and the connection of Holland House with the Rich family was terminated, since the families of Rich and Fox were not related.³ Henry Fox was a tenant of the "suburban palace and paradise"

¹Liechtenstein, op. cit., I, 56.

²Ibid., pp. 68-72.

³Ilchester, op. cit., pp. 42-45.

when his son Charles James was born, but Holland House missed having the distinction of being the birthplace of this famed statesman, for "the noise of carpenters and the bustle of upholsterers obliged Lady Caroline to choose a lodging in Conduit Street" for the birth of her son.¹ This second son inherited the title of Lord Holland upon the death of his older brother Stephen, who left a widow and two children, Henry Richard and Caroline. It was Henry Richard, the heir of his uncle Charles James, who became the third Lord Holland.

Henry Richard Fox succeeded, with the help of his wife, in making Holland House an intellectual center, invested with a "greater brilliancy than it had enjoyed even in the days of Addison"² by attracting "a circle of wits and geniuses."³ Holland House rose to fame as a political, literary, and social salon, well known for its excellent dinners and gay talk.⁴ It was "a non-official council chamber where the few matured plans and the many cemented friendships; where party measures were intelligently discussed and party hopes saved from extinction."⁵ It became, in fact, the "meeting place of

¹Sir George Trevelyan, The Early History of Charles James Fox (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1900), p. 37.

²Liechtenstein, op. cit., I, 142.

³Ibid.

⁴Agnes Repplier, "The House of Laughter; the Holland House Circle," Atlantic Monthly, CLVIII (July, 1936), 18-27.

⁵Ibid., p. 26.

the political and literary celebrities of two centuries,"¹
 "a salon unrivaled . . . in the world."²

For more than a century this imposing red-brick mansion, almost hidden in summer by cedars and oaks, stood in its natural setting against a rise of elms and sycamores. But in 1769 its formal gardens were laid out in ornamental arrangements of flower plots, one of which in circular form represented a rosary.³ Nearby was a fountain, a column of granite topped by a colossal bust of Napoleon by a pupil of Canova.⁴ The alcove on an elevated terrace at the end of this beautiful garden bore two lines written by Lord Holland honoring Samuel Rogers:

Here Rogers sat, and here forever dwell
 To me those pleasures that he sings so well.⁵

Added to Lord Holland's couplet at Rogers's seat were these lines by Luttrell:

Well, now I am fairly installed in the bower,
 How lovely the scene! how propitious the hour.
 The breeze is perfumed from the hawthorn it stirs;
 All is silent around me---but nothing occurs;
 Not a thought, I protest, though I'm here and alone;
 Not a chance of a couplet that Rogers would own;
 Though my senses are raptured, my feelings in tune,

¹Chancellor, loc. cit., p. 416.

²E. L. Didier, "Holland House," Chatauquan, XVII (July, 1893), 387.

³Thomson, loc. cit., p. 249.

⁴"Holland House," Eclectic, XXXII, 223.

⁵Ibid.

And Holland's my host, and the season is June.
 So I rise, since the muses continue to frown,
 No more of a poet than when I sat down.¹

For these gardens the third Lord Holland brought from Spain the first specimen of the beautiful flower, the dahlia.² There were fish ponds and meadows and, before the French garden, an orchard.³ On the western side of the house were small gardens and, farther west, the moats.⁴

A stone porch led to a partially wainscoted porter's hall decorated with three Italian pictures in fresco. Here was the statue of Charles James Fox which was later placed in Bloomsbury Square. The plain entrance-hall had changed little since the time of Henry Rich. In the northern division was the Journal Room, facing the entrance and containing at one time a complete set of the journals of the Lords and Commons. There were also in this room minerals, insects, stuffed birds, Chinese figures, and several portraits including a Reynolds. West of the Journal Room was the sitting room of the first Baron Holland, connected to the garden or dining room by stairs an inch high and covered by a platform on an inclined plane to accommodate the invalid. At the head of a great staircase through a large, antique, embossed door was the Gilt Chamber, with its two deep fireplaces, where mingled so many illustrious people. Lighted by three bow-windows, it contained

¹Ibid.

²"Holland House," Eclectic, XXXII, 223.

³Thomson, loc. cit., p. 248.

⁴"Holland House," Eclectic, XXXII, 223.

marble busts of the Prince Regent, of Henry IV of France, of the Duke of Sussex, and of Lord Holland. Joining the Gilt Room was the Breakfast Room decorated with walls covered with flowered white satin damask, green and gold wainscoting, two cabinets--one of tortoise shell, the other of ebony--and a portrait of Charles James Fox done by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The great drawing-room, rich with French silk curtains, costly articles and cabinets, and a collection of pictures by the best masters, extended north of the Gilt Room.¹ The library, ninety feet by seventeen feet and four inches and originally almost all windows, was celebrated over all of Europe.² The collection, begun in 1796, amounted later to 15,000 volumes of rare and complete works which included, along with English and French memoirs, authors of both Spain and Italy. There were three autographed plays of Lope de Vega, three letters of Petrarch, the original copy of a play of the younger Moratin and the music of Metastasio's Olimpiade, beautifully written out by Jean Jacques Rousseau at the time when he made his living by doing work of that kind. Another treasure was a small copy of Homer, once owned by Sir Isaac Newton and containing his writing on a blank leaf.³ In the Eastern part were the dressing room of Lady

¹Thomson, loc. cit., pp. 249-251.

²"Holland House," Eclectic, XXXII, 224.

³Ibid., p. 225.

Holland and an ante-room containing valuable portraits, cabinets, and miniatures. A dressing-room window carried the inscription of John Hookham Frere:

May neither fire destroy, nor waste impair,
Nor time consume thee, till the twentieth heir;
May taste respect thee, and may fashion spare.¹

That it has been spared and has continued to be regarded with unequalled respect is noted by Fyvie:

. . . undoubtedly its exterior architectural beauty, its interior arrangements, as remarkable for comfort as for luxury and splendour, its collection of varied objects of art, and its almost unbroken chain of political and literary associations, stretching back for nigh upon three centuries, form a combination which has given Holland House the first place amongst our metropolitan palaces.²

It has remained a unique example of a country mansion in the heart of a metropolis.

Little wonder that the demolition of this famed country house was "a moving, and . . . a tragic sight." As early as 1801 or 1802, both wings had been "under sentence of destruction."³ Cracks appeared, but by diverting drains, workmen made it possible to save the foundation and to retain the wings.⁴ In 1841 Macaulay predicted the time when "a few old men, the last survivors of our generation," would "in

¹Thomson, loc. cit., p. 251.

²Fyvie, op. cit., p. 174.

³Ilchester, op. cit., pp. 1-4.

⁴Ibid.

vain seek, amidst new streets and squares and railway stations for the site of that dwelling which was in their youth the favourite resort of wits and beauties, of painters and poets, of scholars, philosophers and statesmen."¹ Later there were threats of pulling it down, but many protests made because of sentimental memories and genuine respect for old associations saved it. Therefore, in 1937 it was still standing intact, although a frail structure, surrounded by new streets and railway stations.²

A severe bombing in 1940 "virtually gutted" the central portion and badly burned the west wing. The east wing, however, escaped largely untouched.³ Because of its brilliant history, including its close association with the Whigs, hope for the restoration of this famous and most remarkable mansion was held for a number of years. But finally Mr. I. J. Hayward, speaking for the London County Council, owners of the mansion since 1952, stated that the damage was too great for restoration and that its preservation would be unwise because of the prohibitive cost and its "'extremely dangerous condition.'"⁴ The Council, however, sought to preserve as much as possible

¹T. Babington Macaulay, "The Late Lord Holland," Essays, Critical and Miscellaneous (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), p. 459.

²Ilchester, op. cit., pp. 1-4.

³The Illustrated London News, p. 50.

⁴Ibid.

and in December, 1952, voted 15,000 pounds for preserving the arcades, the center of the south front, the ground floor of the east wing, and the foundation outline of the rest of the building. In 1953 the Council, because of high costs, further deterioration, and no "reasonable proposal for its use,"¹ decided to give up the idea of preserving the east wing.

Although the Kensington Society also took an active interest in the east wing, it had no practical suggestion for its preservation without the use of more public money. So, on January 9, 1954, the Illustrated London News carried these headlines: "'A Moving, and . . . a Tragic Sight': Holland House, the South Front, as Demolition Proceeds and the Disappearance of the Historic Kensington Mansion Draws Near," followed by the article entitled "Holland House Today: The Doomed Ruins of the Great Whig Mansion."

Later in 1954, however, the Youth Hostels Association intervened. With a promise of a grant from the King George VI Memorial Fund for the building of new hostels, they proposed the preservation of the east wing as part of a Youth Hostel building to adjoin Holland House.² Their architects' plans for this hostel include the east wing and other parts of the old house that can be restored. The new buildings set among

¹W. G. Fiske, "Holland House," Spectator, CXCI (October 15, 1954), 466.

²Ibid.

trees are to be grouped around a courtyard on the eastern side of the Holland House remains. Among those parts to be restored is the façade of the south front. The entire lower level, including the side arcades and the center piece, will be rebuilt, with nothing behind the main entrance hall but a single room to serve as a robing-room for theatrical presentations in the forecourt. The ballroom, now serving as a tea-room in the park, together with the West Tower in which it lies, will also be restored. The new buildings, treated in the traditional manner of Oxford and Cambridge, will be built around a courtyard with no physical contact between the old and the new. Fences or railings are to be replaced with less obtrusive demarcation: pools, changes of level, and the actual external walls of the buildings themselves. The eighteen trees which have had to be removed for construction have been replaced by a total of 570 new ones planted by the London County Council.¹

Today, instead of becoming the mass of rubble that those familiar with its history feared it would become, Holland House shows promise of a useful future. It will live as a haven for youth; its "fine wooded parklands and lawns will remain as one of London's few oases of open country, providing an ever-welcome retreat from the dust and the confinement of the city in its fevered haste."² This restoration of the

¹"The Future of Holland House," The Sphere, February 16, 1957, p. 275.

²Ibid.

finest parts of Holland House out of the ruins of a wartime bombing will be more than a reminder of the spacious days and past "glories of the last country house in London where the Whigs foregathered and wits and poets of the day enjoyed an endless flow of hospitality."¹

In the ensuing chapters, I present biographical and anecdotal material depicting some of the glories and such cultural influences as Holland House exercised in allied literary and political activities. Eventually, Byron becomes my point of concentration, for in his early literary aspirations, as well as his political, he appears to a literary historian to have been the author who most clearly united and perpetuated the political and the literary drive that made Holland House a cultural center for the liberal minded in both England and the Continent in the nineteenth century.

¹Ibid.

CHAPTER II

HENRY RICHARD FOX AND ELIZABETH VASSALL WEBSTER

Lord and Lady Holland

Studying the history of Holland House as "a salon unrivaled in England, in Europe, or in the world,"¹ we become acutely interested in the people associated with it during its brilliance--its hosts as well as its visitors.

Henry Richard Fox, who inherited the title of Lord Holland from his uncle Charles James Fox, celebrated Whig statesman, and who became the third Lord Holland, was born at Winterslow, near Salisbury, in 1773. At the age of two months he narrowly escaped death in a burning house when he was snatched from the fire by his heroic mother.² Left an orphan when he was only four years old,³ he was treated with the tenderness of parents by his famous uncle, but he was unspoiled. His education resembled that of most young Whig noblemen: he learned the classics from a tutor; he went to Eton; he attended the University; he took a grand tour abroad. At Eton he was known for his good disposition. In his Memoirs of the Whig Party he said: "I went through Eton and Oxford

¹Didier, loc. cit., p. 390.

²Henry Richard Vassall, Third Lord Holland, Further Memoirs of the Whig Party, 1807-1821, ed. Lord Stavondale (London: John Murray, 1905), Intro., p.vii.

³Ibid.

without disgrace and without distinction."¹ Eton was undisciplined and uproarious with rampaging, high-spirited young "savages" who were unrelenting in their "fag" practice and who not infrequently engaged in bloody fist fights; Oxford was inhabited by fashionable young men who reveled in drinking and gambling and visiting half the night.² Fortunately, gambling did not hold for Henry Richard the same fascination that it had held for his father and his uncle,³ and his temperance and good sense served him well.

After his first year at Oxford, he traveled on the continent in 1791, at which time he was deeply impressed by France, by the new constitution accepted by Louis XVI, as well as by the National Assembly. Here began a life-long friendship with Lafayette, whom he admired for his love of liberty as it was shown in his enthusiasm for the Revolution. And here he met Talleyrand.⁴ It is not surprising that an impressionable youth was swept off his feet by contact with such greatness.

He took his final degree at Oxford in 1792, but he was disappointed in the University. He recommended Cambridge as

¹Ilchester, op. cit., p. 112.

²David Cecil, The Young Melbourne (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1939), pp. 44 and 47.

³Ilchester, op. cit., p. 244.

⁴Ibid., p. 115.

offering the greater advantages. Of Oxford he said, "'There is pedantry without science, insolence without learning, and intolerance without firmness.'"¹

Deciding to go abroad again, he sailed for Spain in 1793 and stayed three years, during which time he came of age, November 21, 1794,² and developed a love of the literature and art of that country as well as an interest in its political condition.³ In January, 1794, he went to Naples, where he found some Oxford friends and met Sir Godfrey and Lady Webster.⁴

Here Lady Elizabeth Webster had persuaded her husband to bring her, although he detested traveling, in an effort to grasp a portion of the happiness that had not come from her marriage to a man twenty-three years her senior whom she did not love.⁵ Born Elizabeth Vassall in March, 1771, and brought up in England, she was the only child of an American mother and Richard Vassall, a wealthy Jamaican planter. Heiress to a fortune of 10,000 pounds a year,⁶ she was "a spoiled, clever, high-spirited girl, inspiring verses like those which proclaimed

¹Ibid., p. 117.

²Ibid., p. 121.

³Vassall, op. cit., Intro., p.vii.

⁴Ilchester, op. cit., p. 122.

⁵Lady Holland, op. cit., Intro., p.viii and xi.

⁶D. L. Hobman, "Lady Holland," Contemporary Review, CXXCII (November, 1952), 307.

that to her 'All eyes are vassals,'¹ but she could remember being much alone as a child, except at mealtime, in a dingy back room of a London house. She could also remember an old man who, in his dying days, found pleasure in trying to educate her, a lonely, thirteen-year-old girl. It seems that she had been as glad to leave bickering parents to marry thirty-eight-year-old Sir Godfrey as her parents had been to be "rid of the child of their hate"² and as Webster had been to wed the fifteen-year-old heiress.³

She and Webster proved to have nothing in common, however, except "frightful tempers and the most despotic dispositions,"⁴ and early in their married lives they quarreled; she was impatient and capricious, he selfish and ill-tempered.⁵ She wrote in her Journal of being in the power of one who made her "execrate" her life since it had belonged to him.⁶

After the wedding Webster removed his child bride to his country house at Battle in Sussex, where she soon became a problem. She played practical jokes, showed her boredom with

¹Ibid.

²W. Perrott, "Lady Holland," Nineteenth Century, CXXXIX (May, 1946), p. 229.

³Hobman, "Lady Holland," loc. cit., p. 306.

⁴Perrott, loc. cit., p. 230.

⁵Hobman, "Lady Holland," loc. cit., p. 306.

⁶Op. cit., I, 53.

the seclusion of Battle Abbey, and acted without convention. The management of Battle Abbey had been usurped by Webster's aunt, who was energetic and despotic. Perrott tells of Elizabeth's pleasant morning inquiry each day as to whether the "old hag" had died yet. Elizabeth even resorted to youthful pranks of trying to frighten her away with "ghosts" and "refugees," but the old woman was not to be intimidated. She only laughed, locked the "ghosts" up, entertained the "refugees" politely by feeding them, and continued on as the usurper. In her boredom Elizabeth began the improvement of her neglected education by extensive reading and thus began acquiring "the knowledge which was later to help her dominate the conversation of Holland House."¹

On the continent where we find her in 1791, she had showed her interest in public life by going to the National Assembly in Paris to hear Robespierre.² Everywhere she met great, interesting, and amusing people who admired, even liked, her. The attention received abroad gratified her vanity.³ Her companionship, however, often left much to be desired. On a journey through Switzerland she was a very irresolute traveler--she could not decide whether to go on or to stay,

¹Perrott, loc. cit., p. 230.

²Hobman, "Lady Holland," loc. cit., p. 306.

³Lady Holland, op. cit., I, 15.

what means of transportation to use, or which route to take. She was contrary to everything proposed, and Miss Holroyd, her traveling companion, considered any personal offense fully repaid by one wishing on the offender a trip with Lady Webster.¹

Sir Godfrey left his wife for long intervals and returned to England, where he much preferred to be. Alone in a foreign country at twenty years of age, she relates that she "lived with great discretion, even to prudery," never admitting male visitors except to dinners--with the exception of Dr. Drew, who lectured on chemistry, natural history, and philosophy, and Mr. Cowper, "a grave married man."² Nevertheless, she felt a strong desire to depend upon another for happiness, although she strove to suppress the feeling. "The want of passion in my constitution will always save me from the calamity of letting my heart run away with my reason," she wrote.³ In her unhappiness she often thought of suicide. "I cannot bear up when I am alone," she said; "there is a desponding feeling that steals over my mind . . . I want to die, but I do not."⁴

When in 1794 she met Henry Richard Fox, she found him to be cultivated and charming. The young man soon began showing her all the understanding and devotion which her husband

¹Ibid., p. 3. (Note from Girlhood of Maria Josepha Holroyd, p. 65.)

²Ibid., p. 5.

³Ibid., p. 40.

⁴Lady Holland, op. cit., II, 82.

had denied her, and she, losing no time in recognizing his superior qualities, responded to his attentiveness. Although he was slightly lame--ossification of the muscles in the left leg--and not handsome, his youth, his pleasing manner, his lively conversation, and his delightful gaiety captivated her.¹ His amusing stories entertained her, and his innate good nature and cheerfulness won her love. He, in turn, fell completely under the spell of her charm.² They were together constantly. In two years they were happily and joyously married the second day after the granting of her divorce from Webster and a year after the birth of their son. Forty-three years of domestic happiness ensued.³ Theirs was a deep, abiding love; he was "Holly" and she, "My Woman" as long as they lived.⁴

When Webster agreed to grant his wife a divorce, it was on condition that he retain her fortune. Knowing that he would also claim their children, Elizabeth settled upon a plan for keeping at least one of them. Pretending that the youngest one, two-year-old Harriet, had died of measles, she kept her in hiding with a nurse, arranged a mock funeral, and sent to the British Consul at Leghorn a stone-filled guitar case, supposedly the little coffin.⁵ Later, however, for the child's

¹Ibid., I, 117-121.

²Ilchester, op. cit., p. 122.

³Repplier, loc. cit., p. 18.

⁴Hobman, "Lady Holland," loc. cit., p. 307.

⁵Ibid. Ilchester, in the Introduction to Journal of Lady Holland, describes the contents as a kid.

sake, she confessed the truth. After Sir Godfrey's suicide over gambling losses three years following the divorce, Lady Holland, in time, recovered her fortune, but she was never able to claim her children.¹

Society cut the young wife of Richard Fox, not because of the illegitimacy of their child but because the indiscretion had been an open one, and because divorce was considered a disgrace.² Women, especially, refused to come to her house. She received insults. People hesitated to recognize her at the theater. Even Lady Elizabeth Foster, who was herself the mistress of her closest friend's husband, would cast forbidding glances in her direction, and one of her contemporaries, in writing an account of a visit to a certain person's house, added, "'She had all the bad company, such as the Hollands.'"³

Such treatment served only to arouse within Elizabeth the determination to help her husband fulfill the social and political responsibility which he had inherited "as the head of a rich and noble family"⁴ and as the nephew of Charles James Fox. She wanted to repay "the love of the most adorable, genial, kind-hearted man in the world . . . by making his home the foremost house in England."⁵ She credited her husband

¹Ibid.

²Perrott, loc. cit., p. 231.

³Ibid., p. 232.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

with either imparting to her some of his goodness or drawing out her latent goodness by his own excellent example. Because of him she considered herself a better person and a more useful member of society.¹

In her effort to overcome the slights, however, she became somewhat hardened; either she ceased to feel humiliation, or she succeeded in not showing her real feeling by her appearance of indifferent ease. If women would not come to her house, she would attract men. And she did--brilliant men attracted by "conversation and repartee."² They liked a place where "the best brains in the land" could meet "to exchange views and witticisms, without having to mute their conversations to please the female ear."³ Repplier wrote, "It was the good fortune of Englishmen in the beginning of the nineteenth century to find themselves free to dine, and glad to dine, with a hostess whose youthful indiscretion gave them a solid British excuse for leaving their wives at home."⁴ There they were assured of always finding the best company--talent, genius, liberal views, amusing people, and wit--regardless of money and social position. Lady Holland seemed to possess the knack of distinguishing between "superficial brilliance" and the "genuine

¹Lady Holland, op. cit., I, 159.

²Perrott, loc. cit., p. 232.

³Ibid.

⁴Repplier, loc. cit., p. 20.

article"; she demanded the best and got it.¹ Holland House was characterized by a masculine intellectuality and a unique charm partly due to the mental vigor of the "tone-free, skeptical conversation"² peculiar to its predominantly male society. For, although the "easy-going circle" of Lady Melbourne and the Duchess of Devonshire were "on terms" with Lady Holland, the more "rigid" ladies, says Cecil, never accepted her.³ Repplier, on the other hand, thought that by 1825 her past indiscretion was forgotten: "The most strict undivorced and unimpeachable duchesses" were eventually visitors at Holland House.⁴

Accounts of Holland House during its rise to fame have given much more space to its hostess than to its host. But it is to Lord Holland, charming both of manner and of conversation and more popular and better loved than his imperious wife, that Holland House owes a great part of its preeminence, even though Greville observed that no one except his family, in which Allen was included, felt a very warm affection for him, probably because he felt none for others.⁵

¹Perrott, loc. cit., p. 232.

²Cecil, op. cit., p. 55.

³Ibid.

⁴Repplier, loc. cit., p. 27.

⁵Gamaliel Bradford, Jr., "Portrait of a Lady," North American Review, CXCV (May, 1912), 595.

Nevertheless, his culture, his good humor,¹ and his venerable and benign countenance made him a favorite with his associates.² We can picture him, a "clumsy" figure³ but the perfect, unaffected host, cordially welcoming guests, putting them at ease with his hospitable graciousness, and drawing his shaggy, black brows down as he wagged his head and talked of literature with vivacity and of politics with equanimity.⁴ His fund of anecdote was inexhaustible and his mimicry superb. All who came in contact with him enjoyed his genial company, and those who lived with him had the warmest regard for him. He was a delightful companion whose conversation was both agreeable and instructive.⁵ Dallas marveled at Lord Holland's disposition to return good for evil.⁶ His ability to get along well with people is indicated by Repplier, who says that he could talk "smoothly" even with Hallam, and Hallam was so contradictory, according to Sydney Smith, that he "'would leap out of bed for

¹Cecil, op. cit., p. 57.

²Macaulay, "The Late Lord Holland," op. cit., p. 459.

³Cecil, op. cit., p. 57.

⁴Lloyd Sanders, The Holland House Circle (London: Methuen and Company, 1908), p. 28.

⁵John Wilson Croker, The Croker Papers, The Correspondence and Diaries of the late Right Honourable John Wilson Croker, Ltd, ed. Louis J. Jennings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884), II, 416.

⁶Dora N. Raymond, The Political Career of Lord Byron (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1924), p. 36.

the pleasure of contradicting the night watchman whose duty it was to call the hours.'" Continuing, Repplier states that "he was stoical under pain, serene under annoyance, and tolerant of everything save injustice."¹ His generosity, gentleness, amiability, and benevolence drew all men to him. Lord Brougham said that in all his experience he never saw anything that resembled such a disposition.² To Rogers, Byron wrote in 1814, "There is no human being on whose regard and esteem I set a higher value than on Lord Holland's."³

Believing strongly in Whig principles, Lord Holland was a dedicated member of the Whig party. For years of Tory power, he held it together⁴ and brought to it youthful enthusiasm at a time of depression.⁵ He was devoted "to those humanitarian principles which were the Whigs' chief virtue during the long years of Opposition."⁶ His political career, consistent and unblotted, was marked by upright inflexibility. Representing "temperate and aristocratic liberalism,"⁷ he was a champion of liberty and a persevering

¹Repplier, loc. cit., p. 25.

²Ibid., p. 19.

³Thomas Moore, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron with Notices of His Life (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1830), I, 528.

⁴Repplier, loc. cit., p. 18.

⁵Sanders, op. cit., p. 21.

⁶Ibid., p. 39.

⁷Peter Quennell, Byron, the Years of Fame (New York: The Viking Press, 1935), p. 111.

advocate for Parliamentary Reform. After dining with Napoleon and being convinced of his sincere desire for peace, Holland became devoted to the Emperor.¹ He disliked the oppression by Napoleon, but he defended him steadfastly because he sympathized with him and admired him.² He disagreed with his own party when they supported the Government for a new war against Napoleon after his escape from Elba, and he made public complaints about his exile to St. Helena and his treatment there. Napoleon dispatched grateful messages to both Lord and Lady Holland--to her for the presents of books and sweets she continued sending to help console him. When he died he left her a golden snuff box, ornamented by a cameo. It had been a gift from Pope Pius VI,³ and today it is in the British Museum.⁴ Lord Carlisle wrote to Lady Holland, "Lady, reject the gift, 'tis tinged with gore."⁵ Lord Byron replied:

Lady, accept the box the hero wore
 In spite of all this elegiac stuff;
 Let not seven stanzas written by a bore
 Prevent your ladyship from taking snuff.⁶

¹Sanders, op. cit., p. 20.

²Ilchester, op. cit., p. 289.

³Repplier, loc. cit., p. 26.

⁴Lawrence, loc. cit., p. 438.

⁵Sanders, op. cit., p. 43.

⁶Ibid.

And Lord Holland continued:

For this her snuff-box to resign,
A pleasant thought enough;
Alas! my lord, for verse like thine
Who'd give a pinch of snuff?¹

Lord Holland hated imprisonment for debt, slavery, the cruel Corn Laws, capital punishment, and discrimination against Catholics.² He fought the slave-trade despite his West Indian interests. He was a nobleman with interests in the commons, a planter opposed to slavery, a landowner opposing the Corn Laws;³ in addition, he argued to remove theft from offences receiving capital punishment.⁴ His support of the removal of Catholic disabilities proved to be the first step taken toward the final Catholic Emancipation which split the Government in 1801.⁵ It is said that "when-ever a measure was carried through the House of Lords which was not of a just or generous nature, Lord Holland's 'Protest' against it was sure to be placed upon the records."⁶ He had a horror of "oppression sanctioned by law."⁷ His advice,

¹Ibid.

²Repplier, loc. cit., pp. 18 and 19.

³Macaulay, "The Late Lord Holland," op. cit., p. 459.

⁴Sanders, op. cit., p. 37.

⁵Ilchester, op. cit., p. 173.

⁶"Holland House," Eclectic, XXXII, 234.

⁷Repplier, loc. cit., p. 18.

sought because of his orthodox doctrine and disinterested motives, counted much in momentous decisions.¹

Lord Holland is not only respected for his admirable personal traits, his graciousness, and his participation in government affairs, but he is also remembered as a liberal patron of literature, which he loved passionately. In fact, his political interests were thought to be secondary to his real interest in travel, reading, and entertainment.²

Quennell tells us that he had inherited "sound yet conservative literary taste."³ His standards emphasized a free manner and easy diction, but he considered Homer, Shakespeare, and Chaucer superior "to the more polished and fluent writers of the Augustan Age."⁴ To him Crabbe was a genius, but he had little regard for Wordsworth's poetry. He was almost entirely responsible for the library at Holland House.⁵ In it was included much about Spain because of his interest in and his preference for the culture and the politics of that country. He wrote a life of Lope de Vega and a life of Guillon de Castro. The beauty of Spanish literature "appealed to his poetic sense

¹Sanders, op. cit., p. 56.

²Ibid., p. 58.

³Op. cit., p. 111.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ilchester, op. cit., p. 217.

which was so highly developed in his nature."¹ Princess Liechtenstein terms Holland "the best informed and most elegant of our writers on the subject of the Spanish theatre."² In 1808 he prefaced and published his uncle's History of the Early Part of the Reign of James II, which was well received and highly praised.³ In addition, he wrote Foreign Reminiscences: Memoirs of the Whig Party, Further Memoirs of the Whig Party,⁴ a biographical sketch of Sheridan, and A Dream, an exercise of fancy which contains such interesting anticipations in education as the Rhodes scholarships.⁵ That pictures gave Lord Holland more pain than pleasure and that he disliked music are facts which seem hardly consistent with his tastes and talents.⁶

Although Lady Holland's concern about maintaining the prestige of Holland House after her husband's death in 1840 had diminished, she is recorded as giving a dinner within a year, at which time the society was not broken up entirely. Society and conversation continued to be brilliant and

¹Ibid.

²Op. cit., I, 138.

³Ilchester, op. cit., p. 232.

⁴Liechtenstein, op. cit., I, 139.

⁵Sanders, op. cit., p. 28.

⁶Samuel Rogers, Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers, ed. Alexander Dyce (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1856), p. 275.

intellectual.¹ Without Henry, though, "she was empty."² He, a weaker character, had given her life.

The memory of the man and the woman under whose dominion Holland House became the center of social and political importance is one that should be kept alive.

¹Cecil, op. cit., pp. 196-197.

²Perrott, loc. cit., p. 236.

CHAPTER III

THE LITERARY SALON, A PRODUCT OF THE TIMES

That Holland House became the foremost literary salon in Europe because of its host and hostess we are certain. But that it, like its contemporaries, was also a product of the times is undeniable. "The Salon, as an institution," says Tallentyre, was "wholly and exclusively French."¹ In the main it was feminine, demanding as its head the feminine leader. It implied "intimacy between a small set of persons accustomed to meet without any formal invitation."² Conversation was a cultivated accomplishment. Unlike the practical mind of the English which wants always to be doing, the French mind likes to talk, and in the salons there was purpose in the talk. The salons were "the forcing-houses of the Revolution, the nursery of the Encyclopedia, the antechamber of the Academie."³ Here one could find discussed Freethought and the Rights of Man, intrigues, politics, science, literature, art. "Here one made love, reputations, bons-mots, epigrams."⁴

¹S. G. Tallentyre, The Women of the Salons (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1926), p. 1.

²Sanders, op. cit., p. 90.

³Tallentyre, op. cit., p. 1.

⁴Ibid.

Here were brilliancy, corruption, artificiality. The mistresses of the salons were women of tact and kindness with generous hearts, wit, enthusiasm, tenderness, and understanding.¹

One of these mistresses and also one of the most dazzling figures in modern European history was Madame de Staël, the daughter of Monsieur Necker.² She is called the "connecting link" between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, an age when women exerted a great influence from their homes and salons. Her fame was widespread as a statesman, a novelist, a playwright, an actress, a metaphysician, a patriot, an intriguer, a musician, a philosopher--in fact, everything, it would seem. She spoke four languages fluently and volubly: French, German, Italian, and English. Jeffrey called her the greatest writer in France since Voltaire and Rousseau and the greatest woman writer, regardless of any era or of any country.³ Never inactive, she made her genius felt. Byron said ^{that} her society was an "avalanche" and that she lingered so long after dinner that everyone wished her in the drawing room.⁴ Though the richest heiress in France, she was never pretty. Her features were coarse, but with her flashing

¹Ibid., p. 2.

²Ibid., p. 113.

³Ibid., p. 128.

⁴Ibid.

black eyes and full, passionate lips,¹ hers was an ugliness, we are told, that might be called interesting and clever.² Her lust for power and fame, which, plus her egoism, kept her from being womanly, made her the dominating person in her salon. There, in the flowing dress of the period and with yellow turban on her black hair and laurel twig in her hand, she held sway. There men came to listen to her, rather than to talk. There she made history, whispering, suggesting, proposing. What she thought in her salon at night is what was said the next day in public. Such was her influence that she was twice exiled by Napoleon.³

Although, in time, the French Salon degenerated from an intellectual power to a court of beauty, it had made a distinct contribution to the world. From its nourishment of free thought came emancipation of men's bodies and minds. In its rooms were discussed deep "problems of the soul--fate, freewill, death, eternity."⁴ Here, despite much corruption and immorality, men and women "were the first to discuss that purer morality and generous philanthropy which are the boast of the world today. The rights of men were first realized by

¹Ibid., p. 118.

²Ibid., p. 115.

³Ibid., p. 114.

⁴Ibid., p. 150.

the people who most trod them under foot. The Revolution was brought about by the class whom it first turned and rent."¹

The eighteenth century in France produced idleness, vanity, self-indulgence, and scoffers of religion. It was characterized by its superficiality and its physical and moral weakness resulting in real and imaginary ailments for which people resorted to many remedies of a harmful nature. Tallentyre speaks of the "butterflies" of Paris--"weak, witty, charming."²

In contrast to that of the continent, society in England during the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century was real--worldly but unsophisticated--because its position was founded on landed property. The great Whig country houses, though ornate, massive, and imposing, were not palaces. They possessed the warmth and charm of real, gracious living. "Easy-going and unofficial," they were designed for the comforts of private life: leisure, lounging, intimate talk, desultory reading. They conveyed "an effect of splendid naturalness."³ Whig aristocracy was "a unique product of English civilization."⁴ It was a class that governed because, at that time, big landowners held the

¹Ibid., p. 151.

²Ibid., p. 160.

³Cecil, op. cit., p. 2.

⁴Ibid.

economic reigns. Members of Whig Society lived on a grand scale in their London and country mansions. They traveled widely in their own carriages with their retinue of servants, secretaries, chaplains, companions, and librarians. They entertained lavishly, keeping open house for a constant stream of guests. They were never "provincial" or "uncouth" because their extensive travel gave them self-confidence in their knowledge of the world and in their polished manners learned on the continent.¹ Both men and women were politically minded, the women listening, sympathizing, advising. They were out of sympathy with the royal family; they "disbelieved in despotism and democracy."² They did not question the Whig beliefs in ordered liberty, low taxation, and the enclosure of land. Their spare time--and they had much spare time--was given to social life, including balls, clubs, card playing, private theatricals, and the cultivation of friendships and the art of love. Their ideal of man was the one who strove to enjoy life as a whole--"to make the most of every advantage, intellectual and sensual," offered by life.³

Good living and wealth that produces an easy life do not encourage the discipline needed for the hard work necessary to become expert in any one thing or for the self-control

¹Ibid., p. 15.

²Ibid., p. 8.

³Ibid.

to curb indulgence in reckless pleasure--drinking, gambling, free and easy sex life. The English nobility were too concerned with the practical to attain the fullest intellectuality: "they admired what was elegant, sumptuous and easy to understand,"¹ and they were too concerned with the present world to think of the next. Many were atheists.

Their literary taste showed an acute and a witty observation of human nature. They preferred Cicero, Horace, Burke; appreciated Jane Austen; condemned Crabbe as sordid and low; and neglected Blake. They were not spiritual.

Disregarding public opinion, they were brusquely frank and honest. Though not original, they were independent and marked by individuality. Instead of showing disapproval of saying what one thought and following his impulses, they were amused. Eccentrics they enjoyed. Their greatest virtues were their strong roots, their wide scope, their vitality. They directed the country's destiny with vigor, and their pleasures were not allowed to interfere with the more serious activities.²

Toward the latter part of the eighteenth century there was evidence of a new spirit. Reflection on nature and the inner man began to broaden sympathies and refine feelings. "The lucid outline of eighteenth century civilization was softened by the glow of the romantic dawn."³ Whig aristocracy

¹Ibid., p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 13.

³Liechtenstein, op. cit., II, 56-71.

was doomed when landlords began to lose their economic predominance after the Industrial Revolution.

In this social climate of the Whigs the literary salon flourished in London. It was the natural outgrowth of that easy informality, that display of social graces, that cultivation of friendships, that interest in literature and politics characteristic of eighteenth century society.

Holland House was only one of a number of salons in London. There was Carlton House, the home of the Prince Regent and his set. There was Number 6 New Burlington Place, presided over by Lady Cork, who, at the age of eighty-four, was still its hostess and who, a vital and lovable person with a loud, genial voice, was liked by all but also laughed at by all. And there was the great house of Cavendish Square of Lady Charleville, whose general popularity was due, possibly, to her policy of striving for reconciliation of any existing hostilities.

There was Devonshire House, hostessed by Lady Devonshire--formerly Lady Sarah Lennox and sweetheart of George III--¹ and characterized by femininity of the more "civilized" variety. "Here flowered the feminine aspect of Whiggism."² Here were highly cultivated the refined womanly graces: gentle voices and smiles, instead of loud talk and coarse, uproarious

¹Didier, loc. cit., pp. 388 and 389.

²Cecil, op. cit., p. 58.

laughter. The society was gay and dazzling with a continuous confusion of balls, card parties, talk, and reading. The habitués were impulsive and unrestrained, dancing till dawn, gambling wildly, and flinging themselves into love with "reckless abandon."¹ Instead of the intellectual discussions of the table-talk found at Holland House, the characteristic conversation at Devonshire House was gay and intimate--"tête-à-tête, in a secluded boudoir" or "in the corner of a sofa."² The guests read and wrote poems, listened to music, and analyzed emotion and character. Hating "cynicism, vulgarity, and harshness," they showed a warmth and delicacy of feeling. In politics they favored the ideal--honor, liberty, enlightenment.

There was Melbourne House, in which society found an attractive hostess. Elizabeth Viscountess Melbourne, a typical eighteenth century woman of the world, was ambitious, pleasure-loving, and lacking in moral strictness. She maintained a collected dignity, however, and did not neglect her duty to her family or "outrage social standards."³ Men were attracted by her feminine tact and other womanly charms, but they were held by her understanding. Never exacting, she did not expect men to be monogamous; hence they could be

¹Ibid., p. 60.

²Ibid., p. 59.

³Ibid., p. 26.

assured of her never being shocked and of their never being awkwardly questioned. Always in good spirits, she was amusing and both stimulating and soothing. She was respected for her even temper, masculine judgment, and shrewd, judicious opinions. Men felt easy in the company of a charming, sympathetic listener who understood them and who always let her judgment control her feelings.¹

And there was yet another at No. 11 St. James's Square launched as a new salon in August, 1818, by Marguerite Powers Farmer, a charming Irish beauty who had captivated Lord Blessington while she was living at the country house of an ordinary commoner to whom she was not married. As a young girl in Ireland she had been plunged by her dissolute and money-seeking father into the nightmare of an early marriage with an unfeeling, sadistic soldier named Farmer. To escape a continuance of his cruelty, she had been glad to leave the country with Captain Thomas Jenkins, who was attracted by her beauty. It was while she was with him that she devoted all her time to the reading and study which made her one of the best-informed women of London society. There Lord Blessington discovered her and bargained with Jenkins for her hand in marriage. Blessington, a recently bereaved widower, was eager to bestow title and wealth upon the lovely young Marguerite in exchange for the charm and graciousness of a hostess for his houses, first

¹Ibid., pp. 23-26.

St. James's Square and later Seamore Place, upon which he spared no expense in decorating lavishly. And Lady Blessington desired nothing more than to make her husband's London houses "unique and irresistible."¹ The rooms were magnificent in their splendid but informal appointments. Guests were assured of an elegant comfort, a congenial club atmosphere, and superb food and drink.

Ladies of birth, however, absented themselves from St. James's Square. Lady Blessington was not accepted by them, not wholly because of her past, but because of their jealousy, no doubt. She was more beautiful than other ladies of fashion, more intelligent, and pleasanter company. "Clever men seemed actually to prefer an evening in her house to one spent in an atmosphere more hallowed but more tedious."² So the ladies called her an Irish "nobody," accused her of "sexual irregularity," and resented her snatching "a titled and wealthy husband from under the very noses of matchmaking mammas" and presuming "to act the smart London Hostess."³ She, in turn, pretended indifference and strove to make it real.

The principal London hostesses at the time were Lady Cork, Lady Charleville, and Lady Holland, but of the three,

¹Ibid., p. 13.

²Michael Sadleir, The Strange Life of Lady Blessington (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1933), p. 25.

³Ibid.

the last was Lady Blessington's chief competitor. Lady Holland had the advantage of boasting an aristocratic background, of being already firmly established as a hostess, and of having a respected and influential husband. She "ruled her salon by a domineering rudeness, by her skill in keeping conversation general, and by her merited reputation for staunch friendship to those she liked,"¹ as well as by her loyalty to the Whig political tradition. Lady Blessington, on the other hand, owed the success of her salon to her distinguishing talent of putting people at ease, prompting them to talk, inviting their confidence. Number 11 St. James's Square was marked by its distinguished conversation which gained for the Blessington parties a special reputation. In encouraging guests to talk about themselves and their work, Lady Blessington never allowed them to become too boastful. She was quick to discourage any sign of egotism with a quiet smile, a gentle but disconcerting question, or a direct remonstrance. One evening, Landor, sometimes contentious, was depreciating extravagantly the beauty and significance of the Psalms and making uncomfortable a devout Catholic who was present. Intervening she smiled and begged, "'Do write something better, Mr. Landor!'"² The absence of other women made possible enlightened liberty of talk--no subject was taboo.

¹Ibid., p. 131.

²Ibid., p. 227.

Topics included politics, literature, and painting. In the broad scope and high quality of conversation, Lady Blessington could engage intelligently with charm and brilliance on any subjects her guests were interested in. She was more attracted by "intellectual eminence" than by aristocracy. The arrogance and rudeness of aristocrats and pseudo-aristocrats, like Lady Holland, offended her. We are told that Tom Moore, although one of the frequenters of Number 11 St. James's Square, was ill at ease there. As a "slightly servile" and a habitual visitor at Holland House, he was baffled and uncomfortable in being accepted, even welcomed and admired, for his worth, and not because of any humility on his part. Along with her praise, however, Lady Blessington did not hesitate to criticize or ridicule his carelessness. Being accustomed to the "formidable" Lady Holland, Moore took Lady Blessington "with an extreme and curious seriousness."¹ He considered her affected. In reality, however, she was sincere, casual, and pleasantly friendly. Not conscious of her own beauty, she seemed to have no "desire to court notice or to pose for admiration."² She possessed a "womanly responsiveness" and a "rare gift of understanding the complex characters of clever men."³ Her tact, sympathy, and warmth of heart proved a stimulus to men and made her a

¹Ibid., p. 30.

²Ibid., p. 29.

³Ibid., p. 69.

delightful companion to them. She possessed a serenity and vivacity unmatched; the greatest London houses lacked her gracious, gay, elegant entertaining.

Holland House, though classed as the preeminent literary salon of the day, was more like a political and literary club. Women were few. It was "a political council-chamber and meeting place . . . under exclusively aristocratic leadership" and presided over with charm and dignity by one who had the wit to be, but the good sense not to be, a blue-stocking."¹ From its earlier days with Addison it was known for its views of freedom. The Fox family were all noted for their liberal attitudes. They had displayed a "fiery ardor" and an "eager eloquence" to bring about a freer England. They had given an "impulse to English intellect" which still exists.²

Henry Fox, the first Lord Holland, had been Tory until about 1725, when, after his association with Lord Hervey, he became Whig. His entrance into politics had led to his becoming Secretary of War, and for an entire century the house of Fox attained the distinction of having a member of its family in some eminent position in England.³ Although he possessed a charming manner, he was not generally respected. Lord Chesterfield accused him of having no fixed principles

¹Chancellor, loc. cit., p. 424.

²Lawrence, loc. cit., p. 436.

³Macaulay, "The Late Lord Holland," p. 456.

either of religion or of morality, and of being imprudent enough to expose his lack.¹ Of Kingsgate in Kent where Fox retired, Gray wrote these lines after it was in ruins:

Old, and abandoned by each venal friend,
Here H_____d formed the pious resolution
To smuggle a few years, and strive to mend
A broken character and constitution.²

Nevertheless, his charities indicated that he possessed no small degree of human kindness.³

It was to the influence of Henry Fox's son, Charles James, however, that the zeal of Holland House for letters and erudition was principally due. That he was a spoiled child was a result, in part, of his father's over-indulgence. Once, when young Charles had been promised that he might witness the demolition of a condemned wall but was, by some accident, prevented from being present when the wall was leveled, his father had it rebuilt in order that it might be razed before his son's eyes. Another time when the boy expressed a desire to break a watch, his father consented. The child, who was never reprimanded, suffered from lack of discipline.⁴ As a young man he was quite a dandy, wearing an odd little French hat and red-heeled shoes.⁵ He led a

¹Liechtenstein, op. cit., I, 51.

²Thomson, loc. cit., p. 249.

³Ibid.

⁴"Holland House," Eclectic, XXXII, p. 232.

⁵Rogers, op. cit., p. 72.

riotous and a spendthrift life, but he read Homer every year, was a student of Shakespeare, and knew Virgil by heart.¹ Although he considered the Iliad finer than the Odyssey, he loved to read the latter because he considered it more pleasant. He had a high opinion of the Greek physician, Hippocrates, and, among the Greek poets, he preferred Euripides.² The story is told of his calmly reading Greek after losing \$55,000 in two hours at cards with an American gambler.³ He preferred the heroic couplet and the classics to the moderns and early writers to later ones; he was convinced of the superiority of Shakespeare. So fond of Dryden was he that he wrote painstakingly to imitate his style; in his opinion Dryden's imitations of Horace surpassed the original, but he thought that Dryden lacked the playfulness, levity, familiarity of manner, and easy grace of Chaucer.⁴ He liked Wordsworth as a man, but he did not admire his school of poetry.⁵ Milton he considered too restrained.⁶ He paid Coleridge the compliment of thinking Mackintosh wrote

¹Didier, loc. cit., pp. 388-and 389.

²Rogers, op. cit., p. 92.

³Didier, loc. cit., pp. 388 and 389.

⁴Sanders, op. cit., pp. 23 and 30.

⁵Rogers, op. cit., p. 88.

⁶Sanders, op. cit., pp. 23-30.

his articles in the Morning Post, 1802, urging a renewal of the war.¹ His fondness for painting led him to study it carefully. He preferred "lettered ease," and he loved his garden, books, and the country.² A fine debater in the House of Commons, he demanded reform and upheld the people. He was Byron's political hero because he plead for the relief of the Irish.³ "'I would rather,' said Fox, 'see Ireland totally separated from the crown of England than kept in obedience only by force.'"⁴ He became finally the teacher of the "widest liberalism."⁵ Most at heart he had the abolition of the slave trade and peace with France. England's enemies wept his death when he was Secretary of State under George III, who disliked him.⁶ He was buried in Westminster Abbey.⁷ Fox, in spite of, or because of, his father's early indulgence, had grown to possess a passion for justice and a horror of self-satisfaction which led him

¹Clarence Crane Brinton, Political Ideas of the English Romanticists (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 98.

²Sanders, op. cit., pp. 23 and 30.

³Raymond, op. cit., p. 57.

⁴Liechtenstein, op. cit., I, 98. Quoted from Cobbett's Parliamentary History, XXIII, 23.

⁵Lawrence, loc. cit., p. 437.

⁶Raymond, op. cit., p. 219.

⁷Ilchester, op. cit., p. 203.

to become a power in his country, courageous in scourging its vices.

The family tradition for interest in literature and politics was perpetuated by his nephew, the third Lord Holland, who made Holland House again shine out as "a centre of literature and liberalism," and reflect "the opinions and the tastes of both Addison and Charles James Fox."¹ Dinners were held to commemorate Fox's death and "to form an active organization suitable for the circulation of Whig propaganda, for promoting efficiency in times of elections, and for assisting in other ways the advancement of the Party's political views."²

For two centuries Holland House was the meeting-place for celebrities from all parts of the world. ". . . America sent her Washington Irving, France her Talleyrand, Italy her Canova, Germany her Pückler-Muskan, and Russia her Nesselrode to add to the incomparable delight of this most illustrious literary salon."³ A place for brilliant "assemblages, Holland House was to the Whigs what Carlton House was to the Tories."⁴ It possessed a courtly atmosphere, but it was lacking in the "moral obliquity and princely obesity" of the court.⁵ Princess

¹Lawrence, loc. cit., p. 438.

²Ilchester, op. cit., p. 286.

³Didier, loc. cit., p. 393.

⁴Raymond, op. cit., p. 10.

⁵Ibid.

Liechtenstein tells us that it boasted a cosmopolitan circle and that it was "among houses what England is among nations-- a common ground where all opinions could freely breathe."¹ Although a Whig center politically, it was hospitable to "all who talked or thought."² The "politicians, talkers, men of the world"--men of action--were most admired. Macaulay says that politicians, orators, artists, and writers mixed in the "loveliest and gayest society."³ It was a circle in which every "talent and accomplishment, every art and science" had its place.⁴ And Greville comments, "'It is the house of all Europe, without which there would be a vacuum in society that could be supplied by nothing else.'"⁵ The atmosphere at Holland House was skeptical and almost anti-religious. Lord Holland thought a little religion was good for any man, but too much was not.⁶ Theology was touched upon only rarely and incidentally.⁷ The home of a kind of republicanism,⁸

¹Op. cit., I, 142.

²Bradford, loc. cit., p. 594.

³Macaulay, "The Late Lord Holland," p. 459.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Bradford, loc. cit., pp. 594-595.

⁶Ilchester, op. cit., p. 314.

⁷Sanders, op. cit., p. 84.

⁸Lawrence, loc. cit., p. 436.

Holland House was, for forty years, the "resort of all who were famous on the liberal side, for literature or politics; and good nature and hospitality were its reigning attributes."¹ Its principles were "humanitarian" rather than "correct." It "aided the abolition of slavery, the progress of reform, the spread of knowledge, and the cultivation of letters."² However, Lawrence observes that its influence was superficial despite its throngs of noted visitors including princes, politicians, and literary men; despite its surroundings of art and culture; and despite all its gaiety. It failed to cultivate the "sterner virtue of a reformer" or to inculcate "lessons of patriotic honesty." Its "enervating" circle failed to nourish a Dante, a Milton, or a Shakespeare. It exerted "no happy influence upon the progress of English letters."³ But that it did exert an influence is undeniable. In Tom Moore's Diary we read Priestley's words: ". . . Holland House was the centre of an extremely brilliant society, a society that may have been slow to recognize great genius . . . but that was saturated with wit and learning and literature and made table-talk into an art."⁴ And Didier says: ". . . there never was another private residence in

¹Ibid., p. 438.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 440.

⁴Tom Moore's Diary, ed. by J. B. Priestley (Cambridge: University Press, 1925), Intro., p. xii.

England, or anywhere else, around which cluster so many interesting associations, literary, political, social, historical."¹

¹Loc. cit., p. 387.

CHAPTER IV
"QUEEN OF THE WHIGS"

A center of liberalism and literature, Holland House was ruled by Lady Holland, named by Sydney Smith the "Queen of the Whigs." Lady Granville called her "'the only really undisputed monarch in Europe.'"¹ And Macaulay tells us that "the centurion did not keep his soldiers in better order than she did her guests."² She was kind and generous, but she was bound to maintain power. Her "hard masculine intellect" made her domineering, and she was "intent on getting her own way."³ Proud of a hard-earned social position, she was haughty, imperious, tyrannical. She had become the fearless autocrat.⁴

It has been pointed out that Holland House owed its ascendancy to a combination of forces: a charming host, stimulating conversation, Whig tradition, and literary talent and criticism. But the power that successfully combined these forces was its clever hostess, who kept parties alive by virtue of her dominating vitality, and who ruled by "sheer personality."⁵

¹Perrott, loc. cit., p. 236.

²D. L. Hobman, "Macaulay and Lady Holland," Contemporary Review, CXXCIV (September, 1954), 171.

³Sanders, op. cit., p. 76.

⁴Ibid., pp. 62 and 76.

⁵Perrott, loc. cit., p. 29.

Large and bold-looking with the "air of Queen Elizabeth,"¹ she was fascinating. Her beauty, vivacity, and skill in managing conversation made her attractive to men who flocked to her house, eating and spending the night or several days at a time.² Gracious and courteous, she possessed the art of entertaining. So skilled was she in setting people "at their ease" that she could "make the shyest man forget his shyness."³

Lady Holland's intelligence was manifested by her sincere desire for learning. A lover of books, she was a wide reader. She also wrote fluently in letters and in her journal, and she "delighted in the company of men of letters."⁴ She loved men, women, talk, laughter, wit, repartee, and argument.⁵ The scintillating and learned conversation at Holland House caused Greville to despair over his own ignorance. It included "the wit of Sydney Smith, the sarcasm of Samuel Rogers, the anecdotes of Holland himself, the know-all-ness of Macaulay, the erudite knowledge of Dr. Allen, the brilliance of Sheridan."⁶ Besides politics and literature,

¹G. Otto Trevelyan, The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1877), I, 192.

²Ilchester, op. cit., p. 156.

³Perrott, loc. cit., p. 233.

⁴Hobman, loc. cit., pp. 306-309.

⁵Bradford, loc. cit., p. 604.

⁶Perrott, loc. cit., p. 233.

the conversation also included antiquities of the house and the purity of the English language. Once, upon learning that Lady Holland was not familiar with a certain parable in the New Testament, Macaulay was astounded that any one who was supposed to know the English language did not know the Bible. He said, however, that she possessed many talents and "great literary acquirements."¹

Lady Holland, because politics was one of her chief interests, took an active part in "petticoat politics." She wanted Creevey "to spare the Government with jokes, and to begin on 'those Grenvilles,'"² because the division of the Whigs was due to the unfortunate tactlessness of the leaders, Grey and Grenville. Aspiring to exert an influence on politics, she talked of bills, ministerial posts, and any "rumpus in the Cabinet."³ It was once said by a famous wit that Lady Holland was "'the only dissatisfied Minister out of office.'"⁴ Though she must remain out of sight, she liked to listen to Parliamentary Debates in the House of Lords. Ambitious of a high office for her husband, she once asked why Lord Holland should not be Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

¹Trevelyan, op. cit., I, 192.

²The Creevey Papers, a selection from the Correspondence and Diaries of the Late Thomas Creevey, M.P., ed. The Right Honourable Sir Herbert Maxwell (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1923), p. 157.

³Hobman, "Lady Holland," loc. cit., p. 30.

⁴Ibid.

To her inquiry Lord John Russell replied with solemnity, "Why, they say, ma'am, that you open all Lord Holland's letters, and the foreign ministers might not like that."¹ Lady Holland, a staunch Whig, advocated Catholic Emancipation, tolerance toward the Jews, and the Reform Bill of Lord Grey.² She helped to make Holland House the regular meeting place of the Whig party. It became headquarters of the opposition where its leaders held council every Sunday. But it was also a neutral ground for people of opposing views.³

Lady Holland would not permit intolerance, and there was never reason for anyone's being shocked or insulted at Holland House. Lady Holland never encouraged invectives against anyone, and she did not allow ribaldry in any form. She was a skeptic with indefinite views on religion and no deepseated principles of Christianity, but she discouraged irreverence and did not tolerate atheism. In her company a liberal atmosphere prevailed.⁴ Although her liberal religious views prevented any positive beliefs, she was superstitious. She would not start a journey on Friday and was afraid of thunder, a howling dog, and death. During a thunderstorm she

¹The Croker Papers, I, 369.

²Perrott, loc. cit., p. 235.

³Dictionary of National Biography, ed. Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press), VII, 556.

⁴Lady Holland, op. cit., Intro., p. xix.

would close the windows and light candles.¹ She worried for fear unpleasant dreams might come true, and her anxiety over her health reached the point, at times, of being morbid and **ludicrous**. But at the last she faced death calmly and philosophically with courage and lack of fear.²

A contributing factor to the success of Lady Holland's salon was the invariable excellence of the dinners,³ even though the guests were often uncomfortable. The table was set with what men liked to eat. Abraham Hayward, an infrequent diner there, said that much of the choice food was procured through Lady Holland's "habit of levying contributions on guests who inhabited districts famous for venison, poultry, game, or any other edible."⁴ She did not hesitate to commission those who dined at Holland House to procure these delicacies. She insisted upon the early, unfashionable dinner hour of five or six o'clock. Greville thought her concern over her health and her imagined illness made her think early dining necessary.⁵ Talleyrand, however, said she chose her dinner hour so that it would be annoying to everybody.⁶

¹The Creevey Papers, p. 379.

²Bradford, loc. cit., p. 603.

³Trevelyan, op. cit., I, 191.

⁴Fyvie, op. cit., p. 177.

⁵Ibid., p. 180.

⁶Liechtenstein, op. cit., I, 160.

No one dined there without a formal invitation, and Lady Holland did most of the inviting of all guests.¹ Occasionally Lord Holland ventured to ask someone, but only after previously consulting her. He often did not know who would be at his table. He was assured, nevertheless, of there being too many for comfort. Many times sixteen were placed in space for nine.² When too many arrived, Lady Holland would crowd them in, have them change seats, or send some away to make room for others.³ On one occasion when she told Lord Melbourne to change with someone, he walked out angrily saying, "'I'll be damned if I dine with you at all.'" ⁴ Another time she ordered Luttrell to make room; the wit muttered in reply, "'It certainly must be made, for it does not exist.'" ⁵ Greville tells of having been to "'a true Holland House dinner,'" ⁶ where Lady Holland "'had the pleasure of a couple of general squeezes, and of seeing her guests' arms prettily pinioned.'" ⁷ When Lord Holland offered to retire from the table to make room for a guest, Lady Holland would not allow it because "'it

¹Sanders, op. cit., p. 65.

²Repplier, loc. cit., p. 18.

³Fyvie, op. cit., p. 180.

⁴Sanders, op. cit., p. 66.

⁵Liechtenstein, op. cit., I, 158.

⁶Fyvie, op. cit., p. 180.

⁷Sanders, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

would have given'" everybody "'space and ease.'"¹ Moore and Rogers, however, agreed that this close packing resulted in more agreeable dinners because the informality produced a feeling of good fellowship.² Lady Holland's talk was animated, though her contradictions often aroused animosity.³ She was clever and well-informed, and could battle with words with talent and good humor. Being warm-natured, she froze her guests. Byron, in his Journal, wrote:

Why does Lady Holland always have that damned screen between the whole room and the fire? I, who bear cold no better than an antelope, was absolutely petrified, and could not even shiver. All the rest looked as if they were just unpacked, like salmon from an ice-basket . . . When she retired, I watched their looks as I dismissed the screen, and every cheek thawed, and every nose reddened with the anticipated glow.⁴

Without a doubt, Lady Holland's dinners were famous, including her efficient organization and her control of guests. She showed a master hand in skillfully commingling guests of varying interests.⁵

At times Lady Holland seemed inexcusably rude. When Moore took Irving to visit her, she said, "'What an uncouth hour to come at.'"⁶ Rogers told Dyce that when she wanted to

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Liechtenstein, op. cit., I, 156.

⁴Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 456.

⁵Lawrence, loc. cit., p. 439.

⁶Bradford, loc. cit., p. 595.

get rid of a fop she would beg his pardon and ask him to move a little farther off, saying that there was something on his handkerchief that she did not like.¹ To Rogers she commented, "'Your poetry is bad enough, so pray be sparing of your prose'";² and to Lord Porchester, "'I am sorry to hear you are going to publish a poem. Can't you suppress it?'"³ When "Monk" Lewis complained that in Rejected Addresses he was forced to write burlesque, which he did not think he could write, she replied that it was a pity he did not know his own talent.⁴ She pronounced Moore's verses on Hunt "vulgar," and said his Life of Sheridan showed lack of "taste and judgment." She objected to his Lalla Rookh because it was eastern and in quarto. "Poets," says Moore, "inclined to a plethora of vanity would find a dose of Lady Holland now and then very good for their complaint."⁵

Lady Holland developed an exaggerated personality and became increasingly tyrannical. "People laughed at her--after they obeyed her."⁶ She would order a stranger, much to his bewilderment, to entertain her by conversation in the sitting

¹Rogers, op. cit., p. 273.

²Bradford, loc. cit., p. 595.

³Liechtenstein, op. cit., I, 158.

⁴Dictionary of National Biography, VII, 555.

⁵Memoirs, Journal, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore, ed. The Right Honourable Lord John Russell, M.P. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1857), I, 273.

⁶Perrott, loc. cit., p. 233.

room while she had Edgar, her page, kneel before her, hands under her skirts, to rub her legs for pain from rheumatism.¹ When asked out she would change seating arrangements to suit herself, and if she did not like the bread, she would send out for a loaf.² Because of her dislike for tapestry "her hosts would frantically hide them from her baleful eye and withering tongue."³ Upon reading a letter from her in which she complained that the air was too "'keen for Henry'" where they were visiting, Sydney Smith said that he would not like to be near the Hollands' host "'at the first intimation that Lady Holland was displeased with his climate.'"⁴

Nevertheless, people continued inviting her and accepting her invitations. In spite of the fact that they found something to abuse and ridicule in the mistress of the house, they seemed to like it. In the Contemporary Review we read that Lady Holland's hospitality was accepted, "not for her own sake, but because " it was found "both useful and agreeable."⁵ It is told of Sydney Smith that upon thanking Erskine for a favor granted because of Lady Holland's intervention, Erskine replied, "'Don't thank me, Mr. Smith. I

¹Cecil, op. cit., p. 56.

²Mabel Countess of Airlie, Lady Palmerston and Her Times (New York: Hadder and Stoughton, 1922), I, 80.

³Perrott, loc. cit., p. 234.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Hobman, "Macaulay and Lady Holland," p. 174.

gave you the living because Lady Holland insisted on my doing so; and if she had desired me to give it to the devil, he must have had it.¹ She even ruled and bullied her husband, with whom she remained in love, but he adored her and seemed to thrive on her tyranny.²

She showed her boredom when one talked too long and would not allow one person to monopolize the conversation. One time when Macaulay was talking at great length on Sir Thomas Munro, she told him quite brusquely that she would have no more of the subject. He launched out again on something else, for Macaulay had a great store of knowledge and could talk endlessly on almost any topic. Thinking she would stop him, she abruptly asked him the origin of the doll-- when dolls were first mentioned in history. Immediately he began giving the history of dolls, beginning with Roman dolls, but again he was cut short.³ She often interrupted him and asked him to stop talking because she wanted to listen to someone else. However, Macaulay, only half her age, was one of her favorites. In fact, she was so fond of him that she was unduly upset upon learning that the Government was sending him to India and ordered him to refuse the appointment because

¹Fyvie, op. cit., p. 185.

²Perrott, op. cit., p. 236.

³The Dictionary of National Biography, VII, 556.

she would miss his talking to her evenings.¹

In the atmosphere of free thought and talk that prevailed at Holland House, Lady Holland good naturedly met her match in sarcasm and satire and wit among a number of her guests. Determined to put down what she termed the conceit of the French Count D'Orsay, she repeatedly dropped various articles on purpose while he was sitting next her at dinner. Fan followed napkin; then fork and spoon in succession, each of which was recovered courteously by the Count as he continued talking unperturbed. Finally, when she knocked her wineglass off the table, D'Orsay turned casually to the footman and said, "'Put my couver on the floor. I will finish my dinner there. It will be much more convenient to miladi.'"² She was angered but charmed by his impertinence. Often her comments invited severe retorts.³ In talking to the American Ticknor about New England, she said she understood that the colonies had originally been settled by convicts, to which he replied that he did not know, but that in the King's Chapel, Boston, there was a monument to one of the Vassalls, some of whom had been among the early settlers of Massachusetts.⁴ To Rogers, who was talking of beautiful hair, she told of having

¹Hobman, "Macaulay and Lady Holland," pp. 168-74.

²Sadlier, op. cit., p. 30.

³Lawrence, loc. cit., p. 439.

⁴Lady Holland, op. cit., Intro., p. ix.

had so much hair a few years back that she could hide herself in it, but that she had lost it all. Amidst a trickle of giggles he replied that it was a pity.¹ Macaulay tells of how all the guests at a dinner at Rogers's rallied against her bad humor shown in her rudeness to every guest:

Rogers sneered; Sydney made merciless sport of her; Tom Moore looked excessively impertinent; Bobus put her down with simple straightforward rudeness; and I treated her with what I meant to be the coldest civility.²

The discipline was good for her. She liked quick-witted people who did not fear to retort freely with spirit.

The friends of Lady Holland emphasized her good traits. Although men did not especially like her domineering attitude--the desire "to rule over everything and everybody"³--and although friends felt sometimes that she wanted them to regulate their lives for her own comfort and convenience, they were indulgent and, perhaps, amused, because they recognized and appreciated her many good qualities. There was real affection between her and Byron. Moore regarded her as "a warm and active friend."⁴ She was considered by others

¹Bradford, loc. cit., p. 596.

²Trevelyan, The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay, I, 303, 304.

³Bradford, loc. cit., p. 597.

⁴Moore, Diary, p. 40.

as lovable, sociable, and discreet.¹ To those who were in need, she was always ready to perform a kindness. Sir Henry Holland, the physician, said that he never knew her to desert an old friend.² She was generous and kind to servants, even though it was said that her consideration stemmed from selfishness in order to be better served; she was "neither petty nor vindictive"; she was "more ready to like than to dislike"; and she was "passionately loyal."³

Some people saw only her unpleasant traits. Cecil tells us that she was regarded by many as tiresome, capricious, domineering, and egotistic.⁴ Creevey nicknamed her "old Madagascar." He could not endure her presumption and her crowded table. He told of her disgusting her guests over demanding their submission to the vagaries of a huge cat which had injured Rogers and which Brougham kept away from him with snuff. Luttrell declined to make any further visits until the cat was dismissed.⁵ Joseph Jekyll said that the Hollands were like "different ends of a magnet, one attractive,

¹The Journal of Elizabeth Lady Holland, reviewed in The Nation, XXCVII (October 8, 1908), 654-655.

²Bradford, loc. cit., p. 605.

³Hobman, "Lady Holland," pp. 306-309.

⁴Cecil, op. cit., p. 55.

⁵The Creevey Papers, pp. 611, 400, and 653.

the other repulsive.'" And he reported that "'Lord Holland has the gout, and Miladi the blue devils.'"¹ The few women who went to Holland House had not much good to say of Lady Holland. Fanny Kemble complained that the impression Lady Holland made upon her was "so disagreeable that for a time it involved every member of that dinner-party in a halo of undistinguishable dislike" in her mind. She thought that Lady Holland behaved with an impropriety which might have been tolerated only "in a spoilt beauty of eighteen, but was hardly becoming in a woman of her age and personal appearance." Her sister Adelaide was also unfavorably impressed when Lady Holland deliberately dropped her handkerchief and waited for Adelaide to pick it up. At first she made no attempt to do so, but, because of Lady Holland's age and size, she reconsidered, picked it up, and handed it to her. Great was her fury when Lady Holland said triumphantly, "'Ah! I thought you'd do it.'"² "'There never was a woman so court'd, so flatter'd, so follow'd, so obey'd, and so dislik'd as Lady Holland,'" said Lady Bessborough.³

As Lady Holland became self-assured and was confident of her position, she was indifferent to what people said. In thirty years she rose from practically a social outcast to

¹Fyvie, op. cit., p. 185.

²Frances Ann Kemble, Records of Later Life (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1883), p. 59.

³Perrott, loc. cit., p. 229.

almost a Dictator in both London and Paris--a great hostess important to the Whigs and, with her husband, the center of an illustrious Whig circle. Never doing anything in the conventional way, she is a difficult person to describe, peculiar and contradictory. She announced the death of Charles James Fox to friends in a room near his by walking through the room with her apron thrown over her head.¹ She was eager to do some kindness or valuable service to those she had mischievously provoked, or even insulted. She formed strong, lasting friendships with persons whose characters she respected, and she was kind to her servants; but she showed little affection for her own children. In her will she left legacies to her friends but practically ignored her children and grandchildren.² Because she loved her friends and treasured their loyalty, she would not believe that they would speak ill of her.³ Fyvie describes her as "selfish, yet generous; irreligious, yet superstitious; whimsical, provoking, rude, yet obliging and considerate; an unnatural mother, yet a staunch friend; capricious and tyrannical, yet always fascinating."⁴ A contemporary observed that she "'left a more marked impression of her individuality

¹Rogers, op. cit., pp. 96-97.

²Kemble, op. cit., p. 441.

³Repplier, loc. cit., p. 27.

⁴Fyvie, op. cit., p. 199.

than any woman of her age.'"¹ A remarkable woman, she was for the greater part of the early nineteenth century the "most conspicuous female figure," with the exception of royalty, "in the splendid society of London."² An aim had made her life worth while.

¹Ibid., p. 173.

²Ibid.

CHAPTER V
INTIMATES OF HOLLAND HOUSE

Many visitors found their way to Holland House, to which brilliant men of note from all over the world--men of every "talent and accomplishment, every art and science"¹--were proud to come. But a focus of our attention upon a more limited Holland House Circle reveals a group of men drawn together by personal magnetism and similarity of views--literary, political, and humanitarian. Among these are Dr. John Allen, considered a member of the Holland family; the "inner triad," consisting of Sydney Smith, Samuel Rogers, and Henry Luttrell; Thomas Moore, a favorite; and Lord Byron, who, although his place is said to have been around the outer rim of the circle, became the most illustrious of the group.

Dr. John Allen, a learned Scotch physician, became a member of the Holland household in 1802, when he replaced Dr. Drew, whose health was failing. The Hollands were going abroad for the health of their eldest child, Charles, and Dr. Allen, upon the recommendation of Sydney Smith, accompanied them. A bachelor, he completely surrendered his life to Holland House from that time on. To all the guests he became a familiar figure, his stout body atop thick legs; his large

¹Macaulay, "The Late Lord Holland," p. 459.

head and broad face; his white hair; and his bright, near-sighted eyes aided by huge, silver-rimmed spectacles.¹ Unassuming and well-mannered, he became the companion of the Hollands on many trips, as well as at dinners with their friends. His learning was extensive; his general knowledge, broad. A great reader and a precise student, he was considered by Byron the best-informed and ablest of men--a "devourer . . . of books, and an observer of men."² He was, without doubt, highly capable of performing the many duties assigned to him. He served as librarian, steward, and "general factotum"; he prepared dinner lists and arranged rooms for guests.³ So much respect for his erudition had he gained that he did not hesitate to contradict Lady Holland. It was said, in fact, that she even feared him. But in some matters his attachment and loyalty to her were so great that he allowed her to order him around like a "domestic poodle."⁴ Despite his impracticable politics, he became political adviser to Lord Holland, and he trained many a politician in oratory.⁵ Decided in his opinions, he, like the Hollands, did not fail to express his liberal views. He was a believer in the French

¹Ilchester, op. cit., p. 179.

²Moore, Letters and Journals, I, p. 469.

³Quennell, op. cit., p. 114.

⁴Bradford, loc. cit., p. 597.

⁵Ibid.

Revolution, but, being a sensible man with kindness of spirit, he revolted at the horrors following the Revolution. A skeptic in religion, he argued skillfully and positively for atheism, but in all his arguments he remained good-natured. His interest in writing and in literature, which superseded even that in medicine, made him a most congenial member of the Holland household. But "with his time much occupied in looking after the concerns of others, he left nothing behind him worthy of his reputation."¹

Of the "inner triad," Sydney Smith was the favorite, perhaps because of his infectious good humor. Although a clergyman and an ardent reformer, he is remembered for his wit and for the uproarious laughter which invariably followed his own jokes and which affected even the servants.² Tom Moore, in his *Diary*, comments upon Smith's "natural and overflowing exuberance" and the fact that in him one remembers most how much he made people laugh.³ Upon being commanded by Lady Holland to ring the bell, it was recorded that he replied, "'Oh yes, and shall I sweep the room?'" In his last illness his nurse confessed she had given him a bottle of ink instead of his medicine. "'Then,'" he answered, "'bring me all the blotting paper there is in the house.'"⁴ He was offensive to

¹Sanders, op. cit., p. 86.

²Lawrence, loc. cit., pp. 438-439.

³Moore, Diary, p. 52.

⁴Lawrence, loc. cit., p. 439.

Byron, however, who said of him that he was "'the loudest wit'" with whom he had ever been "'deafened.'" Perhaps Byron was slightly condescending to "a poor parson."¹ Beneath the humor and wit of this corpulent, gay, easy-going person, however, lay good sense and sound judgment. He might have been addicted to making fun of everybody, but he was humane and genial. On one occasion a dinner guest at Holland House who had been loudly professing belief in nothing, asked for another serving of a particular dish. As an apology for his request, he complimented the dish enthusiastically. "'I am glad,'" remarked Smith, "'that Mr. _____ believes in the cook.'"² Sanders attributes his merit as a conversationalist to his "supreme common-sense under the guise of fun."³ A politician of "unblemished honesty," he fought for Catholic Emancipation and for Ireland, and he opposed the Slave Trade.

Samuel Rogers, a privileged guest at Holland House, could always find there a room reserved for him.⁴ Being a bachelor of means, he was free to go and come as he pleased, and with the Hollands he had much in common. He was the son of a rich banker, and he lived "a life of literary and intellectual ease."⁴ He entertained often in a beautiful house

¹Quennell, op. cit., p. 116.

²Didier, loc. cit., p. 388.

³Sanders, op. cit., p. 82.

⁴Ibid., p. 175.

overlooking the Green Park and furnished handsomely with cold and classical pieces. Many beautiful paintings had their places on the walls, and alabaster vases adorned the tables. Rogers boasted a fine library. Everything showed a fastidious elegance.¹ His eminence in the literary world was due to the perfection of his table as well as to the rarity of his poems. He presided at delicate, exquisite dinners which were perfect in cooking, choice of guests--everything.² The conversation was on subjects of taste, always high-minded with never a trace of gossip.³

He showed tastes similar to those of the Hollands. He had a genuine feeling for Italian art, and he preferred Dryden and Pope. Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, and Coleridge received "vulgar treatment" from members of a conversation club, some of whom were Rogers and Lord Holland. Literature of his youthful admiration, such as works of Addison, remained his favorite. He was terrified by the newness and virility of Childe Harold, which, however, he praised. In fact, he was a Tory by nature, if it meant preference for the old, the reputable, and the dignified in life, although he was descended from a line of "sturdy Whigs." His interest in politics, which developed in 1780 when the Whigs were ousted,

¹Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 445.

²Andre Maurois, Byron (London: Jonathan Cope, 1930), p. 138.

³Sanders, op. cit., p. 178.

was in reality personal and hereditary rather than the result of deep conviction.

He was admired as a poet and as a critic. Byron considered him one of the immortal poets.¹ In the dedication in Don Juan, appear these lines:

Inquire amongst your fellow-lodgers,
They'll tell you Phoebus gave his crown,
Some years before your birth, to Rogers.

All the reviewers who disliked the new poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge praised Rogers as a poet.

Although spiteful in appearance and known for his malicious witticisms, he was at heart a kind person. Quennell describes him as having a "large, bald, dome-shaped ivory-white forehead," cold and small blue eyes, and "bushy grey eyebrows."² There were many jokes about his cadaverous appearance--"thin as a skeleton and white as a corpse."³ With all the levity about his appearance, his friends knew him as a person quick to render assistance in time of need, not only to well-known individuals, but also to many who were totally unknown.⁴ He was most generous and highly esteemed for his kindness.

¹Moore, Letters and Journals, II, 101.

²Quennell, op. cit., p. 45.

³Maurois, op. cit., p. 138.

⁴Rogers, op. cit., Preface p.vii.

Henry Luttrell, like the other two members of the "inner triad," was a Whig and was valued and cherished for his conversation. Byron considered him a "'most epigrammatic conversationalist,'" and Moore said he was remembered for the good things he said.¹ Good-natured and agreeable, he was admired for wit that was never objectionable. Of the three, he was the gayest, boldest, and most gluttonous.²

In addition to Dr. John Allen and the "inner triad," Thomas Moore and Lord Byron were included in the more intimate Holland House Circle. Moore, the precocious and versatile son of a Dublin grocer, had written verses before he was fifteen. The houses of Whig aristocracy welcomed him when he dedicated to the Prince of Wales his Odes, translated from Anacreon. Doors everywhere were opened to him; he became a favorite in society because of his talents as a singer, as an actor, as a talker, and, later, as a satirist. Frivolous, light-hearted, and moody, he was also so extravagant that, rather than accept financial aid from his friends, he made his home in Paris for a time to escape a debtor's prison.³ But he was amiable and enchanting and had friends everywhere, including a watchmaker in Niagara, a sea-captain, and people who even offered him checking accounts. At a theater in London he

¹Moore, Diary, p. 52.

²Replier, loc. cit., p. 23.

³Moore, Diary, Intro., p.x.

received a public ovation when the entire pit rose at his entrance and the band played Irish airs. His was one of the most scintillating personalities of the time.

Moore admitted his lack of education, but he confessed "strong political feelings" when he was yet a boy.¹ He grew up showing a deep and enthusiastic interest in politics. Therefore he became a friend of most of the outstanding Whig politicians of his time. A frequenter of Holland House, he discussed with Lord Holland not only politics but also poetry and the classics. He and Lord Holland even polished each other's translations.² He was called a "troubadour to the Whig society of the Regency," and it was thought that "he might have been a greater figure in literature . . . if he had thought less about Holland House and more about Parnassus, if his way of life had not driven him to think only of immediate triumphs, if he had not written with one eye fixed up on Lady Holland, . . . and the rest."³ Nevertheless, he was an endeared and honored figure in literature. Lord Holland considered him the only literary person with whom he was intimate that he met on an equal basis.⁴

Moore's acquaintance with Byron began with correspondence about Byron's reference in "English Bards and Scotch

¹Ibid.

²Sanders, op. cit., p. 207.

³Moore, Diary, Intro., p.ix.

⁴Ibid., p. 129.

Reviewers" to an incident involving Moore and Jeffrey, who was editor of the Edinburgh Review. Jeffrey, to many, was the first of all English critics, but he was also the most dreaded critic because of the negative character of his criticisms. His unfavorable remarks in the Review about Moore's poems, which were written under the pen name of Thomas Little, roused Moore to challenge him. When Moore and Jeffrey met on the field of action, each took a liking to the other, although they tried to conceal the fact, and while they were waiting for the seconds to load the pistols, Moore could not refrain from telling an amusing story. Just as they were handed the loaded pistols, the police intervened. The seconds vowed that both pistols had been loaded, but the story was circulated that Jeffrey's pistol had no bullet in it. Moore, after forming a close friendship with Jeffrey, denied, in a public statement, that anything unfair had been intended.¹ Then appeared Byron's lines in which he jestingly but erroneously ascribed the "leadless pistol" to Moore.

Health to great Jeffrey! Heaven preserve his life
 To flourish on the fertile shores of Fife,
 And guard it sacred in its future wars,
 Since authors sometimes seek the field of Mars!
 Can none remember that eventful day,
 That ever glorious, almost fatal fray,
 When Little's leadless pistol met his eye,
 And Bow-Street myrmidons stood laughing by?²

¹Marchand, op. cit., I, 299, note 7.

²George Gordon Noel Byron, 6th Baron, "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," The Complete Poetical Works of Byron (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, Cambridge Edition, 1933), p. 248.

Because Moore had already publicly denied the story and had thought he had lived it down, and because he thought Byron's lines made him appear ridiculous, his Irish temper flared and he challenged Byron to a duel in a letter which Byron did not receive until he returned to England from his trip abroad. After Moore wrote a second letter, Byron replied, upon his return to London, and explained that he had interpreted the incident as he had heard it with no intention of being untruthful. He offered to do anything Moore suggested and expressed a desire that they might become acquainted. In reply to Moore's second letter, Byron wrote on October 27, 1811: "Your friend, Mr. Rogers, or any other gentleman delegated by you, will find me most ready to adopt any conciliatory proposition which shall not compromise my own honour, -- or, failing in that, to make the atonement you deem it necessary to require."¹ Three days later, after hearing from Moore, who had satisfied his honor but who was relieved to have an end to the affair, Byron answered, "You have now declared yourself satisfied, and on that point we are no longer at issue. If, therefore, you still retain any wish to do me the honour you hinted at, I shall be most happy to meet you, when, where, and how you please."² Upon receiving this letter from Byron, Moore informed Rogers, who

¹Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 309.

²Ibid.

was visiting at Holland House, and a meeting for dinner was arranged.¹

That dinner meeting at Rogers's was Byron's first step into the "best," or Holland House, society. Rogers, a banker-poet, and Moore, well established in Whig aristocracy, were both favorites at Holland House. Formerly Byron had known no other society except that of his "hard-drinking Cambridge friends" or the "dim provincial . . . gaities" of Southwell unsuited to his birth and education.² Byron was elated over the invitation from Rogers. On November, 1811, he wrote:

. . . I will then have the honour of accepting his [Rogers's] invitation. Of the profession of esteem with which Mr. Rogers has honoured me, I cannot but feel proud, though undeserving. I should be wanting to myself, if insensible to the praise of such a man; and, should my approaching interview with him and his friend lend to any degree of intimacy with both or either, I shall regard our past correspondence as one of the happiest events of my life.³

He was friendly when he arrived, but his natural shyness and his lack of confidence made him reserved and distant, even apparently haughty. If he wanted to make an impression, he succeeded. Would he have soup? No. Fish? No. Mutton? No. Wine? No, nothing but hard biscuits and soda-water and potatoes "bruised down on his plate and drenched with

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 313.

³Quennell, op. cit., pp. 45 and 46.

vinegar."¹ Hobhouse said that diet would last only as long as it was noticed. And it was told that Byron afterward went to a club where he ate a hearty supper of meat. Rogers considered him "talented, maybe, but absurd and affected."² Moore was impressed by "the nobleness of his air, his beauty, the gentleness of his voice and manners, and . . . his marked kindness."³ He commented on Byron's reddish-brown, "glossy, curling, and picturesque hair" and the "pure, spiritual paleness of his features."⁴ Was this favorable impression due to the fact that "Tommy dearly loved a Lord," as Byron later commented? For Moore was accused of possessing a "touch of snobbery" and of being a social climber.

But whether or not Byron's noble birth influenced Moore's admiration at the beginning, a "close and affectionate" friendship ensued.⁵ Moore said, "From the time of our first meeting, there seldom elapsed a day that Lord Byron and I did not see each other; and our acquaintance ripened into intimacy and friendship with a rapidity of which I have seldom known an example."⁶ Moore, Lord Clare, and Hobhouse were the only

¹Rogers, op. cit., p. 228.

²Quennell, op. cit., p. 45.

³Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 314.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Lord Byron in His Letters, ed. V. H. Collins (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 67.

⁶Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 248.

persons whose friendship Byron never disclaimed.¹ Moore admired Byron as a poet and admitted his superiority, even though the age considered him no more than Moore's equal. On the other hand, Byron was quite fond of Moore. Hunt attributed the fondness to the facts that Moore admired genius and title and that he was a charming companion, independent and liberal in his views.² But Byron thought he was the best-hearted being that he had ever known and the "epitome" of all that was "exquisite in poetical or personal accomplishments."³ The two continued the best of friends and regular correspondents.⁴ To Harness, Byron spoke of Moore as a "delightful companion, gay without being boisterous, witty without effort, comic without coarseness, and sentimental without being lachrymose."⁵ "My tête-à-tête suppers with Moore," said Byron, "are among the most agreeable impressions I retain of the hours passed in London."⁶ Moore and Byron had much in common. They had the same friends and went to the

¹Marguerite (Power) Farmer Gardiner, Countess of Blessington, Conversations of Lord Byron with the Countess of Blessington (Philadelphia: E. L. Carey and A. Hart, 1836), p. 174.

²J. H. Leigh Hunt, Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries (London: H. Colburn, 1828), I, 59-60.

³Byron, Letters, ed. Collins, p. 63.

⁴Thomas Medwin, Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron (London: Henry Colburn, 1824), p. 219.

⁵Blessington, op. cit., p. 143.

⁶Ibid.

same places. Along with one other, they were the only literary men admitted to Watier's, an exclusive club for the aristocracy.¹ Byron found unfailing comfort in Moore's gay chatter and gossip.² Besides, Byron considered him a talented writer. "'Anything that he writes must succeed,'" he said.³ He thought that Moore was one of the few writers who would survive the age "'in which he so deservedly'" flourished,⁴ and that he possessed a "peculiarity of talent . . . all his own" which had never been possessed by another and never would be.⁵ He admired his early works, and he compared his later poetry to a valley of diamonds where everything was "'brilliant and attractive'" but where a choice was hard to make because of the dazzling effect.⁶ The opinion of both Moore and Rogers he valued highly. Regarding a manuscript for criticism, he wrote to Hodgson in 1811: "If my worthy publisher wanted a sound opinion, I would send the MS to Rogers and Moore, as men most alive to true taste."⁷ At times when Moore became discouraged,

¹The Works of Lord Byron, Letters and Journals, Vols. I-VI, ed. Rowland E. Prothero (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1922), II, p. 128, Note.

²Quennell, op. cit., p. 117.

³Medwin, op. cit., p. 219.

⁴Ibid., p. 373.

⁵Byron, Works, ed. Prothero, II, p. 333.

⁶Blessington, op. cit., p. 157.

⁷Byron, Works, ed. Prothero, II, p. 89.

and threatened to leave off writing if he could find "some other more gentlemanly trade," Byron assured him of his interest in and his admiration for his poetry, as well as of his loyalty and sincerity as a friend. Both Moore and Byron received adulation, and neither was jealous of the other.

CHAPTER VI

LORD BYRON AND HOLLAND HOUSE

The main facts of Byron's life are well known. Both his mother's and his father's families boasted a proud genealogy; in ancient times both were distinguished in the field and at court. His father's side was traced to Ralph de Burun, whose name ranks high in the Domesday Book among tenants of land in Nottinghamshire; his mother's, to Sir William Gordon, third son of the Earl of Huntley, by the daughter of James I.¹ From his mother's side, he derived strong liberal views, for Catherine Gordon, "imbued with the traditional Whig politics" of her grandmother, was outspoken and courageous in voicing her professed political opinions.² Refusing to be called a Whig or a Liberal because they were "milk-and-watery" terms, she proclaimed herself a Democrat, which, in her day, was synonymous with anarchist. Unquestionably a sympathizer with the French people, she was not in favor of restoring the King; she ardently hoped for the overthrow of all kings and tyrants. She was responsible for the beginning of Byron's admiration for the French Revolution and for his adoration of Napoleon as a liberator of the people, an adoration which continued to grow

¹Quennell, op. cit., p. 23.

²Maurois, op. cit., p. 27.

throughout his lifetime. Her political teachings, no doubt, left on him a deep and lasting impression.¹

Politics played a major role in Byron's life, a role which was an outgrowth of the influence of his mother's opinions, of the fashionable political interest among men of his time, of his rebellion against all control and subordination, and of his proud love of freedom. From Harrow days, when Dr. Drury had praised his orations, he had dreamed of becoming outstanding as a statesman and as a political orator. In May, 1805, instead of returning to Harrow for summer school on the eighth, he wrote his sister that he intended to remain in London until the tenth in order that he might listen to debates in both Houses of Parliament on the Catholic Question because he expected to hear "many nonsensical, and some Clever things said on the occasion."² His interest in hearing the speeches was serious. Realizing that he would soon be taking his seat in the House of Lords, he wanted to observe the oratory of others and to improve his own.³ Byron still held his political ambitions when he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, later in 1805. Because of his admiration for Charles James Fox, he became indignant when the Tories attacked that recently deceased Whig leader in lines appearing in the Morning Post in 1806. Quick to defend his hero, he wrote in

¹Leslie A. Marchand, Byron (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), I, 34.

²Byron, Works, ed. Prothero, I, 64-65.

³Marchand, op. cit., I, 95.

October "On the Death of Mr. Fox," which was published in the Morning Chronicle:

Oh factious viper! whose envenom'd tooth
 Would mangle still the dead, perverting truth;
 What though our 'nation's foes' lament the fate,
 With generous feeling, of the good and great,
 Shall dastard tongues essay to blast the name
 Of him whose meed exists in endless fame?
 When Pitt expired in plenitude of power,
 Though ill success obscured his dying hour,
 Pity her dewy wings before him spread,
 For noble spirits 'war not with the dead':
 His friends, in tears a last sad requiem gave,
 As all his errors slumber'd in the grave.
 He sunk, and Atlas bending 'neath the weight
 Of cares o'erwhelming our conflicting state;
 When, lo! a Hercules in Fox appear'd,
 Who for a time the ruin'd fabric rear'd.
 He, too, is fall'n, who Briatin's loss supplied,
 With him our fast-reviving hopes have died;
 Not one great people only raise his urn,
 All Europe's far-extended regions mourn.
 'These feelings wide, let sense and truth unclue,
 To give the palm where Justice points its due':
 Yet let not canker'd Calumny assail,
 Or round our statesman wind her gloomy veil.
 Fox! o'er whose corse a mourning world must weep,
 Whose dear remains in honour'd marble sleep;
 For whom, at last, e'en hostile nations groan,
 While friends and foes alike his talents own;
 Fox shall in Britain's future annals shine,
 Nor e'en to Pitt the patriot's palm resign;
 Which Envy, wearing Candour's sacred mask,
 For Pitt, and Pitt alone, has dared to ask.¹

This evidence of youthful loyalty was no doubt "discussed at some of the exclusive Whig parties."² In 1807 his liberal views led him to become a member of the newly established Cambridge Whig Club. He still had a political career in view

¹The Complete Poetical Works of Byron, p. 114.

²Raymond, op. cit., p. 18.

when he planned his first trip abroad to be taken sometime in 1809 and during the two years he was away. In May, 1810, he wrote Hodgson that he meant "to betake" himself to politics.¹ To him the firsthand knowledge gained through travel was a necessary preparation for that career. After he took his degree from Cambridge, July 4, 1808, he continued preparing himself for public life by reading much history and biography, orations of Cicero and Demosthenes, and parliamentary debates of his own country.² Letters to both Harness and his mother in 1809 indicated his political ambitions. On March 6 and 8 he wrote that he would be tempted to say something soon in the House.³

Early in 1809 Byron went to London, intent upon entering Parliament as soon as he should come of age on January 22. He straightway wrote a letter to the Earl of Carlisle, his guardian and the only person of importance on whom he had a claim. By being introduced in the House by a relative, Byron would be spared the trouble of presenting credentials. Anticipating a favorable reply from his guardian, he had written in English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, not yet published, these complimentary lines while he was waiting:

On one alone Apollo deigns to smile,
And crown a new Roscommon in Carlisle.⁴

¹Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 225.

²Raymond, op. cit., p. 9.

³Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 163 and 166.

⁴Marchand, op. cit., I, 168.

But Byron was sorely disappointed when Carlisle did not offer to introduce him and failed to help him establish proof of his grandfather's marriage and of his father's legitimacy. Mortified by being forced to prove his own legitimacy, a procedure rare indeed for a young lord, Byron became bitter and changed his tone in added lines on Carlisle:

Lord, rhymester, petit-maitre, pamphleteer!
So dull in youth, so drivelling in his age,
His scenes alone had damned our sinking stage.¹

On March 13, after an embarrassing delay of almost two months, Byron, accompanied by Robert C. Dallas,² took his seat in the House of Lords.³ Upon his arrival at the House, he was pale, erect, haughty. He treated Lord Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, who held out his hand to welcome him, with disdain and indifference, merely giving him the tips of his fingers. Later, on being rebuked for his coldness to the Chancellor, he said, "If I had shaken hands, he would have set me down for one of his party. I will have nothing to do with any of them on either side."⁴ Despite this early statement of not wanting

¹"English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," Complete Works, p. 251. Later, when he was abroad, he added, in the second edition, the couplet which was still more bitter and personal:

No Muse will cheer with renovating smile
The paralytic puling of CARLISLE. (Marchand, op. cit., I, 168, Footnote 2.)

²His sister married George Anson Byron, uncle of the poet.

³Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 164.

⁴Robert Charles Dallas, Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron (London: C. Knight, 1824), pp. 53-54.

to give the impression of being a member of either political party and a later profession of simplifying his politics "into an utter detestation of all existing governments,"¹ Byron remained a loyal Whig. He adhered to his party, "because it would not be honourable to act otherwise."² Politics, he said, was a feeling, and he could not "torify" his nature.³

Byron's interest in politics was equalled, if not surpassed, by his desire to write. Poetry occupied much of his attention throughout the time that he was planning a political career. Intended only for private circulation, two volumes of his verse had been printed in 1806 and 1807. They were Fugitive Pieces, containing thirty-eight poems, some of which Byron had written as early as 1803,⁴ and Poems on Various Occasions, a revised edition of the first volume. Byron's first volume of verse for the public was Hours of Idleness, which also appeared in 1807.⁵ He had at first been gratified upon hearing that it had been read and complimented at Holland House, for to be praised at Holland House was a coveted honor. In recounting the incident, Byron said,

¹Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 521.

²Ibid., p. 475.

³Ibid., p. 521.

⁴Marchand, op. cit., I, 117.

⁵Ibid., p. 123.

"'Judge of my fever! Was it not a pleasant situation for a young author?'"¹ But a sarcastic critic attacking him as a "conceited young lord"² and ridiculing him unfeelingly in the Edinburgh Review made him furious. Hobhouse, a close friend, said that Byron "'was very near destroying himself.'"³ In a letter to Hobhouse Byron wrote, "As an author, I am cut to atoms by the [Edinburgh] Review; it is just out and has completely demolished my little fabric of fame."⁴ He was angry, depressed, and discouraged, but he soon overcame his discouragement when he found an outlet in rhyme,⁵ his scathing satire "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," published anonymously in March, 1809, a few days after he had entered Parliament. In it was his first reference to the Hollands.

For some unknown reason, Byron attributed the censure of Hours of Idleness to Lord Holland, who, he thought, had caused George Lamb to write it;⁶ and in his unhappy and disappointed state of mind, he ridiculed both Lord and Lady Holland, as well as friends of Holland House:

¹Raymond, op. cit., p. 10.

²Marchand, op. cit., p. 148 and note.

³Ibid., written in Hobhouse's copy of Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 145.

⁴Byron, Works, ed. Prothero, I, 183, note.

⁵Marchand, op. cit., I, 149.

⁶Vassall, op. cit., p. 389.

Illustrious Holland! hard would be his lot,
 His hirelings mention'd, and himself forgot!
 Holland, with Henry Petty at his back,
 The whipper-in and huntsman of the pack.
 Blest be the banquets spread at Holland House,
 Where Scotchmen feed, and critics may carouse!
 Long, long beneath that hospitable roof
 Shall Grub-street dine, while duns are kept aloof.
 See honest Hallam lay aside his fork,
 Resume his pen, review his Lordship's work,
 And, grateful for the dainties on his plate,
 Declare his landlord can at least translate!
 Dunedin! view thy children with delight,
 They write for food--and feed because they write.
 And lest, when heated with the unusual grape,
 Some glowing thoughts should to the press escape,
 And tinge with red the female reader's cheek,
 My lady skims the cream of each critique;
 Breathes o'er the page her purity of soul
 Reforms each error, and refines the whole.¹

Concerning Byron's accusation, however, Lord Holland said he had not even known Byron existed, having thought the title extinct, until he read the review, which was actually written by Lord Brougham. At the time of its publication, Holland expressed "surprise and regret at the unmerited and bitter severity of the article."²

Later when Byron learned that he was wrong and when he became a friend of the Hollands, he withdrew the satire from publication and afterward expressed regret over having written it. In 1813 he wrote in his journal, "'I wish I had not been in such a hurry with that confounded satire, of which I would suppress even the memory . . . I gave up its publica-

¹Byron, "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," The Complete Poetical Works, p. 249.

²Vassall, op. cit., p. 389.

tion on account of the Hollands."¹ A number of references to "English Bards" indicate his sincere regret over its publication. Even after he left England, he wrote in his journal in Diodati, Italy, July 14, 1816, these words: "The greater part of this Satire I most sincerely wish had never been written; not only on account of the injustice of much of the critical and some of the personal part of it, but the tone and temper are such as I cannot approve."²

Byron, practically unknown in literary and political groups before his trip abroad, returned on July 14, 1811, to a curious London--curious about an adventurous youth and his travels in the East, a distant and a dangerous land not visited by the average traveler from England. He was discussed by Lord Holland and others and was referred to as "that extraordinary young man."³ Although his enthusiasm for a parliamentary career had waned by that time, and his dream of making a name for himself as an orator and a statesman had diminished, he planned to take his seat in Parliament again in October, 1811.⁴ And in November he wrote impatiently to Hodgson when Parliament had not yet convened, "I wish parliament were assembled, that I may hear, and perhaps

¹Replier, loc. cit., p. 20.

²Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 171.

³Vassall, op. cit., p. 123.

⁴Marchand, op. cit., I, 289.

someday be heard; . . . I have many plans."¹

Byron eagerly anticipated meeting Moore and Rogers on November 4, 1811. His acquaintance with them and their friends put him in a higher literary society than any in which he had previously moved. He took pride in being able to associate, for the first time, with those literary men whom he considered the first of the land, and he wanted his friends to know that he had become one of the literary circles.²

Peace between Byron and Lord Holland had been worked out by November, 1811. Rogers, who knew Lord Holland was innocent of any responsibility for the harsh review of Byron and his Hours of Idleness, asked to be allowed to tell Byron the truth. Afterward Rogers told Lord Holland of Byron's desire to consult someone about speaking in Parliament against the Frame-Breaking Bill and asked if he might introduce Holland to Byron.³ Holland complied, and on February 12, 1812, a meeting was brought about by Rogers in Byron's rooms in St. James's Street. Friendship between the two grew from their mutual opposition to the passage of the Frame-breaker's Bill.⁴

When Byron had first taken his seat in the House of Lords in 1809, it had been to observe but to say nothing,

¹Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 319.

²Marchand, op. cit., pp. 302-308.

³Vassall, op. cit., p. 123.

⁴Raymond, op. cit., p. 36.

because he realized his lack of experience. On January 15, 1812, however, he returned to Parliament feeling that his first-hand study of comparative government while he was abroad and his experience with men and policy were sufficient to enable him to speak with greater confidence.¹ He was also confident of his possession of certain basic Whig policies and of his ideas on the fundamental rights of peoples. Nevertheless, he was still cognizant of a lack of both experience and a knowledge of points in dispute.²

His interest in the Frame-Breaking Bill caused within him a conflict. Being an aristocrat, he felt an antipathy toward the workers, but being a liberal, he was angered by injustice and the thought of the government's desire to suppress misery instead of attempting to remove the cause.³ He was concerned with the good of the people.⁴ He sympathized with the oppressed; he was "the friend of the poor and the downtrodden."⁵ When he finally decided on the Frame-Breakers' Bill for the subject of his maiden speech, he began preparation with enthusiasm and care.⁶ He was encouraged in this

¹Marchand, op. cit., I, 313.

²Ibid., p. 314.

³Quennell, op. cit., p. 51.

⁴Raymond, op. cit., p. 38.

⁵Brinton, op. cit., p. 152.

⁶Marchand, op. cit., I, 315.

preparation by his conclusion that nothing could be inferior to some of the speeches he had heard at the opening sessions of Parliament.¹ He also had the support of Lord Holland, whose advice he had sought. Experienced and fair-minded, Lord Holland, Recorder of Nottingham where the stocking weavers had rioted, was interested in that area and might well have been expected to possess special knowledge of the situation.² Consequently, because Byron respected Lord Holland's opinion, his superior judgment, and his experience, he sought the elder statesman's approval. To Rogers on February 4, 1812, he wrote his "best acknowledgments to Lord Holland" and referred to acting "with his lordship's approbation." Continuing, he added, "I would also avail myself of his [Lord Holland's] most able advice, and any information or documents with which he might be pleased to intrust me" ³ As reason for opposing the bill, Byron wrote to Lord Holland on February 25, 1812, "My own motive for opposing the bill is founded on its palpable injustice, and its certain inefficacy. I have seen the state of these miserable men, and excesses may be condemned, but cannot be subject of wonder. The effect of the present bill would be to drive them into actual rebellion."⁴ Holland, working for recruits for the Whig Party and

¹Raymond, op. cit., p. 37.

²Marchand, op. cit., I, 315.

³Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 335.

⁴Byron, Letters, ed. Collins, p. 96.

welcoming an occasion he could use for attacking the Tories then in power,¹ was quite willing to encourage the young lord, a potential Opposition member, by giving him his wholehearted support and supplying him with hints for his first speech, which proved to be his most successful.² Several times during the writing of his speech Byron consulted Lord Holland. In a letter to him, he wrote ". . . most cheerfully and sincerely shall I submit to your superior judgment and experience and take some other line of argument against the bill, or be silent altogether, should you deem it more advisable."³

The date chosen to speak was February 27, 1812, on the second reading of the bill, and Byron wrote out the speech and memorized it because he feared he might lose control of his feelings if he spoke extemporaneously. When the day arrived, his excitement was great; he wanted his maiden speech to be sensational. The speech was well prepared and appealed to the feelings of the audience.⁴ It pointed out the wretchedness found in Christian England--worse than that found in infidel Turkey and a disgrace to a civilized country--and it succeeded in directing attention to home conditions. Realization

¹Raymond, op. cit., pp. 37-48.

²Sanders, op. cit., p. 212.

³Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 337.

⁴Marchand, op. cit., I, 320.

that he had shocked many in the House was an exhilarating experience to Byron.¹ Both parties praised the speech, and Byron was gratified over congratulations from both Lords Grenville and Holland.² On March 5 he wrote, "Lord Holland tells me I shall beat them all if I persevere."³ But Byron's delivery was considered theatrical, and in Further Memoirs of the Whig Party, Lord Holland said the speech was "full of fancy, wit, and invective, but not exempt from affectation."⁴ As in 1809, when he began his parliamentary career, the only personal friend present was Dallas, who hastened to congratulate him.⁵ This first speech in the House of Lords attracted the attention of Whig circles and opened to him the doors of Holland House, "one of the social and intellectual strongholds of London,"⁶ made so by its hostess, Lady Holland.

At the beginning of his Parliamentary career, Byron was faced with the necessity of making a decision. His natural sympathies were with the Radicals, but he was desirous of the society of the Moderate Whigs and the Holland House circle. He wanted recognition and acceptance "as a social

¹Ibid., p. 321.

²Raymond, op. cit., p. 48.

³Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 341.

⁴Vassall, op. cit., p. 123.

⁵Marchand, op. cit., I, 322.

⁶Maurois, op. cit., p. 142.

equal in the aristocratic world."¹ He was flattered by attention from Lord Holland, and he showed deference to him from the time they first met.² An ensuing friendship between the two continued throughout Byron's stay in England and even after his establishment of a residence in Italy. Holland commended his courtesy and gratitude and said that he showed "sensibility and kindness for imaginary favors."³ He did not, however, feel that Byron could look forward to a successful Parliamentary career. "His fastidious and artificial taste and his over-irritable temper would, I think, have prevented him from ever excelling in Parliament."⁴ Byron, he said, "was perhaps the shortest, but surely not the least, miracle of our age."⁵

Byron, too, seemed to sense his failure in a political career. He not only distrusted himself but felt the inevitability of the degradation of political life. He was convinced of the hopeless conditions in England and of "the futility of his own efforts to right the wrongs by political action,"⁶ and he wrote to Hodgson that he intended to leave England in

¹Marchand, op. cit., I, 324.

²Ibid.

³Vassall, op. cit., p. 123.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., Footnote.

⁶Marchand, op. cit., I, 318.

1813.¹ Perhaps this anticipation of failure led to his feverish plans for publishing the first two cantos of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.

At about this time the Prince Regent had taken a stand which was disappointing for the Whigs. They had hoped that, upon his accession to power, he would form a new government and thereby oust the Tories. He was indebted to the Whigs for support, but fearing his revenues would be cut by a reforming Whig government, he tried to appear to invite them to form a new government, knowing all the while that they would refuse a coalition with the hated Tory members. At a banquet at Carlton House, February 22, 1812, the Prince quarreled with his Whig friends by abusing them in such violent language that the little Princess Charlotte burst into tears.² The incident was immortalized in the poem "A Sympathetic Address to a Young Lady, or Lines to a Lady Weeping," which, two years later, was acknowledged by Lord Byron:³

Weep, daughter of a royal line,
 A Sire's disgrace, a realm's decay;
 Ah! happy if each tear of thine
 Could wash a father's guilt away!⁴

¹Ibid., p. 318.

²Raymond, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

³Marchand, op. cit., I, 318.

⁴The Complete Poetical Works, p. 168.

These verses on Princess Charlotte's tears "fixed his [Byron's] politics" as those of the Whig Party.¹ When the authorship was revealed there was a loud outcry from the Tories.² Needless to say, Byron lost the Prince's favor and the prestige of the royal patronage. The lines increased bitterness of party faction and led to jealousy and resentment against Byron that steadily grew.

Against their ruler and his mistress, whom they blamed largely for their disfavor, the Whigs encouraged all kinds of satire.³ And in the role of satirist, Byron was supreme. He satirized the "Blues," Southey, politics, hypocrisy, social conventionality, intolerance, cant, sham, and Regency England.⁴ In 1811 he wrote to Harness about Parliament and the mad king, George III: "The present ministers are to continue, and his Majesty does continue in the same state; so there's folly and madness for you both in a breath."⁵ Showing further disrespect for King George, he wrote in 1814 these lines in the poem entitled "On a Royal Visit to the Vaults":

¹Vassall, op. cit., p. 123.

²S. C. Chew, Byron in England (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. 15.

³Vassall, op. cit., p. 123.

⁴E. D. Mackerness, "Byron, the Satirist," Contemporary, CLXXII (August, 1947), 112-118.

⁵Byron, Letters, ed. Collins, p. 63.

Famed for their civil and domestic quarrels,
 See heartless Henry lies by headless Charles;
 Between them stands another sceptred thing,
 It lives, it reigns -- 'aye, every inch a king.'
 Charles to his people, Henry to his wife,
 In him the double tyrant starts to life:
 Justice and Death have mix'd their dust in vain,
 The royal Vampires join and rise again.
 What now can tombs avail, since these disgorge
 The blood and dirt of both to mould a George!¹
 (1814)

And of the Prince Regent he wrote

The papers have told you, no doubt, of the fusses,
 The fetes and the gapings to get at these Russes,--
 Of his Majesty's suite, up from coachman to Hetman,--
 And what dignity decks the flat face of the great man.
 I saw him, last week, at two balls and a party,
 For a prince, his demeanor was rather too hearty.²

While in Greece that same year he had written "The Curse of Minerva," in which he compared Lord Elgin to Alaric for despoiling Greece by sending shipments of her fine marbles to England.³ In addition, he condemned England for treachery to Denmark in the battle of Copenhagen, for her enslavement of India, for distress at home--hidden suffering in cities, inflation, loaded wharves, rusting looms demolished by starving workmen--an idle Senate, and unrest and injustice in Ireland.⁴

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Cantos I and II, went on public sale March 10, 1812, but Byron, eager to make amends for the uncomplimentary lines on the Hollands in "English

¹The Complete Poetical Works, p. 228.

²"Fragment of an Epistle to Thomas Moore," The Complete Poetical Works, p. 227.

³Marchand, op. cit., I, 257.

⁴Raymond, op. cit., p. 56.

Bards," had already presented a copy to Lord Holland on March 5 with an accompanying note: "May I request your lordship to accept a copy of the thing which accompanies this note? You have already so fully proved the truth of the first line of Pope's couplet, 'Forgiveness to the injured doth belong,' that I long for an opportunity to give the lie to the verse that follows. If I were not perfectly convinced that any thing I may have formerly uttered in the boyish rashness of my misplaced resentment had made as little impression as it deserved to make, I should hardly have the confidence . . . to send you a quarto of the same scribbler."¹ And he continued, ". . . your Lordship, I am sorry to observe to-day, is troubled with the gout; if my book can produce a laugh against itself or the author, it will be of some service. If it can set you to sleep, the benefit will be yet greater. . . ."²

Marchand indicates that Byron was reluctant to publish Childe Harold because of his fear "of what the critics might say about the self-revealing egoism of some of the stanzas."³ Samuel Rogers thought the poem beautiful but said that it would not "please the public."⁴ It contained free thinking passages and attacks upon the Tory government's foreign policy,

¹Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 342.

²Works, ed. Prothero, II, 107.

³Op. cit., I, 281.

⁴Rogers, op. cit., p. 229.

the way it conducted the Peninsular war, the generals who had signed the Convention of Cintra, the court of inquiry who had approved the Convention, and Lord Elgin.¹ Passages that reflected on Lord Holland and Sir Arthur Wellesley Byron eliminated,² but he refused to alter the lines expressing skepticism in religion and politics that Dallas thought should be deleted or toned down.³

The appearance of Childe Harold marked Byron's sudden rise to fame. Overnight Byron became the main topic of conversation--the idol of society.⁴ He woke up the next morning to find himself famous.⁵ Admittedly autobiographical, the poem made everyone curious to discover the identity of Harold by meeting and knowing Byron.⁶ He became the center of attraction and the subject of excited talk; he was thronged by women struggling for a glimpse of him.⁷ The genius which the poem exhibited, the youth and rank of the author, and his romantic wanderings in Greece--all contributed to the fascination felt by his readers.⁸ People enjoyed the journey and the bold

¹Marchand, op. cit., I, 280-281 (Note); 293.

²Raymond, op. cit., p. 52.

³Marchand, op. cit., I, pp. 280 and 293.

⁴Raymond, op. cit., p. 58.

⁵Quennell, op. cit., p. 56.

⁶Medwin, op. cit., p. 323.

⁷Quennell, op. cit., p. 56.

⁸Chew, op. cit., pp. 6-8.

political notes.¹ The first edition was exhausted in three days.²

The doors of every Whig mansion in London were opened to Byron. He moved from one great house to another with ease,³ but he preferred Holland House. He regarded both Lord and Lady Holland highly and strove to keep in the good graces of Lady Holland especially. He sent her presentation copies of his works, as well as miniatures on subjects from his poems.⁴ Of the various social sets, he considered Holland's to be the first. "Holland's society is very good," he wrote in 1813; "you always see some one or other in it worth knowing."⁵ At another time he commented in his journal, "All the world are to be at the Staël's tonight . . . did not go to the Staël's, but to the Holland's."⁶

This preference for Holland House society can be attributed to a number of factors. Other houses offered association with leading figures of the day, but at Holland House Byron was assured of always finding not only the most aristocratic society but also the cream of talent. Perhaps

¹Maurois, op. cit., p. 143.

²Quennell, op. cit., p. 56.

³Medwin, op. cit., p. 322.

⁴Sanders, op. cit., p. 213.

⁵Works, ed. Prothero, II, 353.

⁶Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 467.

he preferred the predominantly masculine company characteristic of Holland House. Certainly he was attracted to the place where his own attitudes were reflected and supported. There he found the same humanitarian concern for the oppressed that was so much a part of him. Just as Lord Holland was desirous of alleviating the suffering of his fellowman,¹ Byron hated giving pain if it could be avoided.² Lord Holland supported every effort to "relieve the oppressed and assist the persecuted."³ Both Holland and Byron denounced imprisonment for debt and opposed capital punishment for theft. Lord Holland fought for the abolition of the Slave Trade, even though it meant a loss of fortune for him, for he believed, along with Byron, in the liberty of man and his right to think for himself. Both men believed in and worked for Catholic Emancipation. The influence of Holland and Holland House scourging the vices of England was to be seen later in Byron's greatest satire, Don Juan.

Byron's liberal political views received approval and encouragement at Holland House because Holland was "the champion of every liberal measure" and always offered unconstitutional measures.⁴ The aim of Lord Holland's "political career was

¹Vassall, op. cit., Intro., p. ix.

²Repplier, loc. cit., p. 22.

³Vassall, op. cit., Intro., p. ix.

⁴Autobiography of Leigh Hunt (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1903), I, 249-254.

universal tolerance, combined with a recognition of the legitimate rights of mankind."¹ At Holland House Byron found support in his belief in democratic principles and his dislike of monarchy. The general Whig sympathy with Princess Charlotte increased the opposition to the Prince Regent, who had already found disfavor because of his desertion of the Whigs, but this mutual feeling of scorn of and distrust in royalty did not prevent Byron from eagerly seizing the opportunity of meeting the Prince when, at a party, the Prince expressed a desire to see the author of Childe Harold. Byron was presented to him, and the Prince complimented him on his poem as well as on his general knowledge. Needless to say, Byron was extremely flattered, even though he pretended to make light of the interview in writing to Lord Holland about it. He certainly did not want his Whig friends to think that he had "capitulated to the enemy."²

At Holland House Byron's skepticism, as well as his liberal attitudes, in religion found a congenial climate. There his admiration of and sympathy for Napoleon gained emphasis. There Byron found the preference for the classical poems--Pope, Dryden, Gray--and the veneration for Homer that coincided with his own. His same enthusiasm for Crabbe and his same coldness toward the Lake school of poetry were found

¹Vassall, op. cit., Intro., p. x.

²Marchand, op. cit., I, 353-354.

at Holland House, but over all, was found a passionate love of literature, stronger even than the interest in politics.

Byron's close association with the Hollands continued throughout the years 1812, 1813, and 1814. His second Parliamentary speech in April, 1812, reflected Lord Holland's sympathies in supporting claims of the Catholics. But because of Byron's waning enthusiasm for a political career, the speech failed to make the favorable impression that his first had made.¹ In his letters and in his journal Byron made frequent references to the Hollands. He inquired about Lord Holland's health and sent best regards to Lady Holland. In a letter of June 25, 1812, he apologized for apparent ingratitude and negligence: ". . . but until last night I was not apprized of Lady Holland's restoration, and I shall call tomorrow to have the satisfaction, I trust, of hearing that she is well."²

From August through October, 1812, there were numerous letters from Byron to Lord Holland. Drury Lane Theatre, which had burned in 1809, was being rebuilt. Competition for the opening address was advertized, and the sum of one hundred pounds was offered to the winner.³ When all the entries proved inferior, Lord Holland, who was a member of the committee

¹Quennell, op. cit., p. 149.

²Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 358 and 359.

³Vassall, op. cit., p. 162.

for the rebuilding, invited Byron, on behalf of the Drury Lane Committee, to write the address.¹ He felt that a prologue such as Byron alone could write, as well as Byron's fame, made him the most desirable choice.² In August Byron wrote, "To-day I have had a letter from Lord Holland, wishing me to write for the opening theatre, but as all Grub Street seems engaged in the contest, I have no ambition to enter the lists, and have thrown my few ideas into the fire."³ He felt that he could not write "made-to-order" poetry well, but, for friendship's sake, he gave his consent.⁴ He was most amiable and took suggestions for amendments in good temper.⁵ On September 22, he wrote Lord Holland his intention of sending him something which he could "still have the liberty of rejecting" if he disliked it.⁶ Holland complimented him on his good humor and his willingness to be guided by suggestions in correcting, shortening, and adding passages.⁷ On September 23 Byron wrote to Lord Holland, "I have marked

¹Sanders, op. cit., p. 212.

²Vassall, op. cit., pp. 162-163.

³Lord Byron in His Letters, ed. Collins, p. 80.

⁴Marchand, op. cit., I, 363.

⁵Sanders, op. cit., p. 212.

⁶Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 363.

⁷Vassall, op. cit., p. 163.

some passages with double reading--choose between them--cut--add--reject--or destroy--do with them as you will--I leave it to you and the committee."¹ Almost every day until the opening of the theatre, Byron wrote Lord Holland about the address and sent remembrances to Lady Holland. On October 14 in a letter expressing a wish to know how the speech went off at the second reading, he included a postscript: "My best respects to Lady Holland, whose smiles will be very consolatory, even at this distance."²

When Lord Holland offered Byron a concealed place to hear his lines delivered on the opening night, Byron exclaimed with vehemence, "'I would not be within fifty miles of the place on that night for the universe.'"³ It was just as well that he was not present, Lord Holland thought, for Mr. Elliston recited the lines so badly that Byron would have been driven mad.⁴

Earlier, when there was a doubt as to whether Byron would write the lines, Whitbread composed an address of more than fifty lines in which he compared, in minute detail, the burning and the rebuilding of the theatre to the death and revival of the Phoenix. Lord Holland thought it sounded like

¹Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 364.

²Ibid., p. 380.

³Vassall, op. cit., p. 163.

⁴Ibid.

the verse of a schoolboy; Sheridan said it sounded to him more like that of a poulterer. Then when Byron consented to write the lines, he said, "'I will try, but how shall I avoid that d---d Phoenix? We must not for the world have a feather of that rare bird, which is become as commonplace as a turtle-dove.'"¹ Holland and the committee were not disappointed in their choice of Byron to write the address.²

The year 1813 found Byron continuing to enjoy the company of the Hollands at dinner and at the theatre. "Dined on Wednesday at Lord Holland's" ³ "Went to Lady Holland's--party numerous--milady in perfect good humour and consequently perfect. No one more agreeable, or perhaps so much so, when she will."⁴ At Holland House he met Southey and Curran and many others.⁵ Although he had taken a box for the season at Covent Garden, he joined the Hollands at the theatre and shared their box at Drury Lane. "I must go and prepare to join Lady Holland and party" in her box.⁶ Their mutual love of the theatre was another point of contact between Byron and the Hollands.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 162.

³Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 464.

⁴Ibid., p. 462.

⁵Ibid., pp. 428 and 430.

⁶Ibid., p. 446.

Byron consulted Lord Holland about the proofs of the Giaour and the Bride of Abydos, which is dedicated to him.¹

"I sent Lord Holland the proofs of the last Giaour, and the Bride of Abydos. He won't like the latter, and I don't think that I shall long."² But to his satisfaction both Lord and Lady Holland did like the Bride. He considered their approval kind and good-natured, for he felt that he deserved no consideration from them. "Yet I did think, at the time, that my cause of enmity proceeded from Holland-house, and am glad I was wrong."³

Although Byron was still a literary idol in London, his personal affairs, including his debts and his amours, were making him restless. His distaste for society was increasing, and his life was becoming marked by indecision, loss of purpose, and ennui. His feeling that escape from England was his greatest desire grew. In March he wrote Lord Holland, "'I will not leave this country without taking you by the hand and thanking you for many kindnesses. The fact is I can do no good anywhere, and am too patriotic not to prefer doing ill in any country rather than my own.'" He said that he did not have the "'verve . . . to rival Ld Ellenborough in Molochlike declamation in the House; and without occupation

¹Ibid.

²Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 438.

³Ibid., p. 439.

of some kind'" he could not exist. Travel, it seemed, was the only pursuit left him.¹ He did not, however, leave England until 1816. When he could not force himself to present in the House of Lords the petition of a debtor in prison whose letters described the inhuman treatment of prisoners and asked for prison reform, he interested others in the petition which was finally presented by Lord Holland.²

Byron's satire against the Prince Regent and the government continued. In July, 1813, Byron wrote, "There is to be . . . on Tuesday . . . a national fête. The Regent and _____ are to be there . . . there are six tickets issued for the modest women, and it is supposed there will be three to spare. The passports for the lax are beyond my arithmetic."³ Even though Byron's day was a "time of great satirical activity" when writing was used in an attempt to turn Englishmen against social and political tyranny,⁴ his persistent satire and condemnation of England's policies and his open praise of Napoleon increased the bitterness of party faction and the jealousy and hate felt toward him. His humorous but biting argument on the unpopular side of the Catholic question had

¹Ilchester, op. cit., p. 273, from letters printed for the first time by permission of the Legal Personal Representative of the sixth Lord Byron.

²Marchand, op. cit., I, 425.

³Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 411.

⁴Edmund Charles Blunden, Leigh Hunt and His Circle (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930), p. 64.

irritated the Opposition because it was just.¹ England's policy-shaping Tories were uneasy. Byron, the upstart young Whig who had genius and honesty and who was becoming obnoxious, was increasingly feared. A dangerous opponent in politics was unwanted.² England wanted flattery and feared change which would come with the correction of abuses. She preferred being blind and lethargic to being alert and adventuresome.³ As a critic of England's political follies, Byron was too keen.⁴ He was considered "a rebel against England and her customs."⁵

Early in 1814 Byron sent the manuscript of the Corsair to Lord Holland, "whose good sense and judgment he had come more and more to respect."⁶ Byron had refused to omit from the Corsair the "Lines to a Lady Weeping," the appearance of which would admit his authorship; and when the first edition appeared on February 1, there was a furor among the Tories, many of whom already wished to ruin him because of their "fear, jealousy, and hatred"⁷ growing from his bold criticism of England's policies and his professed sympathy with Napoleon.

¹Raymond, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

²Ibid., pp. 75-80.

³Ibid., p. 56.

⁴Ibid., p. 323, notes from Taine, "Byron," History of English Literature, IV, 8.

⁵Sadleir, op. cit., p. 61.

⁶Marchand, op. cit., I, 430.

⁷Knight, op. cit., p. 264.

During 1814, and even earlier in 1813, Byron's journal reveals his intense feeling about Napoleon, as do the bitter passages in "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte."¹ He admired Napoleon not as a despot but as a liberator.² Napoleon had crushed the mighty.³ Byron's own desire to manifest greatness had been evident for years. ". . . To be the first man--not the Dictator--not the Sylla, but the Washington . . . -- the leader in talent and truth--is next to Divinity!"⁴ He must be "'either Caesar or nothing.'"⁵ His epitaph was to be "'He might, perhaps, if he would.'"⁶ He wanted to show the world that he was fit for great things. He both admired and was jealous of Napoleon.⁷ When he took the name of "Noel" in 1821 and signed his name "Noel Byron," he took "childish pride" in having the same initials as those of Napoleon Bonaparte--NB.⁸ He and Holland House had been delighted to hear of their hero's success in driving the enemy further

¹Ibid., p. 263.

²Ibid., pp. 263-264.

³"Byron and Politics," Southern Review, V, 500.

⁴Lord Byron in His Letters, ed. Collins, p. 89.

⁵Knight, op. cit., p. 264.

⁶Ibid., p. 64.

⁷Ibid., p. 270.

⁸Marchand, op. cit., III, 971.

from Paris.¹ But when Napoleon abdicated in 1814, Byron was disillusioned.² No doubt he pictured himself as a potential leader.³ He had written of hearing a Shakespearean voice that murmured, "Brutus, thou sleep'st."⁴ His similarity to Napoleon in general magnetism and political vision had been noted by others.⁵ His political, inter-national principles expressed in poems about the French like "Ode from the French" and "On the Star of the Legion of Honour" made him unpopular and feared lest he be meditating action of some kind, perhaps threatening to put himself up as a saving power.⁶ After Napoleon's defeat, Byron contemplated a trip to France. Because of his sympathy with Napoleon, however, and his strong personality and his power, it is thought he might not have been allowed in France.⁷ Dr. Lushington, in 1816, reported Lady Holland as saying that Byron would have been received with open arms by the ladies of Paris "had he been allowed to go there."⁸ After Waterloo in June, 1815, he continued to

¹Lord Broughton (John Cam Hobhouse), Recollections of a Long Life, edited by his daughter, Lady Dorchester (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W., 1909), I, 87.

²Knight, op. cit., p. 263.

³Ibid., p. 53.

⁴Moore, Letters and Journals, II, 339.

⁵Knight, op. cit., p. 264.

⁶Ibid., pp. 265 and 271.

⁷Ibid., p. 265.

⁸Ibid., p. 267.

support the revolutionary elements in France. In his "Ode from the French" he said freedom's safety did not rest on the success of a Napoleon.¹ Although he had said that he was but an "insect" in comparison to Napoleon,² an interesting incident occurring in 1816 and recorded by Marchand does not bear out such modesty. One night before dinner Byron said he considered himself "'the greatest man existing.'" When someone suggested "with the exception of Napoleon Bonaparte," he answered, "'God, I don't know that I do except even him.'"³

Despite the increasing attacks upon Byron, a unique occurrence took place in November, 1814, when he went to the Senate House to vote. As he ascended to give his vote and when he retired from the table, he was embarrassed by applause from Cambridge students in the gallery. It was a distinction that had never before been paid a literary man, "except in the instance of Archdeacon Paley."⁴

Throughout 1814, receiving and accepting numerous invitations to dine, Byron was a regular visitor at Holland House. In writing to Rogers June 27, he said, "I dined with Holland-house yesterday . . . my lady very gracious . . . I

¹Ibid., p. 264.

²Moore, Letters and Journals, II, 409.

³Marchand, op. cit., II, 569.

⁴Broughton, op. cit., II, 194.

was not sorry to see them again, for I can't forget that they have been very kind to me."¹ After his marriage in 1815, he and his wife both were guests at Holland House. The Hollands remained interested and loyal friends at the time of Byron's domestic troubles and separation from his wife in 1816. Byron included Lord Holland in many of his confidences,² and when Lady Byron refused to see her husband, Holland, a friend of Dr. Lushington to whom Lady Byron confided, acted as mediator.³ Holland also advised Hobhouse against making a public reply to an article defending Lady Byron.⁴ He wrote to testify that he had never heard Byron say anything but good about Lady Byron.⁵ He wrote Lady Byron offering assistance.⁶ He was asked to use his influence with Byron in helping to bring about his agreement to the separation,⁷ and his intercession resulted in Byron's receiving half of Lady Noel's estate upon her death.⁸ Lord Holland, Byron said, was very kind to him

¹Moore, Letters and Journals, I, 565.

²Knight, op. cit., p. 13.

³Ibid., p. 75.

⁴Ibid., p. 229.

⁵Marchand, op. cit., II, 595.

⁶Broughton, op. cit., II, 285-286.

⁷Ilchester, op. cit., p. 275.

⁸Sanders, op. cit., p. 215.

when Lady Byron left him disgraced.¹ Moore and Rogers, both Holland-House friends, were also kind and loyal to him.

No doubt, party enemies of Byron who might have feared him conspired against his domestic peace by using his separation from his wife as "a very convenient implement";² "the public outcry against him was conducted mainly on party lines."³ His morals were aligned with his politics. It has been suggested that Mrs. Clermont, a domestic servant, might have been a kind of spy seeking scandal in the Byron household for political reasons.⁴ Countess Guiccioli tells of an unnamed person calling on Byron to say that the scandal against him would be silenced if he would change political parties.⁵ He was considered a political and perhaps a religious threat.⁶

After Byron left England late in April, 1816, direct correspondence with the Hollands ceased, but there are references to his sending word to them at intervals, to continued contact in some form, and to their interest in him, even after his death in April, 1824. In a letter to Rogers in July, 1816, he sent remembrances particularly to Lord and Lady Holland.⁷

¹Leigh Hunt, Lord Byron (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), I, 7.

²Knight, op. cit., p. 267.

³Ibid., p. 80.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 267.

⁶Ibid., p. 14.

⁷Moore, Letters and Journals, II, 10.

Hunt indicated that Lord Byron dropped communication with Lord Holland after leaving England. "He had become not very fond of his reforming acquaintances," said Hunt.¹ But in April, 1817, Byron again asked Rogers to remember him to Lord and Lady Holland and spoke of owing thanks to Lord Holland for a book.² When Byron was in Venice, Dr. Francesco Aglietti, a famous physician, editor of a medical journal, and counselor of the state of Venice, was given an introduction to "the first poet of England," by Lady Holland.³ Writing to Rogers in 1818, he sent "'love to the Hollands.'"⁴ In 1821 he requested Murray to ask Lord Holland to use his influence in preventing the staging of Mario Faliero in London.⁵ On March 31, 1823, Henry Fox, Lord Holland's son, visited Byron in Italy. The many happy hours he had spent at Holland House were recalled, and Byron was delighted.⁶ Hobhouse records that he suspected that the Hollands disapproved the destruction of Byron's memoirs in 1824.⁷ On the advice of Lord Holland, Hobhouse withheld from publication until 1870 his Contemporary Account of the Separation of Lord and Lady Byron written in 1830.⁸

¹Hunt, Lord Byron, p. 13.

²Moore, Letters and Journals, II, 97.

³Marchand, op. cit., II, 671.

⁴Moore, Letters and Journals, II, 168.

⁵Ibid., p. 441.

⁶Marchand, op. cit., III, 1056.

⁷Broughton, op. cit., II, 285.

⁸Chew, op. cit., p. 282, Note 1.

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