

UNUSUAL VICTORIANS: THE PERSONAL
AND POLITICAL UNORTHODOXY OF LORD
AND LADY AMBERLEY

by

Valerie Yates

Graduate Program in History
McGill University, Montreal

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ABSTRACT

Lord and Lady Amberley, historically eclipsed by their philosopher son, Bertrand Russell, and relegated to obscurity today, were valid social figures in their own right. They were active in mid-Victorian England in a variety of key social issues, and most particularly in the areas of women's emancipation and Neo-Malthusian birth control. The Amberleys became victims of their own outspoken activity, to the extent that Lord Amberley's political career was ruined by the press. They were branded in their own time as radical, unorthodox, and irreligious. They were first maligned, and since consigned to oblivion as misguided utopians.

A study of relatively unexplored personal documents reveals that they were indeed unconventional. This thesis maintains that they were ahead of their time and that they played a significant supporting role in the articulation of women's emancipation and birth control, issues central to the redirection of Victorian society.

RESUME

Lord et Lady Amberley, bien qu'éclipsés historiquement par leur fils, le philosophe Bertrand Russell, et aujourd'hui encore méconnus, furent en leur temps des figures sociales d'importance notable.

Ils s'impliquèrent activement dans plusieurs débats sociaux de l'époque victorienne anglaise, et plus particulièrement en ce qui concerne le sujet de l'émancipation des femmes, et du contrôle des naissances.

Les Amberleys devinrent victimes de leurs propres croyances. La carrière de Lord Amberley fut ruinée par la presse. Ils furent marqués comme radicaux, non-conformistes, et irréligieux.

Ils furent dénigrés, calomniés, reniés, en tant qu'utopiens, et oubliés.

Cette étude de documents personnels peu connus révèle qu'ils étaient réellement non-conformistes. Cette thèse veut démontrer qu'ils étaient en avant de leur temps, qu'ils eurent un rôle important dans les premières démarches de l'émancipation des femmes et du contrôle des naissances, questions majeures dans l'évolution de la société victorienne.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the endnotes:

AC The Amberley Collection, from the Bertrand Russell
Archives, McMaster University.

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Unusual Victorians: the Personal and Political Unorthodoxy
of Lord and Lady Amberley.

INTRODUCTION

John and Kate Amberley, born in 1842, are likely to be viewed by history as the parents of philosopher Bertrand Russell, or even as the children of Lord and Lady John Russell and Lord and Lady Stanley of Alderley. Yet, they were in their own right, intellectual rebels determined to express their difference with the world.

Lord Amberley in particular was eclipsed on both sides; on the one hand, by the acclaim and publicity accorded both by his time and by history to the philosopher son, and on the other, to the prime ministerial father.

Overlooked by historians, they were nevertheless prominent figures in Mid-Victorian England, due largely to their radical views and the equally radical company they kept. Notoriety, rather than fame, was their lot in their day. This they attracted, at times unwittingly, through their shocking views and public discourse on topics which were ahead of their time. These topics, still sensitive by today's standards, included

birth control in the guise of Malthusianism and the emancipation of women. While Lady Amberley made it her life mission to publicly raise such issues, her husband, antithetically, reaped scandal rather than courted it. It would prove his undoing in the political arena.

The Amberleys were considered veritable firebrands by their society. Their son Bertrand wrote that even semi-radical friends urged prudence, but in vain. He concluded: "The cumulative effect of free thought, feminism, and the suspicion of 'Malthusianism' was to shock society".¹ Lord Amberley's views, once ventilated to the press, were to cost him a seat in South Devon during the general election of 1868. The scandal surrounding his advocacy of family limitation irreparably damaged his name. Lady Amberley's radicalism also caused her considerable embarrassment, as the public press greatly scorned her feminist views and activities.

Lord Amberley's career was brief and both their lives equally as short; their lives, however, were remarkable for their poignancy. They left a veritable wealth of correspondence with family and friends, as well as detailed diaries that recount their personal, political, and intellectual lives, not to mention newspaper clippings attesting to their meteoric notoriety. This thesis will focus on these unpublished documents, housed in the Bertrand Russell archives. Located

at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, this collection, known as the Amberley Papers, contains documents related to the Amberleys during the period from 1854 to 1876, when they died in their early thirties.

The relationships they enjoyed and the correspondence they shared brought them in contact with some of the most significant thinkers and writers of the period. These include people such as Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, his stepdaughter Helen Taylor, T.H. Huxley, William Leckey, Thomas Carlyle, and many others.

Because of that wealth of contacts and correspondence, and of the mark they briefly made on the event of their day, it is all the more surprising that no more detailed examination has been made of this unusual partnership in the past half century of research. Bertrand Russell's own edition of the Amberley Papers in 1937 was the first introduction of these figures. Since then, a few isolated articles and references in other works have appeared.² This thesis will examine the Amberley Papers in a new light, offering the element of analysis lacking in Russell's lengthy edited version, and provide as well material unpublished by him. Using these materials, this thesis will also venture upon a subject previously unexplored with respect to the Amberleys, and little touched upon by social historians generally.

The Amberley Papers provide us with a profile of an arresting couple well ahead of their time. In shedding new light upon these figures, we also obtain an excellent picture of the social and political preoccupations of mid-nineteenth century England. The Amberleys' age was one of a most confident and universal liberalism. Both Lord and Lady Amberley were very active in their efforts toward furthering a variety of personal causes, the most controversial of these being their support of birth control and of the first stirrings of the emancipation of women. Their papers and occasional pronouncements encompassed a breadth of concerns of the day- anti-slavery, temperance, international peace, and various other social reforms reflected in the politics of the day. These latter included the Contagious Diseases Act and the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland.

The Amberleys were inspired by the radical intelligentsia of the day, John Stuart Mill in particular. The Amberley Collection thus reflects the contribution of the enlightened Whig aristocracy under the guidance of the Radical thinkers of the period. The Amberleys were thus, often precariously, lending their voices to and being identified with that radical movement which sought to reshape its society.

This study of the Amberleys, through published and

unpublished material, will focus upon the two key issues of birth control and women's emancipation. In so doing, it can provide new insights in three ways: 1) by giving substance to the Amberleys themselves; 2) by shedding new light on the Malthusian and female emancipation issues^o of the day, and finally; 3) by reflecting the prevailing affairs and moral attitudes~~of~~ of mid-Nineteenth century England.

In documenting their stance on Malthusianism and women's rights, we uncover a portrait of a highly unusual Victorian couple which, by espousing such sensitive and unpopular issues, set itself apart from the great majority of its contemporaries. This examination will not be restricted to the more externalised and public manifestations of their unconventionality, but will also deal with their private and familial lives. What will emerge is the extent of the price paid by them for flying in the face of accepted and cherished beliefs and opinions. By combining the political and the personal, the public and the private, we should also derive a more complete image of these sensitive and open-minded individuals, one which could prove to be of new interest to social historians.

The Amberleys were prolific letter writers; they wrote letters as one uses the telephone today, and in turn they

received as many. As they collected all references made to them by the press, an intimate public as well as private conception of the couple surfaces from an examination of these documents. It is on this public perception, through press comments of the day on their lives and careers, that this study will concentrate. It will start with the unfortunate and unintentional collision between Lord Amberley's Malthusian convictions and his nascent political career. In this instance, the press served as both mirror to and instigator of the controversy that surrounded Lord Amberley. For, it should not be forgotten that a prime characteristic of the press of the day was its active involvement with, rather than editorial distance from, the moral passions of the era.³ We therefore derive from the study of such articles highly emotional partisan views of the Amberleys' involvements, rather than a mere journalistic reflection of them. From this adversarial approach to issues and personalities, an inaccurate image of the Amberleys emerges, particularly of Lord Amberley. Even the most respected medical journals were not beyond launching scurrilous attacks upon the character of one who was perceived to challenge established medical beliefs and practices. In this instance, Lord Amberley found himself caught between the press as the guardians of public morality and the medical journals in their defence of medical ethics. Such a review of

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press opinion illustrates how high ideals and intentions can be trivialized and devalued by public debate by a partisan press.

The public perception of the Amberleys will be complemented by a more intimate examination of their private life, so that their unconventionality be appreciated in all realms of their lives. This analysis will draw upon material largely unavailable in present sources. This subject of concern is wholly unexplored with respect to the Amberleys and neglected as well in a wider sense by social historians. Victorian aristocratic domestic arrangements is a subject for which scholars have shown little curiosity.

There are three basic resources drawn upon in the research and articulation of the themes of this thesis:

- 1) a systematic revisiting of the Amberley collection with Malthusianism and women's emancipation as its focus;
- 2) the investigation of all press articles related to the above two topics;
- 3) a review of the already published excerpts and Bertrand Russell's own perceptions in the Amberley Papers (1937).

In the course of developing its arguments, this thesis

will take the reader from the biographical details that trace the beginnings of the Amberleys' thoughts and influence in the area of birth control and women's rights, through the history of the public controversy, to a close look at the Amberleys' domestic life. This will culminate in the concluding section with a more dispassionate contemporary re-evaluation of the Amberleys' thoughts and significance.

The material will be organized as follows:

The first chapter will examine the long tradition of family radicalism and religious unorthodoxy which the Amberleys had behind them, and will thus briefly concern itself with placing their radicalism in its family context. This section will then examine in greater detail the youth and intellectual development of Lord and Lady Amberley and the beginnings of their radical sentiments, as discernible in their private papers. Lord Amberley's reputation and political career prior to 1868 will be outlined, and the Amberleys' mature views and convictions will be placed in the intellectual context of the day. The couple's "philosophy of progress" will be analysed, so that their motivations and commitment to their causes may be appreciated in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Two begins with an overview of the climate of opinion surrounding birth control prior to and during Lord

Amberley's involvement in the question in the late 1860s. There follows a discussion of Lord Amberley's opinion on population limitation and his activities in this concern. The chapter will pay close attention to the South Devon election of 1868, where Lord Amberley's advocacy of population limitation surfaced and the press transformed it into a scandal.

Chapter Three will follow Lady Amberley's involvement and activities in the cause of women's rights, placing these in the context of the women's suffrage movement of the late 1860s. The chapter will examine in detail her controversial lecture, "The Claims of Women", which was subsequently published. The public reaction to this lecture will also figure prominently in this section.

Chapter Four will examine the extension of the Amberleys' unconventionality into their personal, family life, illustrating how significantly their domestic arrangements differed from those of their class, the landed aristocracy. This section completes the portrait of the Amberleys, showing how their independence of spirit was reflected in their private lives.

The fifth and concluding chapter will study the Amberleys as perceived by their contemporaries, and will then trace the re-evaluation of the couple as it emerges in the 1937 reviews

of Russell's Amberley Papers. This chapter will argue that the Amberleys were ahead of their time in many ways, but were not the firebrands they were depicted in their day. Rather, it will be argued that they were sensitive, sincere individuals dedicated to the greater freedom of all human beings.

The Amberleys were not forgiven in their lifetimes for challenging cherished values, and were subsequently forgotten, perhaps a worse fate than public castigation. A review of the Amberley Papers in 1937 'rediscovered' the Amberleys sixty years after their deaths: "What a pity", it concluded, "that two such very delightful and important people as Lord and Lady Amberley should be subtitled into oblivion."⁴

This thesis is intended to support this view of the Amberleys. It is to be hoped that it will help reawaken scholarly interest in these figures and provoke greater research into their role and part in mid-Victorian life and history.

NOTES

1. Bertrand and Patricia Russell, eds., The Amberley Papers: the Letters and Diaries of Lord and Lady Amberley (London: Hogarth Press, 1937), vol. 1, p. 36.
2. Post-secondary literature includes: Michael St. John Packe, The Life of John Stuart Mill (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954), J.A. Banks, Prosperity and Parenthood: a Study of Family Planning Among the Victorian Middle Classes (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954): pp. 146-50; Peter Fryer, The Birth Controllers (London: Secker and Warburg, 1965): chapter 12; Terry Philpot, "Two Victorian Free Thinkers", in Humanist (July 1970): 206-8; Ann Robson, "Bertrand Russell and his Godless Parents", in Russell 7 (Fall 1973): 3-9. Letters and references to the Amberleys from John Stuart Mill and Helen Taylor can be found in Francis E. Mineka and Dwight N. Lindley, eds., The Later Letters of John Stuart Mill, 1849-1873 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972): vol. 16.
3. See for example, Helen MacGill Hughes, News and the Human Interest Story (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 20.
4. AC 1 4/1, Transcript, Boston, Mass., May 22, 1937.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BACKGROUND, YOUTH AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF LORD AND LADY AMBERLEY

Very little is left to remind us of Lord and Lady Amberley today. While Lord John Russell's activities and career figure prominently in English political history, little is known of his son. Almost nothing survives of the Amberleys, except a brief tribute in the historian Froude's essay, "Cheneys and the House of Russell".¹ The little that is left offers an image of them as fearless young reformers, of a radicalism greatly surpassing that of Lord John Russell's. Shortly after their marriage and in their early twenties, they embarked together on a brief but notable career of radical public speaking, free thinking, and dedication to the idea of progress.

The Amberleys' ideas and opinions were at times ill received by their society. Their critics despaired over the persistent and conspicuous radicalism of the aristocratic couple, and often spoke of the hereditary transmission of radicalism peculiar to their families. The opinion that Lord Amberley was, as one newspaper noted in 1865, "a remarkable example

of hereditary talents and transmitted sympathies"², is a recurrent theme in the Amberley collection. The Amberleys did indeed continue a family tradition of radicalism, a tradition that ran on both sides of the family. Both the Russells and the Stanleys of Alderley historically leaned heavily towards unconventionality and religious non-conformity. A review of the Amberleys' family history and background thus shows their own radicalism to be hardly surprising.

The Amberleys' Family Background

Lord Amberley was descended from the Earls and Dukes of Bedford, who had made a great impact on English life from the sixteenth century on. They had always been liberal in their views, reformers in many cases, and always centres of controversy. As Christopher Trent writes, "they are central figures in a story of high endeavour allied with courage and defiance of established authority".³ By the time Queen Anne came to the throne the Russells were established as one of the greatest Whig families in the country, as well as one of the wealthiest and most influential. They remained Whig for two hundred years without a break. The Russells became constitutional reformers when the English Constitution was on a firm basis, leaving behind their

revolutionary tendencies of the seventeenth century. They became concerned with the rights, freedom of speech and opinion of individuals, and were often outspoken in their criticism of the Crown. According to Trent, "They were generally in advance of their times, probing further and further towards the modern conception of government. They were indefatigable in working for the wider representation of the people in Parliament and were leaders always of progressive thought".⁴ As individuals the Russells tended to "show in diverse ways a disregard for accepted attitudes, each pursuing his course in his own way with no timid apprehension of being thought different from his fellow-men".⁵

The most prominent member of the Russell family, who carried the political banner of the family with distinction in the nineteenth century, was Lord John Russell, 3rd son of the sixth Duke of Bedford. Lord Amberley's father, he was created Earl in 1861, and was twice Prime Minister to Queen Victoria, from 1846 to 1852, and from 1865 to 1866. He was responsible for many social and political reforms, including the Reform Bill of 1832. He retired from active politics early in 1868, after a career of fifty-five years in which, "except in the case of the secret ballot and the reforming of the civil service, he had consistently taken the reforming side."⁶ Lord John Russell stood forth,

as John Prest puts it, as "the champion of the aristocratic middle". His political career was marked by the belief that that

if great changes accomplished by the people are dangerous, although sometimes salutary, great changes accomplished by an aristocracy, at the desire of the people, are at once salutary and safe.⁷

Lord Russell took as his second wife Lady Fanny Elliot, daughter of Lord Dillon, in 1841 and had four children, of which John Amberley was the eldest. The family was thus brought up with the impressive political personality of the father. Russell's reformist principles were such as "would naturally lead to radicalism in his son, to which he never objected", Bertrand Russell has written. "His pride in my father's bold carrying on of the Russell tradition outweighed their disagreements".⁸

Lady Russell, who had married into a family historically in the front rank of the Crown's servants, herself came of a "race of soldiers, governors, and tried servants of the State". As Trent writes, she "united in herself the principles typified in the historic mottoes of her own house and that of her husband's".⁹ She was considerably more Radical than Lord Russell, however, and her influence on her husband was such

that she became known as the "Deadly Nightshade".¹⁰ In stark contrast to her radical tendencies was her Puritan attitude to the facts of life, a result of her Scottish Presbyterian family background. She immensely disliked or did not understand "The claims of animal spirits and exhuberant vitality",¹¹ which led her to attempt to prevent Amberley's marriage to Kate. While she was conservative in her views of behavior and morality and was rather self-righteously narrow-minded, she espoused such causes as Irish Home Rule which only extreme Radicals campaigned for.

Bertrand Russell, who was brought up by Lady Russell*, has written that her "fearlessness, her public spirit, her contempt for convention, and her indifference to the opinion of the majority" were strong aspects of her personality and important in the shaping of his own radical sentiments.¹² She wrote in Bertrand's Bible: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil", and had a deeply rooted conviction that "virtue is only to be found in minorities".¹³

On Lady Amberley's side, the Stanleys of Alderley are said to have been descended from Charlemagne. They crossed the Channel in 1066, and married into the Anglo-Saxon landed gentry. Kate Amberley's father was Edward John Stanley, second Lord Stanley of Alderley, and first Lord Eddisbury

* Both his parents had died by the time he reached the age of 4.

of Winnington, in the county Palatine of Chester, as well as a Baronet. He was the elder son of Sir John Thomas Stanley of Alderley, who was raised to the Peerage as Lord Stanley of Alderley in 1839. His mother was the Lady Maria Josepha Holroyd, daughter of John, first Earl of Sheffield.

Edward John Stanley was described by the Times as "a zealous, able member of several Liberal administrations".¹⁴ He was raised to the peerage before the death of his father, and ended his varied career as Postmaster-General with a seat in the Cabinet, retiring in 1866 with the defeat of the Liberal Party. However, he was more known as a man of "ready and somewhat incisive wit" than as a politician.¹⁵ Not much mention is made of Lord Stanley in the Amberley collection; he appears to have been in the background of family affairs.

Lady Stanley of Alderley, however, figured more prominently in the collection and in Kate Amberley's life. She has been described as "a person of quite remarkable vigour", whose exceptional degree of vitality was inherited by many of her descendants.¹⁶ Lady Henrietta Maria, eldest daughter of Viscount Dillon, had a large family of six daughters and four sons, "amongst whom there was not one quite ordinary human being". Their common characteristics, as Mitford writes, were "a sort of downright rudeness, a passion for

quarrelling, great indifference to public opinion", "lively minds and a great literary sense".¹⁷ Henrietta Maria would give Sunday Luncheons to her children and grandchildren, and at these there used to be, as Bertrand Russell recalled, "argumentation such as I have never heard before or since, for vehemence and profound conviction of entirely different sorts".¹⁸ Their religious opinions, "generally adopted to annoy some other member of the family",¹⁹ were various, including Mahommedanism, Roman Catholicism, Agnosticism, and Anglicanism.

Unlike Lady Russell, Lady Stanley was completely free from prudery, and Bertrand Russell has described her as "eighteenth century rather than Victorian in her conversation". She was a woman of forthright opinion, against all kinds of "nonsense" and every kind of enthusiasm "except for science, enlightenment, women's education, and Italy".²⁰ Women's education became her chief public activity after the death of her husband; she was one of the founders of Girton's College for women, which involved her until her death in 1895, and helped found High Schools for girls and Queen's College. Lady Stanley supported Lady Amberley's feminist opinions and activities and was, in fact, one of her few supporters in times of public opposition and scorn.

The Russells and Stanleys of Alderley, part of the minor

nobility of England almost one hundred and fifty years ago, lived their lives in the particular frame of their age and circumstances. Secure in their wealth, they could easily maintain their large families, develop their personalities and cultivate their talents. Secure in their Whig outlook as well, Mitford writes,

they never considered the fact that each individual has his allotted place in the realm and that their own allotted place was among the ruling, the leisured and the moneyed classes. This peace and security, which are today outside the experience of any but the rich and heedless dolt, had been enjoyed by their ancestors for hundreds of years, were to them the natural order of things, and like the music of the spheres, went unheard because too familiar.²¹

Their radicalism was therefore one of confidence, born and bred on the notion that to the aristocrat all things were possible. Their radical tradition, writes Ronald Clark, was firmly rooted in the belief that predecessors had been born to rule, "not as a right but as a duty; they stood professionally, dutifully, for Whig ideals of Liberalism, education, and benevolent democracy".²² Lord and Lady Amberley would themselves inherit this confident radicalism and sense of duty to the state.

The Russells and Stanleys lived in an important period

in the history of England, particularly the decade from 1841 to 1851. Important changes came about in social, religious and political issues. 1842 saw the imposition of an Income Tax for the first time in time of peace, in 1846 Sir Robert Peel brought about the Repeal of the Corn Laws, and hopeful spirits among Radicals were fanned by the Chartist movement. Despite all these changes the aristocrats and old landed families were still supreme and such Whig citadels as the Bedfords' Woburn estate and Holland house in London prospered.

Lord and Lady Amberley were thus both brought up in an environment rich in a tradition of political involvement, radicalism, as well as unconventionality. Both their roots, Amberley's in particular, were firmly in Whig reformism and a nonconformist tradition. The atmosphere of Pembroke Lodge, the Russell's home, was conducive to creating enthusiasm in the young Amberley for politics, the more so as the most distinguished Victorian statesmen, such as Gladstone, were frequent visitors. In view of their family history of disregard for established opinions, it is hardly surprising that orthodoxy and conventionality sat so lightly on the Amberleys' own shoulders. The Times Literary Supplement in 1937 aptly concluded that "Whatever can be said of the two families, they were not composed of dull and conventional

people".²³

"My mother and father were dead", Bertrand Russell wrote in his autobiography, remembering his boyhood, "and I used to wonder what sort of people they were."²⁴ He later discovered, while editing his parents' private papers, that the Amberleys themselves had been far from dull and conventional people. They attracted much attention in their day, both for the radicalism of their opinions and for the image they projected. Present-day scholars have described the Amberleys as a "fairly-tale couple", for they were both nobly born, wealthy, liberal, handsome, young, and very much in love. They died young, but in their brief lifetimes "they shone through the heavy atmosphere of mid-Victorian pretension and convention like two fireflies in the night".²⁵ Before examining the contribution of this couple to their society, the rest of this chapter will examine the youth and intellectual development of Kate Stanley and John Amberley prior to and shortly after their marriage in 1864:

Kate Amberley's Youth and Development

Katherine Louisa Stanley, born in 1842, grew up in the large, noisy, argumentative Stanley household, the eighth

child in a brood of nine. Her childhood and youth was "happy and healthy," as Russell writes, "full of cheerful family life, riding, parties, travelling, etc."²⁶ In contrast to Amberley's early diary, which tended toward morbid introspection at times, Kate's shows a more pronounced intellectual liveliness, a more careless, less self-conscious nature. Bertrand Russell described her as "vigorous, lively, witty, serious, original and fearless."²⁷ In spite of an orthodox upbringing, which involved the prohibition of all books that were thought unsettling, her letters and diaries reveal strong intellectual interests and the gradual growth of modern ideas in her mind.

Kate read widely, despite these restrictions, looking to her free-thinking brother Lylulph for direction and the exchange of ideas. Being considerably more conservative than her brother in her late adolescence, her letters to Lylulph often included lively discussions and mordant criticisms, which in time would attenuate and even be ruefully remembered. In her diary she noted and commented upon her readings, which included Kant's Critique of Pure Reason and the controversial Essays and Reviews in her eighteenth year, as well as Mill's On Liberty the following year.

Kate was very religious in her adolescence, although

Lylulph's insistent irreligion gradually weakened the certainty of her convictions. At eighteen she flung to her brother the following words, well illustrating her frame of mind:

...you think that we are in the world first & foremost & only to cultivate our intellect our minds & facilities, do you not? But I think that is not the object of life; I think it is to prepare ourselves for another & that it is only a state of trial, & waiting... 28

It would only be after her marriage to Amberley that Kate would abandon her religion. The book Essays and Reviews, which alarmed a great number of people at the time, greatly interested Kate and her comments upon it in her diary illustrate the growth of her critical spirit. The book, which was brought to public attention by an article in the Westminster Review,²⁹ discredited inspiration, prophecy, miracles, the truth of the history and the authority of the precepts contained in the Old and New Testaments, the creation and fall of man, the Sacraments and the Creeds. The article, which stirred the defenders of the church, including the Bishop of Oxford, to reply to the book, horrified those around Kate; a guest thought the article "horrid & unfair", and Lady Stanley, Kate noted, "was disgusted by it."³⁰ Kate, however, thought the Essays much

maligned by its readers; she could see "nothing in it to offend the most weak minded."³¹ She preferred to see it as "an advancement & an improvement of what we have already"; unfortunately, all the "hubbub about it has made everyone look at it as a complete overthrow of everything so that they can never come round to it." Kate assured her diary, however, that she did not mean to "launch out into all the opinions of the Essayists" - what she desired was a greater truthfulness and earnestness, the freedom to "do it my way".³²

Kate's independence of mind and rebelliousness against conventionality is revealed in different ways in her diaries. In a letter to her brother Lylulph, for example, she writes:

You both started in the same groove,
 Mama is still in it but you ran off the
 line; a thing I long to do, I am equally
 sick of the platitudes spoken everywhere
 & the wordly sentiments I hear for
 worldly they are though not in the common
 sense of the word; but as one cannot change
 others it is better only to think about
 changing myself I do not mean to conform
 to others but to bear with them.³³

Kate refused to conform to or accept the antiquated views of those around her. The following criticism of her aunt Ally also reveals her feminist instincts:

Aunt Ally very much objects to all the new books which say that people ought to have a work to do in the world & that women ought to 'better themselves'; she thinks that everyone's duty is to be quiet & retiring & unobtrusive as possible & contented. I remember trying to argue with you on the advantage of contentment & I put myself in yr. place. I still think it right but I can see what harm it can do.³⁴

Kate was also amused by the peculiar notions of Thomas Carlyle, upon his visit to Alderley. He told her that he thought all novels were stupid,

& he did not know any good ones written by women, he abused every one in turn that was mentioned...he thought women had better not meddle with those things but be quiet with darning stockings, a very different idea from Mrs. Mill's in her Enfranchisement of Women; he talked of her & said she was a silly woman, at least not so clever, but that Mill admired her because she was kind to him. He thinks that talking is the great fault of the age & that people had far better not talk..³⁵

It would thus appear that the various admonitions by those around her to "be quiet" and contented appealed little to Kate's alert and questioning mind. Instead, she agreed with the words of Professor Jowett that "the only thing to do" was "to plant one's foot beyond the waves of time."³⁶

Kate's rebelliousness was as yet tentative; a passage from her

diary for 1866, however, reveals the solidification of her refusal to accept the ways of the world; following a discussion with Professor Jowett, she writes:

At the railway we talked of not going against the world & doing as everyone did, and he strongly urged it in everything that was not positively wrong, & said for instance a woman shd. never have the character of an esprit fort. I did so disagree with him- it was worldly wisdom without doubt, but then is that to be the rule of our actions- I may change but now I feel a strong inclination to go against the world.³⁷

Kate Amberley would not begin her involvement in Women's Questions, ~~as~~ she would call them until 1865, after her marriage to Amberley. Nevertheless this interest was not sudden; many of the above quotations illustrate her resistance to accepted notions of female conduct and interests. At an early age she identified improper education as the source of female frivolity and intellectual vacuity. Commenting to Lyluph on a friend's vapid character, she writes:

I do not wonder that quiet people who see her or other young ladies of the same description think it very pernicious to go out in London & think there is little good in a fashionable yg. lady, I think though that the fault is in the education & though mine may have been deficient in some points it has

been perfect in that I do not know how Mama has done it or when but she has certainly made us care for things better & more important.³⁸

This concern over female education would later figure prominently in Lady Amberley's feminist formulations, and in her published lecture, "The Claims of Women". From 1865 on, Kate would be guided and supported in her feminist activities by her close friend Helen Taylor and Helen's stepfather, John Stuart Mill. Lady Amberley would lend her energy and vitality to many women's organizations, all the while, in true Victorian style, devoting herself with great passion to her husband and his career. Though Kate Amberley was an unapologetic feminist, her great charm won the hearts of many. Lady Georgiana Peel, Amberley's sister, wrote in her Recollections that Kate was like "a fresh breeze" coming on the Russell family.

Besides her beauty, the charm of her high spirits, and joy in life, made her a universal favourite. Even the old sage, Thomas Carlyle, would come and wait at her door to take her out riding, and evidently enjoyed the gallops they had on many mornings. She was such a mixture of fun and earnestness, and had in a marked degree the great quickness of thought possessed by all that generation of Stanleys.³⁹

Lord Amberley's Youth and Development

John Amberley was born at thirty-seven Chesham Place, London, on December 10, 1842. He kept a journal from 1854, when he was barely twelve, until his engagement to Kate Stanley in 1864. His early writings reveal a comfortable, happy and uneventful childhood, with no evidence of the radicalism or studious temper that would characterize the older Amberley. Rather than showing any early interest in politics or religion, his diary reveals the ordinary interests and concerns of an aristocratic adolescent boy: tea parties, riding, sports, the desire for independence from parental strictures. His childhood companions included the sons of Queen Victoria, with whom he would often play at Buckingham Palace. The dominant characteristic of his diaries is a pronounced, at times morbid, introspection. Bertrand Russell described his father as "philosophical, studious, unwordly, morose, and priggish".⁴⁰ Reviewing the Amberley Papers, the New York Herald Tribune agreed with Russell: "Lord Amberley is a little stuffy as he appears in these papers..."⁴¹ Bertrand's elder brother Frank, the second Earl Russell, described his father as "short,

black hair, not very strong, not very good sight", and
 "artistic".⁴²

Amberley was educated at Harrow, and went afterwards to Edinburgh, where he lived for a year with Professor A.C. Fraser. He then went to Trinity College Cambridge, where he was very unhappy. In 1861 Lord John Russell was created Earl, and his elder brother, the Duke of Bedford, Marquess of Tavistock, died. John was given the courtesy title of Viscount and inherited the Duke's Irish estate of Ardsalla, becoming Lord Amberley of Amberley and Ardsalla.⁴³

Amberley was introduced to religion while very young, and his Anglican beliefs were very important in his youth. More enduring than his ties to religion, however, was his "very exceptional intellectual integrity", as Bertrand Russell calls it.⁴⁴ Amberley's diary for August 5th, 1860 praises candidness and truthfulness: "...such conduct, I think, deserves the highest praise in an age when the rules of politeness forbid plain language...or at best make it difficult & dangerous; when to tell a man his faults is so much harder than to talk of them behind his back, to reprove honestly so much harder than to speak unkindly."⁴⁵

This rigid intellectual honesty, according to Russell, was a major cause in the thwarting of his political ambitions: "He considered each political question on its merits, and refused to conceal his opinion whatever it might be."⁴⁶ Amberley made a virtue of "honour toward opponents, fairness in representing their arguments...the power of entering into points of view which are not our own," as well as "the stern regard for facts, the hatred of exaggeration, and the delicate regard for other people's feelings."⁴⁷ Innocently, he expected these virtues in others.

A major change in Amberley's life came about in his twenty-first year: a sudden change from orthodox Anglicanism to free-thinking. The 13th of December 1863, two days after his twenty-first birthday, Amberley announced in his journal that he was no longer a Christian; "...a course of religious enquiry (particularly reading 'Greg's Creed of Christendom') has led me to feel that I can no longer hold the doctrines which formerly I used to cherish as truths of the highest spiritual value." His reading and independent thinking had impressed upon him the conviction that "the whole system of 'Dogmatic Christianity' is built on a false foundation; a foundation which I cannot help feeling that the progress of Truth will in the course of time shake so violently that the Superstructure will

fall."⁴⁸ Amberley thus early professed himself a deist; his mature religious beliefs would closely resemble those of Herbert Spencer's, both in nature and written expression. The Amberleys' deism admitted of prayer but not the divinity of Christ.

Shortly after, Amberley wrote his first piece for the periodical press, an argument for the relaxation of the doctrinal declarations required of clergymen of the Church of England. This article appeared in the North British Review for November 1863, and stirred considerable interest and controversy; the public eye was thus on Amberley for the very first time. For Professor R.J. Helmstadter, Amberley's progression to free-thinking was appropriate to the Russell name: "In a sense the call for religious liberty that ran through the article was a Russell family tradition", one which his father Lord Russell supported.⁴⁹

After Cambridge, which he left without a degree in 1862, Amberley devoted much of his time to reading and writing. He was involved briefly in Parliament in the mid-sixties; he ran unsuccessfully for Leeds in 1865, was a member of Parliament for Nottingham from 1866-68, and lost the South Devon election of 1868 due to a scandal over his support of birth control. His brief public

life effectively ended, Amberley turned from London to the country, from politics to the pursuit of literary interests. Although he had attempted a parliamentary career, out of adherence to the family tradition, Amberley never really became deeply engaged in practical politics. His true interests were political economy and the analysis of religious belief. Wrote Bertrand Russell of his father, "as in many Russells, the desire to study and philosophize fought with the inherited desire for power, and with the moral conviction- for it was no less- that he must do a Russell's duty to the state."⁵⁰

After their marriage in 1864, the Amberleys spent some months of each year in London, where they had a house in Dean's Yard. After a few years they moved to Ravenscroft in the countryside. Amberley contributed to the North British Review, The Fortnightly Review, and the Theological Review, and began preparing his book on religious belief.⁵¹ Amberley did not lecture, and nor did he attend conferences or involve himself in any scholarly institutions. The couple's intellectual life was set by the visits of and friendships with England's radical intelligentsia. These included George Grote and his wife, John Stuart Mill and his step-daughter Helen Taylor, Herbert Spencer, T.H. Huxley,

Frances Power Cobbe, and many others. A local paper in 1870 remarked, "Both Lord and Lady Amberley are well and widely known in political and literary circles, and are esteemed as much for the liberality of their views as for the ability and modesty with which they state them."⁵² They belonged to the intellectual section of the Whig aristocracy, standing, as the Times commented, "on a hub from which the spokes of fashion, tradition, radicalism, and rationalism radiated."⁵³ Kate established herself as a leading society hostess, her Tuesday night salons being well known.

The Amberleys developed their intellectual enthusiasms, lectured and agitated for reform in one of the most interesting and dynamic periods of the nineteenth century. While the 1850s and 1860s have been described as an age of relative prosperity, comfort, and even political complacency, the parliamentary reform debates of the late 1860's swiftly changed the political temper of the day. New opportunities for reform came about with the death of Lord Palmerston after the general election of 1865; Russell, now Earl Russell, became the head of the government and Gladstone became the leader of the majority in the House of Commons. The Bill which had begun under Russell in 1866 and which was eventually changed and passed by Disraeli in 1867,

was much more radical than anyone had anticipated, and was a great step toward a commitment to democracy. A great part of the urban working class had been enfranchised and the electorate doubled.

The reform-minded Gladstone administration of 1868-74 brought about a great number of legislative and administrative reforms. The first issue Gladstone turned to was the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland. During these years reforms in the Civil Service system and the English Judicial system were introduced, as well as the Education Act of 1870, which was a step towards creating a common minimal level of education for all children. In 1871 an act repealed all religious restrictions on students attending the traditionally Anglican universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The Trade Union Act of 1871, though prohibiting picketing, legalized unions and gave them the protection of the courts. Finally, the Ballot Act of 1872 was a reform that had long been advocated by radicals.

The years 1865 to the early 1870s stirred the hopes and confidence of Liberals and Radicals. In 1865 the Fortnightly Review began its career with a mission, as stated in its prospectus, to "further the cause of progress by the

illumination of many minds." Under the editorship of John Morley, it was to become after 1872, as Donald Southgate writes, "The best authority for the orientation of the English mind towards a more secular and scientific outlook."⁵⁴ The intellectual radicals of the day, Lord and Lady Amberley among them, laboured against all which impeded the greater liberty of individuals and the progressive course of society.

Radicalism in this period gained an intellectual respectability and social prestige which the radicalism of the Manchester School under Cobden, Bright, and Villiers in the 1840s and 1850s had never had.⁵⁵ Under the influence of John Stuart Mill, Goldwin Smith, John Morley and Henry Rawcett, the new radicalism, which had entered into connection with organized labour, pondered the rights of women, democracy, as well as the principles of church establishment. These radicals, still cheered by the success of the Anti-corn Law League, had a wide spectrum of causes before them—temperance reform, women's suffrage, disestablishment, secular education, the repeal or advocacy of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and the promotion of international peace. Nearly all of these causes the Amberleys concerned themselves with in their lifetimes. In 1867 John Stuart Mill was able to assert that "we live in a world of novelties;

the despotism of custom is on the wane."⁵⁶ The Amberleys themselves reflected the hope and confidence of what has been called "the age of improvement",⁵⁷ a confidence greatly facilitated by their class position. As Bertrand Russell has written:

...throughout their lives the world was moving in directions that to them seemed good. And although they opposed aristocratic privilege, it survived intact, and they, however involuntarily, profited by it. They lived in a comfortable, spacious, hopeful world...⁵⁸

The abovementioned issues and causes essentially constituted the nature of Liberal political activity. There was, as Hamer puts it, "not seen to exist any central core of principle and belief to which were related and in which were cohered all the particular things that Liberals did and all the particular reforms in which they were interested."⁵⁹ The principles of Liberalism and of Radicalism thus suffered from a lack of coherency, from the fact that they were a "miscellany of vaguely humanitarian enthusiasms, chiefly for the relief of individuals from the metaphysical rather than material distress."⁶⁰

Lord Amberley himself espoused a "miscellany

of vaguely humanitarian enthusiasms" in his lifetime. His political position was first defined in his unsuccessful bid for the Liberal seat at the Leeds election of 1865, and firmly established by his successful contestation of the Nottingham election of 1866. He remained a Member of Parliament for Nottingham until 1868. Amberley was identified as a Radical Whig back-bencher, and was thus part of a rather unimportant section of the House of Commons. These backbench Whigs, according to John Vincent, "represented all shades of political opinion, and were in general politics a marginal, and not a directive force." They were few in number, lacked individual weight, and "had nothing in common apart from their relationship with the historic Whig houses."⁶¹ Amberley, rather than being an outstanding personality or established politician, held the appeal of being a 'gentleman' with radical opinions. A gentleman, as one paper later put it, "whose sports were not foxes and pheasants and horses, but Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity."⁶²

Amberley's radicalism was exposed to the public by his first political address at a reform meeting February 1st 1865, called by the Mayor at the request of the Leeds Working Men's Reform Association. The purpose was to

consider the propriety of petitioning the House of Commons for Parliamentary reform. In his speech Amberley called for the further extension of reform, a subject with which he could be said to have "especial historical connection." "I don't know when it may come," he said, "but still I trust the day may come when it will be possible that every intelligent and honest man, whatever the class to which he belongs, or whatever the employment he pursues, may be admitted to the extension of the franchise." He looked forward to the abolition of "distinctions and lines of demarcation between various classes," and humorously concluded: "You will have been able to gather from my remarks that I am not one of those who regard the advance of democratic opinions with particular alarm."⁶³ He confessed himself in favour of "violent changes" if for the better.

Lord Amberley's political debut was closely watched by the press. The Morning Star of February 2nd 1865, a Radical paper, wrote: "Lord Amberley has given good evidence that the historic name of Russell shall not be lost to the party of progress." The Times, with a touch of distaste, described Amberley as "thoroughly indoctrinated in the logic, the controversy, and the history of Reform...Mr. Gladstone is the Mentor of the young Telemachus..." The Standard,

a Tory paper, was prepared to forgive Amberley's "flippancy" on account of "his tender years, as well as his lack of understanding of the issues of Reform". Punch, inferring parental influence, published a satirical poem, "As the Cock Crows, the Young Cock Learns."⁶⁴ Many Liberals, including Gladstone, praised Amberley's speech.

Amberley thus pledged himself to the more radical of the Liberal Party very early in his life and at the very beginning of his political career, despite his father's cautions. "Amberley must take his own course at Leeds," Earl John Russell wrote resignedly to Kate, "...I have no wish to call in question his discretion."⁶⁵ Kate's Aunt Louisa was quite appalled by Amberley's radicalism; "And so Amberley is going to follow in his Father's footsteps & speak up for Reform", she wrote to Kate. "I am an old Whig by education & have been from my earliest years trained to Whig Politics but not to Radicalism & though I was quite aware that Amberley was of the Ultra Liberal School, yet I trusted that he might have enough prudence not to give out a public meeting the full force of his Liberalism."⁶⁶ John Stuart Mill warmly praised Amberley's speech, confident that he would have a fine career before him, "if he only went on as he had begun".⁶⁷ After declining to stand for Westminster,

Amberley rather reluctantly accepted in May to stand for Leeds. Despite the success of his Leeds speech, Amberley, as well as the other Liberal Reform Candidate, Mr. Baines, lost the election.

Amberley was elected for Nottingham in 1866 after a campaign in which he advocated Sunday places of recreation. In 1867 he made his maiden speech on the Reform Bill, which gained the praise of Archbishop (later Cardinal) Manning, J.S. Mill, his father, Gladstone and Disraeli. That year he also introduced his Sunday Lectures Bill, which was unsuccessful. In 1868, after a visit to America, Amberley declined to stand for Nottingham again. He feared a repetition of the circumstances of the last election, when Bernal Osborne intervened and split the Liberal vote, thus defeating Amberley's colleague, Cossham. He also feared a corrupt and rowdy contest. He was adopted as candidate for South Devon instead, to contest his father's old seat, which had been Tory "almost from time immemorial" - that is to say, thirty-three years.⁶⁸ Amberley also sat as magistrate in Monmouthshire, at Trelleck Petty Sessions.

Amberley's friends and family had warned him of the possible consequences of his brave declarations of faith.

Professor Jowett had written to Lady Amberley that her husband "must expect to be abused and to hear 'American', 'traitor to his order' and the like. And in time I have no doubt that you will live to see him under various disguises in 'Punch'".⁶⁹ Lady Amberley herself was worried at times about her husband's political career; though she felt that his "great truthfulness, honesty, singlemindedness and courage" would eventually tell, she feared that he would "never shine in politics". "...he wants readiness, and adaptability to people and circumstances", she confided to her journal.⁷⁰ The Times recognized in Amberley's terribly "honest convictions" a kind of "holy faith", and felt he would soon be a sorry victim of the rapacity of political life. "We shrink from the contemplation of this pure, untainted, unsophisticated, unencumbered Reformer of his country as the wear and tear of life may present him even at thirty."⁷¹ The Times' words were rather prophetic; for the moment, however, Amberley felt bound to his duty to express himself.

The Influence of John Stuart Mill and Helen Taylor

Of all their radical friends and acquaintances, the Amberleys were most influenced by John Stuart Mill,

whom they met when they were both about twenty-two and newly wed. A strong friendship developed between them, following a weekend house party at Mrs. Grote's in 1865. Mill's discussions and encouragements to the couple to care not of the world's judgments greatly impressed Lady Amberley and raised her "into a hopeful state of mind":

He was talking about everyone being wished to be alike & do alike, & I told him that we met with opposition for going to the country & not going out as everyone did & people were always wanting A to shoot to be like everyone else so he advised me to answer 'I did not wish him & he did not intend to be like everyone else but something more & of use in his time & for that solitude & study were necessary & not to be always in the world... He said the wish & intention to do good was good in itself...

The next day, on the 21st of February, Kate wrote in her diary:

...Mill said he had been very glad to meet Amberley...It has been a very great pleasure meeting him, so edifying & made one feel so hopeful & strong of the use one could be in the world.
- I am so happy at A knowing him & Mill's appreciating him. It is of course more pleasure to hear him praised or rather commended by Mill than all the praise or blame of the world-

I do trust never to mind more
 what the world says, than I do now;
 for now it is quite indifferent to me,
 I know all his motives are pure &
 great & unselfish, only to be admired;
 & while he sticks to his principles
 how can I care what people think or
 what motives they attribute to him!⁷²

Lady Amberley later described herself as one of
 Mill's "devoted followers".⁷³

Kate Amberley and Mill's stepdaughter, Helen Taylor, became close friends, corresponding regularly until Kate's death in 1874. Helen greatly encouraged and supported Kate's feminist activities, which had been spurred by Mill's historic women's suffrage speech in Parliament in 1866, and by his book, The Subjection of Women (1869), Mill had felt that Amberley was "one of the very best of our rising politicians."⁷⁴ He served as an advisor to Amberley both on his writings and on his political activities, and even agreed to become godfather to the Amberleys' third child, Bertrand. According to Ann Robson, their friendship was anchored in a certain need: "although both the Russell and Stanley families had radical tendencies, they did not give unqualified support to the young people and it was of very great importance to both Amberleys to have the approval of the most respected philosopher and

radical of their time." Their support of Lady Amberley was particularly valuable, Robson notes, for Kate was greatly discomfited by the idea of drawing public attention upon herself and of violating Victorian rules of aristocratic feminine idleness.⁷⁵

A biographer of Mill has written that the intimacy that developed between Mill and the Amberleys was a "disastrous one", in terms of the couple's worldly interests: "...the whole of their thought was steeped in Mill's opinions, dangerously advanced; and their contempt for society together with their determination to act up to their beliefs made them rash."⁷⁶ Mrs. Grote attempted to dissuade Amberley from following "the example of Mill, whose creed all recognize as the extreme democratic," and warned him of "going beyond the limits of a conscientious liberal in public speaking", lest he should "one day have to recede from positions taken up in the warmth of his popular sympathies."⁷⁷

The Amberleys, however, almost worshipped Mill and were not to be deterred from following their philosophy of Truth and Progress.

The Amberleys' Philosophy of Truth and Duty

The Amberleys' unconventionality and efforts in the

fields of birth control and women's emancipation cannot properly be appreciated without an analysis of the philosophical basis of their commitments. This philosophy led the couple onto the path they took, and provided strength in the face of adversity.

Lord Amberley had early, as a youth of 17, expressed the desire to do good in the world; similarly, very near the end of his life, he expressed the hope that little he had done had been "of a bad kind. I should die with the sense that one great work of my life was accomplished".⁷⁸ The concept of duty figured prominently in the Amberleys' philosophy of life, particularly in that of Lord Amberley's. This duty involved devoting one's life to "doing good", working to the attainment of knowledge and Truth, and remaining true to one's principles. "We both put Duty above everything else", Amberley once wrote to his wife, "& I do ask you to do yr. duty..."⁷⁹ The ideas of Truth and knowledge were especially important to Amberley, and appear often in the collection as a theme. Those near Amberley noted his "determined pursuance of knowledge", the way he made "everything else give way to it".⁸⁰ His journal of September 1860 to February 1864 typically began with a poem on Truth:

Truth circles into Truth. Each note is clear
 To God; no drop of Ocean is e'er lost;
 No leaf forever dry and tempest-tost. 81

Similarly, Amberley's Analysis of Religious Belief, his final effort, begins with the quotation: "Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free". Amberley strove, by the example he set, to help emancipate his fellow human beings from narrowness and meanness of spirit, however great and difficult the task. The following passage, from a letter he wrote to Kate early in their marriage, captures Amberley's sense of purpose in life, his optimistic commitment to his philosophy of Truth and progress:

I wish to show by what I write, by the life I live, by the example I set, that opinions such as mine need & ought not to bring the slightest suspicion or censure upon those who hold them. And I will say what I believe & what I disbelieve that others may pick up such little fragments of truth as I may be permitted to give them, or be weaned from the errors that hamper their thoughts...I can look back upon history & see that the great thinkers of the world, who have never discovered the absolutely true, have been able to break down the superstition & to diminish the Intolerance of mankind...Thus shall we strive to increase the charity of men towards each other, & mitigate their bitterness. And

we will not demand Toleration
only at the hands of our friends,
but much more justice. They shall do
us justice. 82

Amberley thus expected opposition to his beliefs
very early, before the beginning of his political career.
However violent the initial reaction to the Amberleys'
beliefs and way of life, Amberley optimistically believed
society would eventually do them justice:

Let them be shocked & pained at first,
if it must be so (though I hope
even this may be avoided) but when
the first violence of their surprise
or their resentment is over, we
will ask them if afterall, we are
worse than other men; we will ask
them to confess, if not at once by the
force of reason then later by the
force of facts that the fruits of the
Spirit may be granted to those who have
flung off the ancient creeds as chaff,
& stand upright, pure, & noble without
their aid! 83

While the Amberleys had long anticipated the welcome their
unconventional opinions would receive, they had inaccurately
judged the severity of this censure. Amberley had not
anticipated how very "shocked and pained" the world would be,
and the toleration he had expected was not granted them
in their lifetimes.

The Amberleys felt the need to express their dissatisfaction with the ways of the world, though the world might not be a sympathetic listener. Lady Amberley's advanced beliefs were a matter of faith and religion, she confided to her friend Henry Crompton; "My religion impels me to be outspoken & in my life to show what I believe."⁸⁴ Shortly before their marriage, Amberley found it necessary to warn Kate that he should have to proclaim whatever he believed, and that "a certain degree of unpopularity, or even alienation from friends might be the result".⁸⁵ In the face of public outrage they took comfort from the idea that they remained true to their convictions, and accepted as inevitable the hostility and resentment: "...one must make up one's mind to some disagreeableness for the sake of one's opinions", Kate wrote to Helen Taylor in 1870.⁸⁶ Similarly, Amberley expressed the following to Kate during their courtship:

Those who would be something more than they who feast 'to laugh and die' must accept misunderstanding, unkindness, disapproval as their inevitable lot. They must be content to forego father & mother for the sake of Truth; they must be ready to resign what most they prize the moment it clashes with the light that is given them. It is their duty to follow that light withersoever it may lead.⁸⁷

"It is not exactly a high order of merit wh. is shown by admiring the martyr-spirit in others, but possessing, none of it oneself", he continued. Amberley seems to have been endowed with this "martyr-spirit" even in his youth; one of his early journals contains the following verses:

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, & persecute you, & say all manner of evil against you falsely for thy sake, Rejoice, & be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.⁸⁸

With the strength of their philosophy of life behind them, the young Amberleys rushed headlong into their intellectual enthusiasms, which will be the focus of the following Chapters.

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63. AC 1 4/1, Examiner and Times, February 1, 1865.
64. AC 1 4/1, Morning Star, February 2, 1865, The Times, February 3, 1865, The Standard, Friday February 3, 1865, and Punch, or The London Charivari, February 2, 1865.
65. AC 1 1/1, Earl Russell to Lady Amberley, January 26, 1865.
66. AC 1 3/2, Louisa Stanley to Lady Amberley, January 28, 1865.
67. AC 1 4/1, Lady Amberley's Journal, Sunday February 19, 1865.
68. The Times, Saturday November 28, 1868, p. 9.
69. AC 1 3/4, Professor Jowett, Professor of Greek and Master of Balliol College Oxford, to Lady Amberley, February 2, 1865.

70. AC 1 4/1, Lady Amberley's Journal, May 12, 1866.
71. AC 1 4/1, The Times, Friday February 3, 1865.
72. AC 1 4/1, Lady Amberley's Journal, February 20, 1865, and February 21, 1865.
73. Lady Amberley to Mr. Morley, June 9, 1873, quoted in Frank, Earl Russell, op.cit., p. 48.
74. John Stuart Mill to R.W. Emerson, August 12, 1867, in Hugh Elliot, ed., The Letters of John Stuart Mill (London: Longmans & Green, 1910), vol. 2, p. 87.
75. Ann Robson, "Bertrand Russell and His Godless Parents", Russell 7 (Fall 1972), p. 3.
76. Michael St. John Packe, op.cit., p. 437.
77. AC 1 3/4, Mrs. Grote, wife of George Grote, historian, to Lady Amberley, December 14, 1866, and December 11, 1866.
78. Lord Amberley to Lady Russell, no date, in Bertrand Russell, op.cit., vol. 1, p. 12.
79. AC 1 3/1, Lord Amberley to Lady Amberley, October 25, 1864.
80. AC 1 3/4, Lady Amberley to Mrs. Grote, December 14, 1868.
81. AC 1 4/1, Lord Amberley's Journal, September 1860 to February 1864.
82. AC 1 3/1, Lord Amberley to Lady Amberley, February 17, 1864.
83. Ibid.
84. AC 1 3/4, Lady Amberley to Henry Crompton, a positivist and friend, June 5, 1870.
85. AC 1 3/1, Lord Amberley to Lady Amberley, March 15, 1864.
86. AC 1 3/4, Lady Amberley to Helen Taylor, May 26, 1870.
87. AC 1 3/1, Lord Amberley to Lady Amberley, October 22, 1864.
88. AC 1 4/1, from Lord Amberley's "Collection of Miscellaneous Thoughts", September 1860-February 1864.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONTROVERSY BEGINS: LORD AMBERLEY AND MALTHUSIAN BIRTH-CONTROL

Lord Amberley's interests centered on political and economic history, and the subject closest to his heart, upon which he first published and wrote on following his retirement from politics, was that of theological debate. Amberley did, however, devote his attention to other subjects and causes; woman suffrage, for example, was an interest he shared with his wife, Kate Amberley. It is paradoxical that it proved to be the subject of birth-control which gained him the greatest public notoriety and furor, since it would appear that his private references to the subject were never intended to reach the public ear. The commotion caused by their revelation forced Amberley into a defensive stance on an issue with which he was not nearly as intellectually preoccupied as his religious views. Lord Amberley's name came to be intimately and negatively connected with the idea of population limitation, much to his consternation and misfortune.

Before examining the nature of Lord Amberley's Malthusian

views, it would be helpful to begin with an overview of early birth-control propaganda and of the climate of opinion surrounding the subject in the 1860s. Placed in their context, both Amberley's ideas and the violence of what ~~came~~ to be known as the 'Amberley Affair' in 1868 will be better understood.

The topic of family limitation was a very sensitive one throughout the nineteenth century; viewed as an outrage of delicacy, the subject was excluded from all public examination or discussion. A steady stream of birth-control propaganda and controversy came to be felt from the 1820s on, forming what Norman E. Himes calls the period of "quiet percolation"¹ - a limited percolation downward of contraceptive knowledge. This quiet would only be broken, as Peter Fryer and J.A.Banks have shown, by the brief commotion of the Amberley Affair in the late 1860s.² Early birth-control ideas were based on the doctrines of Thomas Malthus. In his Essay on Population (1803), Malthus had argued that reckless overbreeding depleted human resources; as food supplies move in arithmetical progression, population moves in geometric progression, leading to a depletion of the food supplies and a resulting state of misery and vice.³ Malthus thus argued that misery and poverty resulted from human failings rather than from social institutions. Charity and

reform were mere palliatives; the only cure for poverty, in Malthus's opinion, was educating the worker as to the necessity of sexual self-restraint and the deferral of marriage. Malthus did not advocate or condone contraception, however. In the 1820s, alone and unaided, Francis Place ventured upon an attempt to educate the masses. He offered explicit contraceptive information in his "diabolical handbills", which were furtively disseminated in back alleys. In doing so, Place gave birth control a body of social theory ⁴. Utilitarians such as James Mill and Jeremy Bentham also adopted Malthus's concern for population, but declared not only the morality but the social necessity of contraception. ⁵ Birth-control would come to be placed by mid-century as part of a reformist package, linked to the Woman Question, by such writers as John Stuart Mill, although this was a minority opinion in an increasingly conservative atmosphere.

Neo-Malthusians operated in a hostile environment; birth-control was linked to pruriency in the Victorian mind, unmentionable in public and hardly considered to constitute respectable reading material. The ignorance surrounding the subject often led opponents to confuse birth-control with abortion and infanticide and accuse advocates of seeking to undermine the existing family structure. According to

Francis W. Newman in 1871, birth-control was an unnatural vice that amounted to "promiscuous concubinage," which would gravitate "first into the justification of abortion; and next into infanticide."⁶ Another author in 1871 also looked upon the matter with equal horror, convinced it spelled the doom of the nation:

To inoculate English society with French vices; to destroy our unique home-life and home-ideas; to betray the sentiments which have established the purities of our society and glorified us in the eyes of nations; nay, to depreciate at once our manners and our race, is the remedy, God help us! offered by the thinkers, followed by the strange women and chattering disciples of the social philosophy.⁷

So delicate was the subject that both advocates and opponents could only refer to it in the vaguest terms possible as late as the 1870s, for fear of obscenity.

Reputations were besmirched by involvement in this matter; only the most extreme Radicals who had nothing to lose, like the notorious birth-control propagandist Charles Bradlaugh, were prepared to face the severe public censure. John Stuart Mill's youthful Malthusian activities, for example, were unearthed by Abraham Hayward in 1873 in an attempt to block his public memorial.⁸

The staunchest enemy of birth-control was the medical profession; although a few physicians did support the campaign for birth control in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the medical profession as a whole remained adamantly opposed to contraception, despite an increasing concern with the problems of infant mortality, abortion, and infanticide. The medical profession fought against the promotion of habits of immorality, habits which it saw as "so vile in their character, so dishonourable in their development, so degrading in their practice."⁹

A number of reasons may be cited to explain the medical profession's resistance to birth-control. As Angus McLaren notes, the profession was sensitive to the explosive nature of the issue and anxious to establish its professional respectability; its initial response was therefore to declare that the control of fertility was not a medical problem. The Lancet, the most illustrious and respected medical journal, illustrates well the prevailing medical opinion on the subject: the question of "over population" they held to be unworthy of any space or examination in the journal, for it was a "silly and mischievous one", dependent on the "rational defect or obliquity of mind" of those who fall under its sway.¹⁰

According to McLaren, family limitation was viewed as

an inappropriate subject for study by respectable physicians because it was "associated with the activities of non-professionals- the quacks, the retailers of rubber goods and the midwives- who challenged their professional monopoly in medical science."¹¹ Furthermore, doubtful physiology combined with the confusing of religious, moral and social prejudices also plagued medical discussions of family limitation. Physicians continued to confuse abortion and contraception, and, in addition, were convinced that contraception was physically and psychologically harmful.¹² Women, it was believed, were susceptible to a great range of retributive sexual maladies while men faced the prospects of sterility and mental decay. For those who surrendered to the foolish doctrine the moral consequences were very grave: the Lancet concluded that "a woman on whom her husband practises what is euphemistically called 'preventative copulation' is...necessarily brought into the condition of mind of a prostitute." For the male, the practice, "in its actual character and in its remote effects, is in no way distinguishable from masturbation."¹³

The medical profession assumed the responsibility for public morality, and succeeded in blocking all discussion of birth control in its professional journals until the late 1860s. However, as both John Peel and J.A. Banks note, the

medical profession's silence on the subject vanished when it became evident in the 1860s that the issue could no longer be ignored.¹⁴ Medical journals were provoked into the first explicit mention of contraception as a result of the outcry raised against Lord Amberley in the autumn of 1868, when it became known that Amberley not only himself advocated birth control, but proposed that the medical profession do so as well. A great deal of the hostility voiced in England towards birth control, and its advocages in this period, according to Peter Fryer, was aroused "during or as a result of the Amberley affair of 1868-69".¹⁵ The medical profession reacted with indignation and disgust at Amberley's Malthusian speech of 1868, as shall be explored in this chapter.

Despite the profession's continued condemnation of the use of contraceptives, the British birth rate declined in the latter half of the nineteenth century (from 34.1 per thousand in 1870-72 to 24.5 per thousand in 1910-12).¹⁶ In the 1860s and 1870s an extension of birth control propaganda was directed to the middle class. In 1872, for example, Montague Cookson in an article entitled "The Morality of Married Life", added a new argument by addressing the audience "which occupies a middle place between the plutocracy and the masses."¹⁷ He draped his argument for

family limitation not only in economic terms or in connection to the woman question, but wrote as well in terms of the intellectual horizons of his class. Marriage and the ensuing unreasonable production of children involved a break in the education of humanity "incompatible with the continuity of moral growth, a surrender of freedom."¹⁸ During the next 15 years, Robert Dale Owen's Moral Physiology (1831) and Charles Knowlton's Fruits of Philosophy (1841) were republished and some anonymous pamphlets were published as well, such as "Valuable Hints" (1866), "The Power and Duty of Parents to Limit Their Children" (1868), and others. The most popular and influential book published at this time was authored by the physician George Drysdale: Elements of Social Science: or Physical, Sexual, and Natural Religion. So hostile was the climate of opinion that Drysdale did not dare acknowledge his authorship of the book in his own lifetime. Although only five-and-a half of its six hundred pages were devoted to an analysis of 'preventative sexual intercourse', it was republished in many large editions in many translations. The English version under the changed title of The Elements of Social Science sold in all 88,000 copies.¹⁹

The Amberley Affair can thus be located in a very

sensitive era in the history of birth control; while open discussion of the subject was not encouraged, public opinion within the middle class appeared to be in the process of change. The conjunction of the Amberley affair and the impact of the birth control propaganda in the 1860s and 1870s, according to J.A. Banks, may have been of some importance; this conjunction, "while not yet bringing round the force of middle class publicly expressed opinion to the contraceptive point of view, nevertheless could hardly have been negligible." 20

George Drysdale's Elements of Social Science appears to have been instrumental in sharpening the young Amberley's interest in the Malthusian question, and later, in deepening the scandal surrounding him. The following passage appeared in his journal for the second of February, 1864. Amberley was in his twenty-first year:

I am reading a most interesting book recommended by J.S. Laurie on 'Physical, Sexual, & Natural Religion' in which the author (a medical man) seems to overturn all the moral theories on the subject of Chastity &c. As a cure for poverty (being also a political economist) he recommends preventative sexual intercourse, with a view to which various expedients are subjected. If true, the book throws a new light on the whole Malthusian

question & provides a new outlet for the great social difficulty by much easier means than I had ever thought of: the author's very materialistic notions offend me; but there is one great merit in the work & that is the continual protests he raises against the utterly foolish delicacy which prevails on these most important subjects.²¹

Amberley's journal does not show further evidence of his interest in the matter, and his correspondence is no more indicative of involvement. Given his lack of discursiveness on the matter, it is difficult to determine the reasons for his interest, the degree of his intellectual commitment, and any influence other than Drysdale's book. It is possible to assume that John Stuart Mill, given his close relationship to Amberley and his own strong opinions on the issue of Malthusianism, may have influenced and supported Amberley on this question. No evidence, however, can be found of discussion upon this subject in the correspondence between Amberley and Mill; the influence can only remain a conjecture.

Amberley's involvement in the Malthusian question began rather innocuously and was brought to the public ear against his intentions. It will be the contention of this chapter that the scandal of 1868-69 was very much out of

proportion to Amberley's actual intellectual and personal commitment to the issue. Given the climate of opinion at the time, it is doubtful that Lord Amberley would have chosen to bring the issue of birth control out into the public; prudence would preclude such a decision, especially in the light of both his prominent position and reputation, and the prestigious career that promised to unfold before him.

Amberley's involvement in the Malthusian question began with the London Dialectical Society, following a letter from the organization of the 14th of May, 1868:

A philosophical Association has been recently established called 'The London Dialectical Society', founded upon the principle of absolute liberty of thought & speech, and having for its object the unbiased consideration of all those important questions, which have at various times, occupied the Attention of Philosophers & all thinking men.

Its members at present about 80, are persons of Education & respectability, & comprise graduates & undergraduates of Universities, Members of the Medical & Legal Professions, & Gentlemen otherwise engaged in literary & Scientific pursuits.

The Council, aware of the liberality of your Lordship's views, are desirous of your patronage & co-operation, & have directed me to communicate with your Lordship, and to state that it would afford us much pleasure if your Lordship would confer upon us the honour of becoming one of our Vice-Presidents.

We beg to observe that the duties are merely nominal, indeed, the word 'Patron' would more correctly express the nature of the position.

I have the honour to remain, my Lord,
with profound respect,
your Lordship's most obedient & faithful Servant,
D.H. Dyte.²²

Lord Amberley became Vice-President of the Dialectical Society, which was essentially a private debating society. The constitution of the Society is interesting, throwing light on its nature and purpose:

That Truth is of all things most to be desired, and is best elicited by the conflict of opposing opinions.

That the Society should afford a field for the philosophical consideration of all questions without reserve, but especially of those comprised in the domain of ethics, metaphysics, and theology.

That it should be unsectarian in the widest possible sense, and allow the most absolute freedom of debate, no subject whatever being excluded from consideration except on the ground triviality.

The following remarks by Professor Bain may be considered to embody the leading principle of the Society, and show the origin of the title:-

'The essence of the dialectical method is to place side by side, with every doctrine and its reasons, all opposing doctrines and their reasons, allowing these to be stated in full by the persons holding them. No doctrine is to be held as expounded, far less proved, unless it stands in parallel array to every other counter theory, with all that can be said for each...²³

It was Amberley's involvement in these Society debates which would lead to the stirrings of public controversy and cause him much discomfort and misfortune, although the debates of the Society had never been intended for public scrutiny. His first activity in the Dialectical Society involved a debate on prostitution, held on May 27, 1868, raised by a paper of Dr. C. Drysdale, brother of George Drysdale. Amberley reported on the meeting at length in his journal. The meeting somehow reached the press, the Daily Post providing a report of the proceedings on the 2nd of November 1868. It was a meeting of July 1st, however, which led to Amberley's troubles, a meeting of which he kept no record in his journal. The meeting was reported to the press in the same manner as was the first meeting, without the members' intention or even knowledge.

The meeting, which he chaired, was on a paper read by ex-tutor J.S. Laurie (who, it is to be remembered, introduced Drysdale's Elements to Amberley), called "On the Happiness of the Community as Affected by Large Families." Speakers included the birth control propagandist Charles Bradlaugh, and Dr. Charles Drysdale. The Medical Press and Circular for July 22nd, 1868²⁴ published a detailed report of the meeting. As the journal reports it,

Amberley thought the subject brought forward by Mr. Laurie to be of first rate importance, and that there was no doubt that the prevention of over-population was the most satisfactory method of attacking the evil of poverty. He was glad to hear from Mr. Bradlaugh that the working classes were beginning to debate this vital point, but he went on, the influence of the clergy, the reticence of society, and the natural passions of mankind, were opposed to prevention of over-population. Amberley believed that women would naturally have a stronger feeling against large families, had they any say in the matter, and if their opinions were more heard. The conclusion that Lord Amberley drew was that if Mr. Malthus was correct, and that, if ever there was to be an escape from poverty, it would be from the limitation of family size. While emigration was good, it was not rapid enough to relieve the pressure caused by rapid multiplication. Amberley objected to celibacy, and believed that all would naturally object to war and famine as solutions to the problem. It thus appeared to Amberley to be a medical question how this could best be accomplished without injury to the health. In America, he observed, ladies were in the habit of keeping back their families, but the methods they employed seemed to him to be dangerous to health. "Hence," he concluded, he "should much like to hear a discussion as to whether some innocuous

measure might not be discovered."²⁵

While Amberley's speech and proposal seem innocent from today's perspective, his suggestion of involving the medical profession in the birth control issue horrified the profession and sealed his fate. Calm prevailed for ten days after the report, and then the storm erupted, with a violence that was to escalate as the weeks went by. The British Medical Journal provided an account of the meeting in its issue of August the 1st. "There is in London a Society called the Dialectical", the report began, "where ladies and gentlemen discuss together the most delicate subjects". The journal refrained from judgment until the end of the account, ending with the words: "We believe that our profession will repudiate with indignation and disgust such functions as these gentlemen wish to assign to it."²⁶ The following week, The British Medical Journal reported with satisfaction that Dr. Edmonds, who had been present at the meeting of July 1st, wished the journal "to intimate that he would not by any means be a party to assigning to the profession any such anti-genetic functions, or such as they would be likely to repudiate." Another medical member also requested the journal to state that he was not disposed to "remain connected with a Society which gravely discusses the propriety

of assigning to medical men the intimated function of teaching females how to indulge their passions and limit their families". The journal concluded: "We publish with great satisfaction this protest, which we think honourable to the authors of it."

27

Members of the Dialectical Society were thus already retreating from an increasingly embarrassing situation, medical men fearful for their reputations. At this time the secretary of the Society, D.H. Dyte, deemed it necessary to inform Lord Amberley of the publication of the meeting and of the medical profession's growing indignation:

I think it right to inform your lordship that owing to the publication of a wholly unauthorized report of a recent meeting of the Society, comments concerning your lordship and the Society have appeared in 'The British Medical Journal'. I beg to enclose the parts of the journal containing these observations, together with a copy of my reply to the same.

Similar articles have appeared in the 'Medical Times and Gazette', copies of which I will likewise procure and immediately transmit to your Lordship.

I wish to add that the Council and indeed the whole Society always have been, and still are, almost unanimously opposed, most strongly, (to) the publication of reports of our meetings, a proceeding which, we believe, would have the effect of fettering discussion. 28

A few days later Dyte again wrote to Lord Amberley, emphasizing the undesirability of stirring public interest in the Society's affairs. Dyte also provided clues to the leak of information:

...I perfectly agree with your Lordship as to the inexpediency of publishing reports of the Society's proceedings... The Society is too young, and public opinion too unripe & unhealthy to permit of anything of the kind without causing much mischief and annoyance. The publication of the present occasion, however, was, I believe, not due to the admission of strangers as your Lordship appears to think, but, I rather suspect, to one Member or two Members of the Society, whose zeal for the propagation of Population Doctrines () than discretion... There is nevertheless considerable laxity with regard to the admission of strangers, and I have frequently had the occasion to bring this matter before the notice of the Council. It is now proposed that visitors shall not be admitted except on personal introduction by a Member....29

Lord Amberley must have derived little comfort from Dyte's assurances, for the debate showed no sign of abating, as other medical journals joined in the fray. The Medical Times and Gazette began its attack on Amberley in its issue of August 8th, in a more openly hostile fashion than the British Medical Journal. The article, entitled "Viscount

Amberley's Insult to the Medical Profession", began in the following manner:

We are compelled to notice- but for the present very briefly- a most scandalous insult offered by Viscount Amberley to our Profession- one we can only account for in on the supposition of an entire oblivion of all difference between right and wrong, moral and physical.³⁰

The article deplored Lord Amberley's "insolent questions as to how far medical men are willing to degrade women, and make themselves accomplices to unnatural crimes." The doctrine of population, the journal concluded, was merely set up by "such wretches as desire to enjoy the privilege of selfish lust, and to avoid the duties of matrimony."³¹

The Medical Times and Gazette returned to the subject in its issue of August the 15th, in an article called "Is Prevention Better than Cure?" Once again, the journal took particular offense at Lord Amberley's view that family limitation was a medical question:

We cannot find words sufficiently strong to express our utter abhorrence

and condemnation of the idea of discussing such a question as a purely medical one. It is not a medical question, and will never become so until others, some of which we shall attempt to indicate, shall have been established in the affirmative.³²

In its defense of medical ethics, the journal raised other questions of morality and political economy, revealing how little prepared the profession was prepared to enter upon such a complex and distasteful subject.

1. Are we the absolute and irresponsible controllers of the circumstances of our own existence?
2. Is the subtle principle which we call life so much our own property that we have the right to decide for or against its transmission to others to come after us, when we have, by the indulgence of our own instincts or passions, called into action natural forces, which if interfered with, would pass through various stages of embryonic development?
3. Is the relative over-population of one country or continent only to be remedied by such measures, so long as many vast tracts of land presenting every requisite for human habitation are allowed to remain absolutely uninhabited?³³

Only when these questions would be answered in the affirmative would the medical profession meddle with a subject "which now under the wholesome restrictions of law is limited

to dens of obscurity and vice"- a subject of which the profession was "hardly conscious", were it not dragged into light by such as Amberley. "For the honour of our Profession, for the truest and best interests of our country, and in the name of public decency and domestic purity," medical men deplored the idea of introducing 'unnatural vices' into their families and homes.³⁴

The medical profession thus took the responsibility of protecting not only its own best interests and honour, but that of society's as well. The question of birth control was intimately linked with indecency and pruriency; aware of this, the self-conscious profession denounced Amberley's proposal. As the Medical Times and Gazette of August 29th stated,

We have...repeatedly protested against any violation of the strictest reserve and delicacy in matters pertaining to sex, and we have warned our Medical brethren of the peril that will befall us if we once allow the public to suppose that we, as a profession, ever meddle with practices which may furnish a handle for accusations of indelicacy or pruriency, or interference with nature.³⁵

Once the medical profession became "an accomplice to the passions and frailties of mankind", or meddled with matters

of a prurient taint, medicine would no longer "be a profession for a gentlemen."³⁶ In condoning birth control, the medical profession would become an accomplice in filling married life with "unnatural contrivances", and in the case of the unmarried, become "aiders and abettors in immorality" and general debauchery. In their outrage, the medical journals would charge Lord Amberley with advocating abortion, infanticide, and even prostitution.³⁷

The medical profession was thus first and foremost preoccupied with its own safety; all the journal attacks on Lord Amberley amounted to a repudiation of his mild and private suggestion that the profession become involved in fertility control. Had Amberley never made this suggestion, the scandal may never have occurred at all.

Lord and Lady Amberley were both much dismayed by this unexpected turn of events. Lady Amberley wrote in her journal on the 13th of August of friends informing them of "mysterious reports against Amberley." "We heard from an elector in London," she wrote, "that the over-population discussion at the Dialectical Society had got out. Everyone is much shocked."³⁸ Amberley was very anxious to clear his name and bring an end to this controversy. He wrote a

letter to the editor of the Medical Times and Gazette, which appeared on the 19th of August. Before correcting the grave misapprehension of the paper, Amberley remarked to the editor that it was "most unusual to make observations delivered at a meeting of a private character the subject of public comment in a newspaper."³⁹ Dealing with the accusation that he had asked an "insolent question as to how far medical men were willing to degrade women & make themselves accomplices in unnatural crimes", Amberley defended himself as follows:

...I admit that medical men might properly have felt insulted had I really proposed that they should make themselves accomplices in unnatural crimes. But I can assure you, that so far from desiring them to do anything of the sort, I should consider any medical man who did so quite unworthy of his profession. In fact, I alluded to certain malpractices which are common in America, but not, as might appear from the report, to recommend them but solely to reprobate and condemn them. It would not be possible in the compass of a letter, to explain my views on so complicated a question as that of population, but I trust that you will perceive that you have wholly mistaken me in supposing that I meant to advocate the commission of such crimes as those to which you allude...⁴⁰

Lord Amberley, in addressing exclusively the charges of

advocating the 'unnatural crimes' of abortion and infanticide, sidestepped the question of birth control itself entirely. The Medical Times and Gazette answered Amberley's letter in the same issue. The journal was glad to hear that Amberley's real sentiments were "so sound and honourable". While happy to make public his exposition, the journal could not resist waving a moralistic finger:

...we must say that the affair furnishes the most convincing proof of the indiscretion of selecting such a subject for discussion and of publishing the proceedings. The subject is so slippery, it involves in its very nature so near an approach to evil, that sentiments uttered with the best intentions seem to bear base interpretations.⁴¹

With a hint of its former hostility, the journal concluded "The moral is, that if people will amuse themselves with dirt, they must not wonder if they get splashed."

Unfortunately for Lord Amberley, the indignation and protest roused by the July 1st meeting was not to be restricted to the medical press; his speech reached the lay press at the critical moment of his acceptance as candidate for South Devon. What began as a warm and optimistic welcome of the promising young lord, soon turned into a disagreeable, at times violent affair, which thereafter cured Amberley

of all wish for a political career.

Before the ventilation of his Malthusian views to the lay press, Amberley's political career had been full of promise. An analysis of Amberley's welcome for the General Election of 1868 renders his sudden change of fortune even more tragic. When suggested as Liberal candidate for South Devon, Lord Amberley was described by the Western Times as "animated by the high principles which have for ages been the characteristic of the House of Russell."⁴² Another correspondent wrote:

I am told Viscount Amberley, Earl Russell's eldest son, would be a desirable candidate to represent any Liberal constituency, and it has occurred to me, taking into account his family connexions with the county, and the signal services of his father to the cause of Reform, that he would be an eminently fitting second Liberal candidate for Exeter. I am told he is a young man of promising talents and progressive opinions; in fact, in the true sense of the word, an orthodox Liberal....⁴³

The Western and Daily Mercury of August the 8th 1868 was confident of Amberley's electoral success for South Devon:

There can be no doubt that Lord Amberley's

candidature will answer the highest requirements of the South Devon Liberals. He will fight an earnest and plucky battle, and will be pretty sure of success. The announcement of his selection, or rather election, will be received with enthusiasm everywhere.⁴⁴

Indeed, Amberley had all the chances of success before him; his education had been a life's apprenticeship to the work of a statesman, and Liberals and Liberal papers held him in high esteem. The latter regarded him as "an original thinker; with deep insights, definite and advanced opinions, and strong and earnest convictions",⁴⁵ a young man prepared to go "far beyond his father".⁴⁶

Circumstances changed dramatically, however, when the lay press discovered the Medical Times and Gazette's articles, seizing, as Bertrand Russell writes, "on the opportunity of making political capital out of such an indiscretion on the part of the son of the late Prime Minister."⁴⁷ The Conservative Exeter and Plymouth Gazette of August the 14th, in an article headed "Extraordinary Imputation Against Lord Amberley", quoted the Medical Times and Gazette's article of August the 7th. The paper repeated to the public the "Whig lordling's" gross insults

to both the medical profession and the women of England and America, and concluded:

...It is hardly credible that such a proposition can have emanated from one who lays claim to the title of an English nobleman. We see no reason to doubt the authority we quote, however; and if the charge against the Viscount is true, we hope and believe that wherever he appears in Devonshire his candidature will be treated with scorn and contempt, and that he will be scouted by every decent man and woman. Is he fit for a legislator who would introduce into virtuous England not only the political license of America, but what we cannot err in calling one of the most horrible of its vices? If his reported words express aright his meaning, this young Viscount councils the pure wives and mothers of England to commit an offense which the law of England punishes with penal servitude, councils them, in fact, to degrade themselves below the level of the brutes that perish. For the sake of our common humanity let us hope that there is some mistake about this matter, and that the scion of a noble English house has not, as represented, perpetrated so unpardonable an offense against morality and civilization.⁴⁸

What had initially been a protest on the part of the medical profession soon became enmeshed in a larger political campaign, closely touching Amberley's electoral prospects. As the Tory Globe of August the 25th noted, the heir of the House of Russell had been placed in "an extremely

unpleasant position with respect to society and which is even more important to his Lordship's immediate prospects, with the constituency of South Devon." ⁴⁹ The Globe justified the intrusion of the press into the matter, stating: "It is not only perfectly natural but incumbent upon the public press generally to lend its aid to the organs of a highly respectable profession by making it known to the world that they have so repudiated and protested." The Globe had no desire to "impugn the character of Lord Amberley as a gentleman", or to question his freedom of speech and opinion. Nevertheless, the incident clearly demonstrated the young Lord to be unfit for statesmanship:

It cannot be shut out from sight, that the mind which early in manhood, but a very short period after it has emerged from the immaturity of youth, has the temerity to meddle and muddle with such subjects as the limitation of families by artificial means, cannot have formed a just estimate of its strengths and weaknesses, can never have grasped the depths of its profundity, and is in the very nature of things incapacitated from a statesmanlike and eclectic view of the politico-social system. ⁵⁰

With Amberley's "prurient tastes" and "overweening sense of self-importance" in mind, the Globe doubted that the electors of South Devon or of any other constituency "would

consent to be represented by him in Parliament."⁵¹

Amberley decided not to ignore the matter, as it showed little indication of subsiding by itself. He prepared himself to answer the slander publicly, and Lady Amberley wrote in her diary: "As he never said anything of the sort it is easy to meet it. Kelley said if true it wd. be fatal to his chance & all the Comtee* were in a state about it."⁵² At Plymouth on August the 18th, he made his denial with "manly indignation", as the Western Morning News related, hurling back "the foul aspersion of his character which unscrupulous opponents have dared for political purposes to lay to his charge."⁵³ Although the subject was a very delicate one, Amberley answered point by point the charges made against him. His actual words, from the Western Morning News of the following day, are as follows:

Under ordinary circumstances I should most strongly have objected to any such question, but these are not ordinary circumstances, for an accusation has been made against me which I would gladly have passed over in silence- (A Voice: I dare say you would)- but nevertheless that accusation having been made I do feel compelled, however unpleasant it may be to myself, before the public, to say one word in self-defense. (hear, hear) I have been accused of being anxious that

* Amberley's Liberal election Committee.

medical men should lend themselves to the commission of unnatural offenses (Hear, hear). That is the charge and I am obliged to state it in order to answer it. Gentlemen, I feel bound to tell you out of respect both for my own character and out of respect for you that the charge is false (Cries of 'Bravo', and loud cheers, and a Voice: It's only a Tory dodge). So far from desiring that any medical man should assist at the commission of such crime, I should consider that any medical man who lent himself in any way to its commission was absolutely degraded, and unworthy to be looked upon as a respectable man of society (Cheers). 54

Amberley reminded his audience that he had not been the one to bring the matter before the public, for he had never at any public meeting or in any other public place said one word about it. He hoped his opponents would let the matter rest:

I have been exposed to a gross misconception. It is impossible for me to ignore the purpose for which this matter has been raised (Hear, hear). I cannot blind myself that it is started as an election cry, but having denied the accusation, I do not trust in the interest of common decency, if for no other reason, that it will be suffered to rest, and if my opponents are not willing to take that course, and still persist in using against me means which I should scorn to use against the bitterest of personal enemies, then I would venture to tell them that it is possible to overshoot the mark and they may find that slander and calumny, convenient as they may be

for the moment, are weapons with which it is dangerous to play, and that the honourable and manly spirit of Englishmen revolts against this attempt which has been made to fasten upon me an infamous imputation, to which I am not justly liable (Cheers) ⁵⁵

Lord Amberley repeated his denial two days later, at Kingsbridge, on August the 20th. Upon being asked once again if the report in the Medical Times were true, he replied:

After the reply which I gave yesterday to a question of a similar nature I had hoped that nothing further would have been said upon this matter (Hear, hear). I think the feeling of the meeting will be with me that after that denial it is well that the subject should be allowed to rest (a Voice: The answer was not explicit). ⁵⁶

The next day, at Dartmouth, Amberley made a third denial, thus completing his tour through the southern division of Devonshire. The account, from a local paper, reveals the emotional, often nasty nature of Victorian elections:

(Mr. Gutcliffe) during the address of Mr. Collier*, endeavoured to drown his senses of that gentleman's eloquence by amusing himself by reading a

* A Conservative and a supporter of Lord Amberley, respectively.

printed slip of paper handed him by a reporter of a Conservative paper, entitled 'Lord Amberley on Over Population'. As soon as Mr. Collier had finished, Mr. Cutcliffe again ascended the platform and was about to read the paragraph, when a gentleman took it from him and threw it away- an act that elicited tremendous cheering from the electors.

Lord Amberley, however, was not ashamed of what the document contained, recovered it and handed it to Mr. Cutcliffe, who commenced reading it to the meeting with an air of delight. It was as follows- ...A Correspondant informs us that Lord Amberley denies the accuracy of our report of the proceedings of the Dialectical Society, published in our impression of July 22nd, at the same time calling upon us to verify our report. To this request we are happy to comply, as the gentleman who represented us at the meeting, upon reference to his notes, informs us that the report is strictly correct. The wording may be somewhat different"- (cries of 'Oh, Oh! and much uproar)- so much so that Mr. Cutcliffe again made a hasty retreat to that part of the hall best adapted for him. 57

The medical profession, however, was unmoved by Amberley's denials, believing them merely to be out a desire to conciliate the electors of South Devon. Lord Amberley's official presence at the society and the adoption by a subsequent speaker of the views he now repudiated, was proof enough that his views were accurately represented. 58

The Liberal and Conservative papers hastened to exploit

the situation, attacking each other and each other's candidates in a battle that lasted throughout the election. The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, identifying Lord Amberley as part of a breed of unscrupulous Radicals, wrote: "Lord Amberley, and the other preachers of his brief and dismal creed, touches a subject... only to besmear it, and rob it of everything which can render it attractive, interesting, or elevating to the mind or soul."⁵⁹ The Devon Weekly Times attacked the Editor of the Conservative Squeaker for encouraging "gross personalities" and "scurrility", commenting that this "cunning and canting method" was "characteristic of the Tory prints"⁶⁰ Charlie Wescomb's paper, The Telegram, was attacked by Liberal papers for pelting "dirty missiles" at Amberley:

That Charlie Wescomb should be base enough to turn the discussion of a philosophical society to an electioneering account, and try to blast the character of Lord Amberley and ruin the peace of mind of those nearest and dearest to that young noble, is what some people who know Charlie too well, will not be surprised to hear; but that the...Conservative Party should use Charlie's dirty suggestions, that they should pay him for his base slanders and unmentionable insinuations, is what we did not expect. It only shows what the Tory Party will

do when they fancy they can
rouse bigotry and ignorance
against an opponent whose life
and morals are not open to any
just accusation.⁶¹

Press animosities took a poetic turn, as the Liberals
claimed the Conservatives

...took up a ribald pen,
which they eyed exultingly:
'If abuse won't do,' they grinning said,
'We'll try obscenity!'

A loathsome tale, for prurient minds,
Well spiced they now reprint;
Into each sickening detail plunged,
Without reserve or stint.

...But Amberley, with cool disdain,
Their calumny defies;
And on a conscience pure and clear
He tranquilly relies.⁶²

Poetry also followed Amberley into his own home, as
an anonymous poet sent him the following verses, headed
"Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur. Hor. Sat. I, 1.69:

If you could, my Lord, change your baptismal name,
You might indeed the name of Onan claim,
That being now the name through Devon flown,
By which hereafter you will there be known.

The electors of South Devon, he was sure,

...will shortly to his Lordship prove
That they have wives and daughters whom they love.
And whom they will take care they will not make
The prey of such a filthy, foulmouth'd Rake.
Can there be any now who will deride
The startling fact which cannot be denied
That his Lordship advocates infanticide?⁶³

Although Lord Amberley had made three firm public denials of his advocacy of 'unnatural crimes', and was fairly confident the matter would be laid to rest, the scandal only seemed to assume graver proportions. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Liverpool, Alexander Goss, preached a sermon against Amberley, accusing him of a project for preventing an increase of population "by stifling children in their birth". The report was made by the Daily Post on the 2nd of November:

God forbid that the wicked and impious idea should ever find a place in the councils of the noblemen of this nation; yet it had been promulgated by the son of Earl Russell, and had found its way into the public prints. 64

A series of letters were exchanged between Goss and Amberley, the Bishop claiming that the Daily Post's report had been inaccurate. Amberley angrily lashed out at him:

It is happily not often that the pulpit is prostituted to the purpose of making such an attack as this on the private character of an individual. But should you again design to make use of it for such an object, it will be desirable for your own sake that you should have some better warrant for your assertions than the loose & careless declamations of anonymous writers in obscure journals.⁶⁵

Public disapproval and outcry did not fall solely on Amberley's birth control opinions, however. As Amberley was attempting to extricate himself from this first scandal, his free-thinking was found to be almost as distasteful by his opponents. The clergy in particular opposed his Sunday Lectures Bill, his support of Gladstone's policy of the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland and of the opening of Oxford and Cambridge to Dissenters. "Lord Amberley ought to be opposed by every friend of the Sabbath," stated the Secretary of the Lord's Day Association in the Tory Exeter Gazette, "He is one of its worst enemies."⁶⁶ His opponents claimed that his irreligion surely discredited him as possible member of Parliament, and placards expressing disapproval of Amberley's "atheism" were paraded during the election campaign. The South Devon election Committee was in quite a state over the controversy that surrounded Amberley and the torrent of abuse that rained

down upon him from every side. "Poor things they must think they have a kettle of fish to fry, what with Malthusianism & heterodoxy...", Lady Amberley wrote to her husband during one of his campaign tours.⁶⁷ The Committee was very low about Lord Amberley's success.

The Nomination date was set for the 24th of November; the Amberley affair had been raging for over three months. The Amberleys were much excited, their spirits hardly dampened by the unpleasantness of the past months. As Kate wrote to her mother Lady Stanley, "As the time comes near the fight gets very exciting & ours will be dreadfully close. Amberley is already so excited he lies awake very much at night,"⁶⁸ Lord Amberley expressed his worries to John Stuart Mill: "Unfortunately the Tories are very strong here, & if I can succeed in beating them at all it will still be a very close contest....Indeed it will be a wonderful thing if a Liberal can be brought in at all for S. Devon, the territorial influence being nearly all against us, & likely as you may guess to be unsparingly used."⁶⁹

The event did prove to be very far from dull; as the Western Daily reported, the proceedings were marked by "the greatest possible excitement, and at times by much uproar."⁷⁰ At least ten thousand persons were said to be present at the Plymouth event. Much of the uproar

was caused by the display in front of the hustings of placards of "indecent character", connected to the population question. This placard was thought to have been planned by the Tories; the Liberal section of the crowd was "much excited by the appearance of the board, and it seemed as if a free fight would ensue," the Western Daily Mercury related.⁷¹ Though the placard was eventually removed, it was again flaunted in Amberley's face when he rose to speak, causing great disorder in the crowd:

Ultimately the indecent board was pluckily captured by Mr. F.P. Balkwill, Mr. Eliot Square, and others from the hustings who held it on high, and though Mr. Balkwill did not escape without being 'punched' by one of the navvies or farm labourers carrying the board, and several persons were knocked down, the movement succeeded, for the board was completely smashed up, and the pieces carried off in triumph, amid great cheering.⁷²

The placard in question showed Vice-Count Amberley, "The Quack Doctor", selling "depopulation mixture" according to "the New French and American Systems". Much to everyone's horror, these "filthy cartoons" were forwarded by post to respectable ladies, and men actually went to meetings offering for sale purported contraceptive

devices to the crowds. The placard, which was exhibited "before the blushing faces of our wives and daughters",⁷³ was rumoured to have been authored by a Tory clergyman.

Amberley lost the election, defeated by Sir Massey Lopes and Samuel T. Kekewich. The number of votes recorded were: Massey Lopes 3,235; Kekewich 3,233; Amberley 2,694.⁷⁴ Lady Amberley wrote in her journal that her husband was "very much disappointed."⁷⁵ The Times remarked that the Tory success appeared to have "exasperated" the populace in many parts of the division: "At Kingsbridge the windows of the Conservative Committee rooms were broken. At Tavistock clergymen were pelted in the streets. At Hatherleigh a riot occurred..."⁷⁶ At his declaration, Amberley expressed no personal regret, but hoped that "all unpleasant recollections would, however, be banished by everyone".⁷⁷

Much disgusted with the Tory's use of the birth control affair on the platform, Lady Amberley refused to shake hands with Sir Massey Lopes, Amberley's successful opponent. "As a lady, as a woman & as a wife I decline to make his acquaintance", she declared on the hustings.⁷⁸ Although Sir Massey Lopes repudiated all "personalities" on his part, claiming in his election speech that he had "never directly or indirectly said anything against Lord Amberley",

Liberal newspapers were much disgusted. A Plymouth paper charged that he had won the election by the "vilest and most abominable vilification of his opponent". The article continued:

It is too notorious that the offensive cartoons and placards have been traced to a quarter very near to Sir Massey himself. It was too evident that the offensive placard which caused Lord and Lady Amberley to refuse to shake hands with Sir Massey...was the actual work of some member of Sir Massey's Committee, who might if they chose have suppressed it. Will the public for a moment believe that Sir Massey had no power to suppress a large placard exhibited very close to himself...? It was also evident that the innumerable placards against Lord Amberley, which were circulated and posted in every nook and corner of the division, and often carried about in the pockets of ladies and clergymen, had the impress of authority, and were sanctioned by the leaders of the party.⁷⁹

Sir Massey sent his denials to Lord Amberley, through Mr. Colliers, a supporter of Amberley. "I have never heard of the so-called Dialectical Society," he wrote, "before I saw it noticed in the London Press & Lord Amberley's name connected with it." He expressed his regret that Amberley "should have reason to complain of having his objects & intentions mis-represented"; he hoped that

he and his Committee would equally sympathize with him "for also having been so much mis-represented during the late Contest."⁸⁰

Reporting on the election results, the Times commented that Amberley had "contrived...to shock many of the constituents he sought to win by the strangeness of his opinions, and could not overcome this prejudice by force of character."⁸¹ A letter to the editor from a member of Amberley's Liberal Committee in response to these words proves to be very revealing. The author contended that Amberley had lost the election precisely by the force of his character, contrary to the Times' theory, and by his attempt to run the campaign by standing on principle alone:

Lord "Amberley's force of character" was the despair of his Committee and strengthened the prejudice of his electors. He determined to stand only on the principle he represented- support of Mr. Gladstone's policy- and firmly declined to condemn the methods so lavishly ~~repeated~~ to by our opponents. He steadfastly refused to canvas the electors personally, while our two opponents were unweariedly occupied in canvassing during three months. He never would notice the innumerable misrepresentations, not to say calumnies, that were busily circulated concerning him. He disregarded many of the well-meant suggestions of a zealous committee...

Notwithstanding our entreaties, he positively declined to pay any attention to a placard headed 'Is Lord Amberley a Christian?' and which most effectively injured our cause.

He failed as nearly all the young candidates have failed who have attempted to stand on principles alone during the general election, and whom you deservedly ridiculed... for 'expecting to take the world by storm'.⁸²

The Malthusian affair turned the General Election of 1868 into an unpleasant event, with many bruised feelings resulting for all parties. Many angry letters were exchanged, and loud cries of misrepresentation were heard from both sides. As a surviving eyewitness recounted to Bertrand Russell:

A more scandalous and shameful proceeding I have never witnessed in any election I have ever been connected with. Of course, at that time I was far too young to understand the significance of what I saw, and I remember in asking what it all meant was told it meant something we ought not to talk about.⁸³

The Western Daily Mercury proudly asserted that Lord Amberley had "borne abuse as the rocks bear rain, glistening under it."⁸⁴ Amberley, however, was rather depressed by

the loss of the election and by the rough treatment he had received there. Friends and family were quick to support him and assure him that it was but a brief setback to his political career. "I am very sorry you have been so vexed, & so ill-treated about S. Devon", Earl Russell wrote to his son. "I was thinking when I advised you to go there too much of my old days." Nevertheless, his exertions had not been thrown away, Earl Russell assured him: "You have gained experience, facility in speaking, & if not overtired with your efforts will be fit, a year hence, or sooner to address a more propitious body of followers electors."⁸⁵ Lord Granville and the Gladstones wrote kind letters to Amberley, expressing their confidence that he would win the next time. The historian William Leckey assured Lady Amberley that there were some defeats more noble than many victories:

There is little merit in a mere nobody holding unpopular opinions but for one who like Lord Amberley had a great political career opening to him so easily and so naturally, to have relinquished it for a time rather than profess popular opinions which he did not believe or repudiate unpopular opinions which he did not believe is certainly not a thing in which it would be painful to look back.⁸⁶

John Stuart Mill also expressed his regret to Lord Amberley: "Your conduct on this matter has been so brave and generous that it will infallibly bear good fruit in the future", he assured him. As to the press attacks, "these snarls are the best testimony that one is doing work which really requires to be done, and which all the world is not yet ready to do".⁸⁷

It is interesting to note that the public reception of Lord Amberley's Malthusian views during the South Devon election was not as uniformly hostile as the press debates would seem to indicate. Many of the electors during the election campaign and the election itself sympathized with and supported Amberley, shocked by the Tory's dishonourable use of the Malthusian affair. Amberley even received a letter from a woman unknown to him, heartily supporting his advocacy of family limitation. The letter stands in stark contrast to the medical profession's views and to the extreme delicacy surrounding the subject:

...Being very much abroad in early life, and observing the comfort that resulted from small families I was led to enquire, how it was, that there was such a strange contrast to England, & I found that there was prevention both

simple and perfectly harmless-
 On coming to England...I consulted
 three old friends in the medical
 profession..., they all agreed
 that my theory might be correct,
 but they had never thought seriously
 on the subject- After the birth of
 my second child I thought I should
 have quite enough to do to clothe
 and educate them I therefore resolved
 to make the trial, the result was
 success, without any inconvenience,
 but rather a comfort- I then tried
 the plan with others, and the same
 was the result; until a fancied
 security led them to imagine that
 nature had acted and not art. Increase
 was the result. I agree that it (is) a
 moral and a religious question not to
 increase population, when starvation
 or disease is to be the certain
 inheritance.

I have much wished all my life
 to make the subject more generally known
 but the ignorant prejudice against it
 has prevented me...Should your
 Lordship desire it I should be happy
 to inform you of my experience and be
 glad to aid in carrying out a project
 which would be a general blessing if
 adopted.⁸⁸

Several newspapers, both Liberal and Conservative,
 defended Amberley's Malthusian views as well. The
Western Daily Mercury printed the speech of a Mr. Rooker
 at Modbury on October the 12th, who had stated that
 Amberley's opponents either did not understand the question
 of population limitation, or understanding, directly
 misrepresented it. He continued:

There is not a man on this platform, there ought not to be a man or child in this crowd of any intelligence who does not know that was great question of the increase of population is one that has not risen from Lord Amberley, but that it grew out of a long previously considered question- (cheers); that the very first man who dealt with that question politically was a Clergyman of the Church of England called Malthus. It has been often debated, and we know that thirty years ago a woman of unsullied reputation* because she published a book on political economy in which those views were indicated, and because she referred to what was then termed the 'preventative check', she was jeered at and scoffed at in every way, but still her character, unsullied, unblighted, unaffected by it, has stood the wear and tear of thirty years...89

Tory support also came to Amberley's side; the Tory St. James' Chronicle stated on the 22nd of August 1868 that the population question was "the very largest subject of social inquiry", one that had been admitted from the earliest times to have "pressed hard on human comfort, leisure, adequate food, clothing, shelter, and moral improvement." Lord Amberley's suggestions were part of a statesman's duty to his community: "...it is a part of a statesman's duty to exhaust an enquiry which primely affects pauperism, now consuming such millions of treasure yearly with absolutely no return, except it be an ever-increasing

* Harriet Martineau

harvest of paupers."⁹⁰

One unidentified local paper expressed its regret that Lord Amberley did not avail himself of the opportunity of expounding with more fullness his views upon his "new crotchet", Malthusian theory.

The electors of South Devon can hardly be refused the privilege afforded to some society up in London of hearing their candidate discourse upon the necessity of and the mode of diminishing the growth of the population. They have a right to know what is the statesmanlike view of the question; and whether Lord Amberley inclines to what he calls 'the American system', of which he speaks with frank approval. It would be interesting to know his Lordship's judgement in this matter...⁹¹

Such support of Malthusian theory was unusual, however. Amberley's Liberal supporters were careful to defend Amberley as misrepresented victim, rather than as brave Malthusian. However heartening for Amberley, such unqualified support must have been barely heeded above the furor of the debate.

Unfortunately for Lord Amberley, the birth control scandal did not end with his defeat in South Devon. Although he had gone to great lengths to clear his name, and had suffered the loss of the election, the Malthusian taint clung to him persistently for a few years. A year after

the election scandal, Dr. James Edmunds, a member of the Dialectical Society, wrote to Amberley to inform him that "the odious calumnies" with respect to the Society had been set afloat again in the Lancet, the leading medical journal, and the British Medical Journal. The imputations were again a repetition of "that attack some time since made upon your Lordship for political purposes", Edmunds wrote. "These charges are now running through the press & will doubtless again be reproduced to impede your Lordship's entry to Parliament."⁹²

The Lancet, which had refrained from entering the debate the previous year, finally vented its opinions in its issue of August the 7th, 1869. The journal reported on a meeting of the British Medical Association held at Leeds, at which Dr. Beatty of Dublin attacked the Dialectical Society for publishing a book advocating infanticide. This book was said to contain a chapter on "The Theory of Painless Extinction". The Lancet believed the Dialectical Society would be more fittingly entitled to the name, "not of dialectical, but of diabolical."⁹³ The British Medical Journal took the opportunity to once again express its disapproval of the Society and its members. The journal stated that the prevalence of infanticide was

hardly surprising, when such odious doctrines could be found to be "openly recommended by Societies composed of the Upper ranks of the people, and presided over by noble Senators..." The Society, although advocating the "monstrous propositions" of Malthus, did not as yet go as far as the author of the book. However, given the diabolical nature of the Society, the journal gravely doubted the lengths to which the members might finally drift.⁹⁴

The Dialectical Society responded by writing to the editor of the Lancet, stating that the allegations concerning the Society were "entirely untrue":

The Society does not advocate Malthusianism or anti-Malthusianism, or any other view or theory of any kind; and although the utmost freedom of debate is the fundamental principle of its constitution, no member or visitor has ever mentioned, except to reprobate, the odious practices for the carrying out of which it has been stated that the Society has sought the co-operation of the medical profession. Neither had any book whatever, at any time, been published under the auspices of the Society...⁹⁵

Certain members felt that an action for libel should be

commenced to clear the Society and to prevent the repetition of such charges against the Society and Lord Amberley, but the matter was dropped. A few months later, perhaps fearing other outbreaks or simply embittered over his unhappy relationship with the Society, Amberley formally requested that his name be withdrawn from the list of the Society. In a letter dated the 23rd of April, 1870, he was informed that the Executive Committee of the Society had never been aware that he had become a member of the association, and that his name had never been included among those of the association.⁹⁶ Amberley must have been seized by an odd sense of irony.

A year later the subject again excited public curiosity, causing more discomfort to Lord Amberley. The brief upset was provoked, ironically, by Charles Bradlaugh, notorious birth control propagandist, and involved Drysdale's Elements of Social Science, the book which first sparked Amberley's interest in family limitation. Once again, Amberley was informed by letter that trouble was brewing. On August 23rd, 1870 David King, editor of British Harbinger, wrote that Amberley and other gentlemen of distinction were being named in public meetings as sanctioning the "immoral principles" propagated by The

Elements of Social Science:

Of course I do not presume to question your Lordship as to your opinions as though I had the smallest right to demand explanations. My object is merely this- that if your Lordship's name is thus used without authority and you have not sanctioned the sentiments above cited I may be able when the statement is again made, in my presence, to deny the same.⁹⁷

Despite the fact that Amberley had once praised the Elements in his diary, he expressed his strong disapproval of the book in his reply to King:

I was quite unaware that my name had been used in support of opinions to which you refer. Whoever has so used it has done so entirely without authority or sanction from me, & in total ignorance of my real views. With the book you mention, 'The Elements of Social Science' I am indeed acquainted, (but I regard the doctrines advocated in that book with the strongest disapproval. It appears to have been written with the intention of undermining all the recognized principles of social morality, & of affecting- among all who adopt its conclusions- a condition of things in which)* - The (promoting) author's ideal of society appears to be a state of unlimited licence, happiness being obtained by the universal indulgence of degrading

* This and the following section in brackets were scratched out by Amberley.

passions. I contemplate such teachings with the utmost aversion, & I consider the wide circulation of the work which contains it the more to be regretted because its pretensions to medical authority (to which I am convinced it has but little claim) may easily mislead unwary or uninstructed readers.

Should anyone attribute to me in your presence any sort of agreement with this pernicious work I authorize you to contradict the statement in the most emphatic manner.⁹⁸

Whether Amberley had in time revised his opinion of the book, or was simply concerned with the remnants of his reputation, is impossible to tell. Both Amberley's and John Stuart Mill's names were associated with the book by Charles Bradlaugh, who appeared fond of raising the subject at public meetings. When Bradlaugh's statements were challenged by King at one such meeting, Bradlaugh is said to have answered that "he himself had heard Lord Amberley say that this (Elements of Social Science) was the best book that was ever written on the subject and that it ought to be in the hands of all working men. It was said in the presence of 70 or 80 of the most respectable physicians of London."⁹⁹ Bradlaugh affirmed that Amberley had praised the book during the July 1st meeting of the Dialectical Society. In a subsequent letter to David King,

Amberley denied ever having mentioned the book at any meeting of the Dialectical Society during the year 1868. He concluded:

...I have to inform you that my present estimate of the 'Elements of Social Science' is not the result of a change of mind since 1868. Mr. Bradlaugh's statements about me being thus unfounded, it is obvious that anything he may say about Mr. Mill or others must be received with extreme caution.¹⁰⁰

Mill himself approved of the book, although he felt compelled in a public declaration to state: "I have most certainly never on any occasion whatever, in public or in private, expressed any approbation of the book..."¹⁰¹ Amberley's denial was supported by his old tutor, J.S. Laurie, who had been present at the meeting of July 1st: "I am convinced you said nothing about the book called Elements of Social Science." He supplied Amberley with signatures from members of the Society, and pressed upon him that "the sooner a contradiction is made, the better."¹⁰² Laurie felt it important that the "ribald press" "should not be presented with a single assailable point to quibble about."¹⁰³ Bradlaugh, however, insisted that the British Medical Journal of August 1st, 1868 had not printed

the whole of Amberley's speech; before a meeting of 1000 persons, he stated that, though not printed, Amberley had indeed praised Drysdale's book.¹⁰⁴ Vague rumours persisted for another year, until the end of 1871.

Laurie, who had first introduced The Elements of Social Science to Amberley, and who had read the paper on over-population at the ill-fated meeting of July 1868, felt responsible for Amberley's misfortunes:

It was a curious fatality that I above all others, should have been the unwitting means of bringing this and the more general trouble on your head. But, ignorant as I then was of the real force of public intolerance, I could not anticipate such a result.¹⁰⁵

Public intolerance had indeed been great, and the public had not been prepared to easily forgive Amberley for what it saw as his violation of a code of delicacy.¹⁰⁶ Society had reacted as it did for two reasons: first and most importantly, Amberley's Malthusian views were in themselves abhorrent, as the earlier part of this chapter showed. Secondly, Amberley's association with the shameful issue was shocking because he was a gentleman of distinction; he was the son of a past Prime Minister, and part of the nobility. Although Amberley had not intended

it to be thus, never before had nobleman's name been intimately and publicly connected with the birth control issue, an issue that had always been associated with quacks, furtive, back-alley handbill distributors, misdirected philosophers, and fools. That the discovery of Amberley's views coincided with his political campaign in South Devon was to his greater ill-luck and personal misfortune.

The factors of ill timing and public intolerance had been far too great to allow Amberley to have escaped less personally and politically marked than he was. Amberley's position was very complex, for he found himself caught by three different interests: a medical profession horrified by his novel suggestion, unscrupulous politicians on the platform, and a press both partisan and eager to defend public morality.

Disturbed by Amberley's suggestion that the medical profession become involved in the question of family limitation, the profession was naturally anxious to state and defend its professional ethics. The medical profession used the Amberley affair to clearly state that the control of fertility was not a medical question. Amberley's political opponents were also very eager to use the incident to their best advantage. The press was important in both serving

political interests and ventilating Amberley's opinions to a wider public.

The repeal of the Stamp duty in 1855, prefigured by the abolition of the tax on advertisements two years earlier and followed six years later by the abolition of the tax on paper, resulted in a rapid proliferation of metropolitan and provincial newspapers, as well as a greatly enlarged readership.

An important social development of the nineteenth century was thus the realization that the newly developing mass circulation newspapers represented the most efficient way of reaching hordes of voters. A distinctly political journalism was practiced, thus increasing the duties and roles of journalism. Mid-Victorian journalism assumed the role of "opinion-shaper, watchdog, party propagandist, voice of the people, mover and shaker of cabinet chairs, and independent reporter of reality."¹⁰⁸ Systematically and unabashedly, as Stephen Koss writes, newspapers were used on an unprecedented scale "to formulate party programmes, to implement political strategies, and to serve personal ambitions."¹⁰⁹ Journalism was used to stimulate either vote or petition. Such aims are evident in the Western Mercury's exhortations during the General Election of 1868, —

as it called upon the Liberals of South Devon to "prove their manhood" and vote for Lord Amberley.¹¹⁰

In its role as political actor, the mid-Victorian press consciously intervened into the political system, using as its weapon the editorial and opinion column. Thus, just as the press was an opinion shaper, it was also, as Helen MacGill Hughes notes, the "agency of a cause".¹¹¹ Contemporary notions of objectivity did not apply to Mid-Victorian newspapers; while today the editor's views are confined to modest dimensions on an inside page, in the period we are examining they pervaded the whole newspaper. Indeed, as Hughes writes, "The qualification for editorship was partisan enthusiasm, for his office was confused with that of the politician..." The editor performed his duties with the view that the press, like the pulpit, "should point out to the people where their duty lies, and do so in conformity to its own scheme of values."¹¹² Thus, in making no distinction between the account of an event and the editor's opinion of it, news was often turned into a sermon. The Amberley affair exemplified the press's dual role of defender of public morality and political propagandist.

Lastly, both the great attention devoted to the Amberley affair in the newspapers and the highly emotional

way it was dealt with, can also be understood by considering that such newspaper crusades attracted readers and built circulation. As one author today has noted, journalists from the eighteenth century had discovered that "to the serious business of politics and war one could add bits which were exciting, titillating and shocking."¹¹³ Such exciting news as Amberley's purported advocacy of child murder engrossed people's interest and made them buy the paper from day to day. Such journalism, which also satisfied the curiosity of the ordinary man for the characteristics and vices of notable people, has been called "stunt journalism".¹¹⁴

Although 'What ifs' and 'Should haves' are of little value to historical understanding, it is nevertheless interesting to consider that, had Amberley not involved the medical profession in his speech at the Dialectical Society, the scandal may never have happened. From another perspective, had the South Devon election not coincided with the medical profession's outrage, the scandal might have stayed more restricted to the medical journals, and have abated on its own. As it was, Amberley was singularly unlucky.

The political fate suffered by Lord Amberley lingered as a reminder to politicians of the heavy price to be paid for speaking out on "socially taboo subjects".¹¹⁵ As one

scholar has written:

Memory of this incident coupled with the continuing belief that a large population is indicative of national prosperity and imperative for national defense augured ill for the acceptance of an idea like family limitation among candidates for political office. 116

Amberley had found himself in a difficult position throughout the scandal of 1868. He had chosen not to defend his views on family limitation, but to take a defensive stance, no doubt to protect his reputation for the approaching election. However, he never published an authentic report of the original discussion over which he had had the misfortune to preside, despite his opponents' frequent demands that he do so and the newspapers' frequent use and even versions of it. He had resorted instead to public denials, which had somewhat restored his honour. Throughout his campaign of denial, Amberley could only refute his alleged advocacy of 'nameless crimes', while avoiding completely the issue of birth control itself; he could only protest that he had been misunderstood and misrepresented. Given the great delicacy of the subject, Amberley was reluctant to be explicit about the nature of his views; consequently, he was never able to

say what exactly were the measures that he had recommended.

Amberley himself thus adopted Victorian reticence on the subject, despite the fact that he had once deplored in his diary the "foolish delicacy" that prevailed over the question of birth control. The combination of conflicting, sensationalist reports, and his unwillingness or inability to expound with clarity on his views undoubtedly contributed to further confuse and prolong the affair.

A Liberal paper commented on the danger of such an unavoidably vague stance:

There is so much gross misconception, so much moral perversion, wherever any speaker uses vague terms, as he naturally must, to express his meaning upon such a question as that of population, that unless great care is taken some extraordinary absurdity is sure to be thrust upon him: It has been so with the views of Mr. Mill and others, so that Lord Amberley does not stand alone in having moral enormities laid to his charge.¹¹⁷

Amberley's supporters recognized the difficulty of his position; he had his "hands tied", one paper wrote, for he could not refer at length on the subject without "outraging decency".¹¹⁸ Like Amberley, his supporters preferred not to stir the question, but hoped the affair would eventually

cease to be of interest. As Mr. Collier wrote to Amberley:

I have felt very much for you in this matter, and have thought a great deal as to the best way of meeting the charges. It seems to me, as you say, that the question can only be understood by those who have at least made some study of political and social questions, it is quite impossible to explain it publicly, and the only course to pursue is to meet the charges as they are made as you have done, by direct denials, and, as far as we are concerned, not stir the question at all. I am in hopes then that it will die out.¹¹⁹

The Amberley affair of 1868, whose echoes continued until 1871, is interesting and instructive in several respects. First and most importantly, it indicates the strength of public hostility and opposition to the idea of birth control in mid-nineteenth century England. Amberley's own reticence on the subject, the marked distaste and vagueness with which even the less sensationalistic press handled the affair, is an indication of the extent to which delicacy made birth control a virtually undiscussable subject. As the Cambridge Review notes:

The comments his letters, papers and bold uncompromising election

speeches elicited, both from the press and from his contemporaries, shows us how hard it was to discuss such a matter as birth control even in private, and how impossible in public. 120

The Amberley affair is thus a little known, forgotten chapter in the history of birth control. It is also the story of a rather unwilling actor in this set of events; the Amberley affair marks the personal misfortunes of a man who had not accurately judged the force of public intolerance, who, in the end, preferred "foolish delicacy" and evasion to a premature defense of an unpopular issue.

Although Lord Amberley's family and friends had expected him to return to politics, Amberley's exclusion from Parliament did not prove to be temporary. After the scandal in South Devon, Plymouth eyed him warily and even Liberals in other constituencies hesitated to adopt him. In addition to the handicap of his very Radical reputation, he wished for future election expenses to be defrayed locally. Understandably, the great vexations he suffered in South Devon might have removed all the attraction a political career might once have held for him. "A blameless husband and father of a family", the New York Times wrote

in 1937, "blissfully happy in his home, was hounded into the wilderness of retirement".¹²¹ As previously mentioned, however, Amberley preferred the quiet of his library to the hustings; he had entered politics mostly out of a sense of duty to the Russell name, and out of the prodding and enthusiasm of his parents and spouse.

Earl Russell was indeed sorely vexed by the fact that no constituency could be found to adopt Amberley as Parliamentary candidate. Lady Russell "immensely" minded "his not being in Parliament", as she wrote to her sister.¹²² In an attempt to soothe that wound, Gladstone offered to give Amberley an early promotion to the Upper House, should Earl Russell accept.¹²³

Amberley, however, retired to his country home in Monmouthshire. He was still fairly concerned with practical politics; he actively supported the Contagious Diseases Act and the Married Women's Property Bill, suggested that secular education be incorporated in the 1870 Education Bill, had an audience with Pope Pius IX the same year, and in 1871 published an essay, "Can War be Avoided".

Published in the Fortnightly Review, this essay advocated a Federation of Nations be established to which all nations would have recourse to settle their disputes.

Lord Amberley devoted himself increasingly to literary

work, to his lengthy Analysis of Religious Belief, which was published after his death in 1876. The book, however, was not successful. Reflecting his depressive state after the sudden loss of his wife in 1874, the book does not read very well; the Analysis received only three reviews, all hostile, and one from the Times which was personally abusive towards Amberley.¹²⁴

It would thus appear that Lord Amberley was neither a very eager or even very successful rebel. He was only too anxious to cover up the embarrassing and ill-timed Malthusian affair, and promptly removed himself from the political scene. Though his career began in a burst of promise, with the full force of family tradition and prestige behind him, he fell short of everyone's expectations, including his own. He began his adult life with a sense of expectation, brimming with noble aspirations; but his life was very short and his aspirations were seen as certainly less than noble. He received much abuse for one who so little expected or desired a scandal, and for one so mild and gentle in nature. His book, the most important effort of his life, was deemed a failure; along with his book, Amberley was quickly forgotten by society, despite all the anger he roused. To this day he remains an obscure figure.

That Amberley was unsuccessful is certainly true, but his present obscurity is undeserved. Amberley did not see fit to publicly defend his views on birth control; he can thus scarcely be seen as a fearless pioneer of birth control. Amberley seems to have deemed such views as secondary to his reputation and political career. Nevertheless, that he did espouse such beliefs and briefly involve himself in the issue is in itself remarkable, in the light of the extreme extreme unpopularity of the subject. He was ahead of his time in his Malthusian beliefs; by the same token, he faced an audience that was not ready for the public expression of such ideas. Amberley's experience offers a new light to the history of birth control agitation, and he emerges as an almost-successful figure, next to the successful ones of John Stuart Mill and Charles Bradlaugh. While it would be easy to conclude that Amberley's efforts were futile, it must be remembered that the Amberley affair of 1868-69 provoked the medical profession's first explicit mention of birth control in its journals, setting a new trend. Though Amberley appears to have been destined by fate to end as a rather tragic, unsuccessful figure, his role in the history of birth control is nevertheless significant and of interest to today.

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CHAPTER THREE

LADY AMBERLEY AND THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

Lady Amberley's activities in the cause of female emancipation spanned the period from approximately 1865 until her death in 1874. Her adolescent diary, as Chapter 1 has determined, reveals in many instances her displeasure with accepted norms of female conduct and concerns. After her marriage to Lord Amberley in 1864, Lady Amberley began to give some direction to her interest in "women's questions". In Leeds, in connection with Amberley's candidature, she began to teach to factory girls. "I had my class of girls 16 of them, nearly all of them factory girls", she wrote in her journal in April 1865. "I taught them about fresh air & tight lacing for 1½ hour..."¹ A local paper noticed Lady Amberley's new interest: "Her Ladyship ...appears to be a radical reformer in the matter of female dress, and not only interdicts her pupils from the use of crinoline, but is also opposed to other objectionable, though too commonly adopted, articles of attire."² Lady Amberley's close friend Helen Taylor approved of her interest:

You have an interesting and useful subject of study in your factory girls. The whole question of women's working, at least as regards married women, is a difficult one, I think in a good state of society the mothers of young children will probably not attempt to work out of their own homes, but before this matter can be put to rights there are many questions to be settled. Education is certainly the first and most pressing...³

Lady Amberley's interest underwent a change, however, the following year. Her heightened enthusiasm coincided with, indeed, stemmed from the great change that the woman's movement itself underwent from the mid-1860s. Although a coherent case for feminine participation in politics and public life can be traced back to at least two generations before lady Amberley's time, the woman's movement did not become organized until 1867.⁴ The efforts of women to be included in the 1867 Reform Bill launched the first woman suffrage organization in England that same year*. Lady Amberley's involvement in the cause of women's rights from 1865 to 1874 is therefore intimately connected to this development of an ongoing, organized woman suffrage movement, and thus to a period of high hopes and intense effort. A brief outline of the events that led to and followed

* London National Society for Women's Suffrage.

this new development will enable the reader to appreciate both Lady Amberley's efforts in their context and the nature of the reception she and the wider movement were given.

The question of women's suffrage was first brought before British electors in 1865, when John Stuart Mill made votes for women part of his platform on contesting the borough of Westminster. He became known as "the man who wants girls in Parliament."⁵ Further encouragement to suffragists came from the opposition; on the 17th of April 1866, Disraeli declared in the House of Commons:

I say that in a country governed by a woman...where you allow women to form part of the other estate of the realm...peeresses in their own right for example...where you allow a woman not only to hold land, but to be a lady of the manor and hold legal courts... where a woman by law may be a churchwarden or an overseer of the poor...I do not see when she has much to do with the State and Church, on what reasons, if you come to right, she has not the right to vote.⁶

Suffragettes were elated, interpreting Disraeli's words as a pledge to their cause. On June 7th 1866, Mill presented in Parliament a petition signed by 1,499 women, Lady

Amberley among them. This event has been said to mark the commencement of a continuous campaign for women's suffrage, organized by women, extending until the vote was won in 1918. In October of that year Miss Lydia Becker formed the provisional Manchester Women's Suffrage Committee, federated with the London National Society for Women's Suffrage. Of this very first organization both Lady and Lord Amberley were part. On May 20th of the following year, Mill introduced the first amendment in the Commons on women's suffrage, moving that the word "man" should be replaced by the word "person". 73 votes were secured, 194 voting against the amendment. Lord Amberley and Jacob Bright were among the minority voters. Lady Amberley, from the Ladies Gallery, witnessed the historical speech:

The house was very thin but he was listened to with the utmost attention and respect. He came to a most painful pause at one time nr. the beginning of his speech and stood silent for near 2 minutes or more; he seemed quite lost, only his eyebrows worked fearfully; the House cheered him and he resumed and went on fluently to the end.⁷

Mill believed the event had given "an immense impulse" to the question. "Numbers of men and women in all ranks have

since given their adhesion to the movement; and agreement with it is rapidly becoming a badge of advanced liberalism".⁸

From 1868 on a great number of articles and discussions on women's suffrage poured forth. Most notable of these was Mill's Subjection of Women (1869), one of the most eloquent and controversial pleas for the complete equality of the sexes ever written. Fitzjames Stephens believed it to be "the strongest distinct illustration known to me to be by far the most ignoble and mischievous of all popular feelings of the age".⁹ Though many were horrified by Mill's book, Lady Amberley was greatly influenced by it and would adopt many of Mill's arguments in her own feminist formulations. She wrote to a friend in America:

I was very much pleased with Mill's Subjection of Women, it has made a new epoch in the history of the movement- I wish it cd. be done without talk, but no reform was ever made without talk & without boring people out at last, & so I suppose we must be discussed & turned inside out for the next 20 years & then law makers will begin to see they had better give in & let us manage our own affairs & keep our own property & be guardians to our own children.¹⁰

Lady Amberley's estimate of twenty years was optimistic, for women would not get the vote on equality with men in

England until 1928. The period after 1874 was a difficult one for the movement, as the great emotional opposition from men and women alike greatly slowed progress. This period has been referred to as the "doldrums" period in the history of the movement.¹¹

In 1866, however, Lady Amberley was as hopeful and confident as the movement itself. Her readings for the year, as marked in her journal, began with Emily Davies' The Higher Education of Women, and Curtis' speech of Female Suffrage. That year she surprised the press by accompanying Lord Amberley on the platform during his Leeds campaign. "It is reserved for the Nottingham people", the Daily Bristol Times remarked, "to enjoy the privilege of having ladies prominent actors in a public contest. Lord Amberley made up for want of stature by bringing Lady Amberley with him in his second appearance; and her influence upon the meeting is said to have been considerable." This newspaper quite liked the idea of having the "fair sex" take part in public contests, "for their appearance must be attended by a softening, mollifying effect upon all parties".¹² In 1867 the Amberleys visited the United States, and there Kate met several feminists, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Harriet Beecher Stowe. These Lady Amberley would correspond with until her death.

The Amberleys' home in Rodborough often became the scene of debate on the woman question; on the 11th of May 1867, for example, the Amberleys, Mr. Bright and Mr. Blackie discussed woman's enfranchisement after dinner. "Blackie and Bright both agreed in objecting to the women's suffrage", Lady Amberley recorded in her journal, "Bright saying that women wd lose much by it and Blackie saying men were trees and women flowers and flowers might as well wish to become trees etc".¹³ Similarly, on the 14th of May, Lady Amberley recorded the result of another discussion with Huxley and Mrs. Grote, wife of George Grote the hisorian. "We are still in the harem stage though in the last stage of it and those men who like to keep women in the doll state are not out of it", Huxley had stated. "All the same", Kate wrote, "Huxley does not think that women will ever be equal to men in power or capacity".¹⁴ She did seem to win over some of her sceptical guests at times; "Mr. Sanderson* is here now and has become a convert to all women's rights",¹⁵ she wrote to her friend Henry Crompton, the Positivist. Helen Taylor was greatly pleased to hear of her friend's interest in the woman's rights question:

...you gave me immense pleasure by
letting me know your favourable

* A family friend.

impression of the women's rights women. Magna est veritas! you must be with us on this, the greatest question of politics, since the battle against negro slavery is won. There is no other misery left in the world equal to the misery of wretched women, and to fight against it is the greatest work in our generation.¹⁶

Lady Amberley's growing interest in the woman question is reflected in her reading list for 1869; listed in her diary for that year is Milton on Divorce, Mill's Subjection of Women, Dr. Chapman on Prostitution, Miss Bessie Parks on Women, Muller's, Huxley's, and Trall's books on Physiology, and a work entitled Woman's Work and Woman's Culture.¹⁷ The same year she sent a series of letters to Henry Crompton, in an exchange of thoughts on the woman question. From these letters emerges the only explicit articulation of Lady Amberley's mature views on the subject, aside from her public lectures in the 1870s.

"I do not like the word 'women's rights' & would just as soon say women's questions", she began, "for I do not care much about the reforms I wish for as a matter of right but as a matter of expediency & moral improvement". The social subordination of women, she wrote to her friend, came about from a legal system made by and for men, resulting from their advantage of greater physical strength. "This

was all very well, or rather very bad; but logical in an age when might was right & when brute force governed the universe". As force no longer ruled the world, Kate could see no reason why women could not be allowed to profit from the change, could see nothing in woman's nature and mental capacities to doom her eternally to an inferior position. The relegation of half the human race to the position of mere squaw or harem princess she found deplorable. She yearned, instead, to see woman as "a helpmate to man, an improving & equal companion". For those unmarried, greater education and opportunities would enable them to "stand alone & live a life of usefulness & happiness to themselves & others instead of forever pining for that one only occupation left to women of matrimony and its consequences." She continued:

To bring about the feeling that a woman is a human being, a soul, a mind, a rational, feeling, thinking animal, & not only a sensuous creature made for man, I want what are called 'women's rights'. When the law has given a woman the position I want for her, public opinion will follow it, & then will woman have a chance of leading a happier, better & nobler life than so many of our own poor women are doomed to in great cities.

Lady Amberley wished for certain reforms for women;

these were: throwing open all occupations and professions to women, giving them equal wages for the same work as performed by men, letting women have full control of their own earnings, opening universities to women, and lastly, that women be given the franchise on the same terms as men, "not as an end, but as a means of getting themselves heard & attended to". In short, Lady Amberley wished to make women of all classes citizens.¹⁸

Lady Amberley's feminist theory can be seen to be clearly steeped in both the Liberal tradition and J.S. Mill's Subjection, which has been said by latter-day feminists to remain one of the clearest and most intelligent statements of liberal feminism.¹⁹ Kate Amberley argued, as did Mill, that women's legal rights should be the same as those of men and that women should receive the same educational opportunities, the current inequality being a result of a one-sided distribution of rights. She based her arguments on the Liberal belief that each individual should be able to rise in society as far as his or her talents permitted, unhindered by restraints, law or custom, according to the demands of the market. The following passage from a different letter to Crompton well illustrates this view:

One word as to women: I think nature is quite strong enough to assert herself- leave all open & free & let all start fair & she will find her proper level & do the work she is fit for- I want differences to be permitted amongst them also- I hate the dull uniformity & dead level But I like the variety to come from aptitude & choice & not to be imposed.²⁰

She longed for "more opening, & more freedom, & more light & knowledge" in the life of women of all classes, she again asserted to Crompton.²¹

The influence of Mill's Subjection of Women upon Lady Amberley was such that her arguments often closely resemble those of Mill's. Just as she wished for reform as a matter of expediency and moral improvement, Mill deemed it "a question of justice and expediency", a question most pertinent to what is "most advantageous to humanity in general".²² Lady Amberley, in an above quote, believed woman would find her "proper level" once all was "open & free"; similarly, the Subjection of Women argued that what women can do,

but not so well as the men who are their competitors, competition suffices to exclude them from.... If women have

a greater natural inclination for some things than for others, there is no need of laws or social inculcation to make the majority of them do the former in preference to the latter. Whatever women's services are most wanted for, the free play of competition will hold out the strongest inducement to them to undertake.²³

Lady Amberley's letters to Crompton were thus in essence a summary of the salient points of Mill's Subjection, as would be her public lecture of the following year. J.S. Mill's influence on Lady Amberley was therefore no less than his influence on her husband. In a letter to Kate, John Blackie even referred to Mill as her "great prophet".²⁴

In April 1869 Lady Amberley busied herself with gathering petitions for the Married Women's Property Bill, which was to have its second reading on the 14th of that month. "I walked all about Littleworth to get signatures at the cottages", she wrote in her journal. "A went with me. I had 235 signatures- chiefly women".²⁵ She was later offered to take the chair at a meeting of the Committee of the Married Women's Property Bill, but sadly declined on account of her mourning over Lord Stanley's recent demise.

Lady Amberley was also concerned over the question of female education, and met occasionally with Miss Emily Davies,

active proponent of suffrage and one of the founders of Girton College, Cambridge, for women. She offered fifty pounds towards the opening of Girton, but Davies did not wish to have Lady Amberley's name on the Committee, as she thought it was "a very dangerous name".²⁶ Nevertheless, she lent her help to female medical students recently admitted to the lectures of Edinburgh University, offering a fifty pound scholarship for three years.

On August 20th 1869, Lady Amberley began writing an article on women, which, at Helen Taylor's insistence, would become her public lecture, "The Claims of Women". Taylor's support and encouragement would prove to be invaluable to her; when Lady Amberley's confidence seemed to falter, Taylor was quick to respond: "Don't be discouraged from writing because Lord Amberley criticises you severely. It is an excellent thing to have a severe critic at home; I am a very severe critic on Mr. Mill...." She continued,

You must remember that every woman who has been well educated begins at a disadvantage with men and with uneducated women; she has to unlearn the letter writing style- the style of saying so little in as many words as possible and passing lightly from one subject to another. Will you let me see the article you have written

and shall I suggest improvements in it?...A woman who wishes ever to be on the same level must be content to be ten or fifteen years behind hand; it takes this time to complete a tolerable education under all the drawbacks of feminine life.²⁷

While writing her article, Lady Amberley continued attending lectures; March 1870 found her and her husband at a full meeting of the Woman's Suffrage Society in Hanover Square. Many important figures of the movement spoke, including J.S. Mill, Helen Taylor, for the first time, Mrs. Fawcett, Mrs. Grote, and Mrs. P.A. Taylor. Lord Amberley, as well, made a speech on this occasion. "It went off very well & was a great success", Lady Amberley wrote in her journal.²⁸ She, however, had remained silent. The meeting stirred considerable interest, the Times and the Daily Telegraph, a popular Liberal paper, providing detailed reports of the proceedings. Lady Russell was relieved that her daughter-in-law had not exposed herself to the public: "I congrat yr wife on not havg made a speech...", she wrote to Lord Amberley. His speech, however, she was pleased with, having heard that it was "the best speech at Woman's Meetg- not excluding Mill's-..."²⁹

Lady Russell was shortly to be disappointed, however. Lady Amberley began to prepare herself for a

public lecture based on her article on women, which was to be held on the 25th of May 1870 at the Mechanics Institute at Stroud. This she did in secrecy, not wishing to be "discouraged in any way" by her redoubtable mother-in-law or others in London.³⁰ The meeting drew a large crowd of "very respectably dressed people" and was chaired by Sir John Dorrington of Lyppiat Park. Lady Amberley described the meeting in her journal as follows:

I had expected to sit to read my lecture but A said I must stand. I was not in the least nervous & felt my voice cd be heard. There was hardly any applause & it seemed to fall very flat. After the lecture I wanted to get the Petition for the Female Suffrage signed but owing to mismanagement & putting it in a small room very few signed it.... Dear old A was quite delighted with the way I had done it...³¹

The meeting ended quietly and successfully, despite Lady Amberley's slight disappointment. "I saw the audience did not agree but many told me I had converted them", she wrote to her mother. "It is worth some trouble if one converts people to one's views".³²

Lady Amberley's lecture, "The Claims of Women", was gracefully delivered and forcefully argued. In much the same style as her letters to Henry Crompton, she stated

clearly in her lecture what she wanted, why she wanted it, and how she hoped to obtain it. The Times reported that she first begged the indulgence of her audience in that she was wholly unaccustomed to public speaking, and said that "the intensity of her convictions had caused her to come forward, saying to those who regarded such conduct as unwomanly that feeling without action was little better than a millstone hung about the neck".³³ Lady Amberley began her lecture by stating, as had Mill in his Subjection of Women, that logical argument had been comparatively powerless to induce men to recognize the equality of the sexes, and that her appeal on woman's behalf would thus be rather to the feeling than to the intellect. She directed her lecture especially to women and more specifically to "their less fortunate sisters", in the aim of hastening "not, alas, a millenium; but at least a time when every woman will have free scope to cultivate and employ all her faculties and energies, and will be further taught that it is her duty to cultivate them, and a time when, in the eyes of the law, she will be the equal of man".³⁴

Lady Amberley based her plea on the two million of the six million women over twenty years of age in Britain engaged in independent industry, women with neither

husbands, nor children, nor fortune. Of these women, thousands were driven to "an existence of moral suffering, or abject helplessness and sin".

...thousands are certainly driven to it by real want, by the absence of any opening for their industry, their energy, and their capabilities; by the cheerlessness, the hopelessness of their lot; by the absence of education, which we have neglected to provide for them; could, I say, women be convinced that this is so, would they again lightly say, 'What is that to me?'³⁵

The fact that thousands of women were so driven to seek work for themselves was, she stated, "argument enough that by opening more professions, more educational advantages to them, we shall not be guilty, if guilt it is, of alluring them away from their homes to the deadly temptations of the outer world."

Men would not gain anything in maintaining the inequality between the sexes. Great advantages could be gained from the admission of women to political power, Lady Amberley argued. Women's sympathies being strong, they would "bring their interest and energy to bear on many injustices of social life, and not so readily acquiesce in the idea that these evils must be borne, and that

legislation is powerless to make any impression on them".

All would reap benefit from the equality of the sexes:

for, be the woman rich or poor,
married or single, idle or working,
it will bring her an increase of
happiness by raising her as a moral
and intellectual being; and in her
improvement, how can man as her
companion, and man as her child,
fail to taste its fruit?³⁶

Woman, as well as man, was a human being first, Kate continued,
and should have the nature, rights, and duty of one;
"free scope, equal privileges, and the same standard
is all that they require".

An increase of women's liberty, knowledge and power
would not turn the world upside down. The whole fair sex
would not be turned into "unfeminine monsters", for "what
is beautiful in her nature must be true, and what is true
need not fear the inroads of any new opinions or new
heresies".³⁷ Lady Amberley argued against the notion
that idleness was the crowning beauty of woman, and
that work must of necessity unsex her: "it is not the work
done nor the education given that unsexes a woman, but
some kinds of labour, some kinds of misery and want of
education that unsex her". The plight of numerous childless,

widowed, and unmarried women was surely evidence that matrimony could not be the sole vocation or outlet for women, Kate argued, and believed that leisured women could use their time in some political, scientific or social work, according to their aptitudes. The community would thus no longer sustain a loss of force, labour and energy by barring the door to every external occupation to one half of the human race.

Lady Amberley argued that the acquisition of the vote would offer definite material advantages to women, for the settlement of those things that concerned them alone. "Political power is a protection", she stated, "and it is in that sense, and not as a right, that we demand it for women".³⁸ In addition, if granted the possibility of being candidates as well as voters, elections would themselves be greatly changed for the better. Rather than resulting in "well-known male electoral vices", feminine virtues and influence would result in "less lying and humbug, less treating, less intimidation, less unscrupulousness, and less rowdyism".

Equal justice is what Lady Amberley asked for, the opening up to women of a world of choice and opportunities.

The law of natural selection would ensure that women would not undertake tasks unequal to their capacities. Left to herself, as she had once argued to Crompton, woman would find her place in society; "Precisely in proportion to their enlightenment will women on the whole see more clearly what their true work is, and that work need not always be identical with that of men, nor yet so opposed that the men must sweep, and the women weep".³⁹

Lady Amberley concluded her lecture with an ambitious list of the measures the women's movement conceived to be required to secure equal justice. These were:

1. A great improvement in the education of girls;
2. That all universities be opened to women;
3. That all professions and occupations be opened to women;
4. That married women should have rights over their own property;
5. That widows be legally recognized as the guardians of their own children;
6. The extension of the franchise to women on the same basis as men, as a means of power and protection;
7. That political and social interest and work should be open equally to women, that the state profit from their talents or aptitudes;

8. That public opinion should sanction every occupation for women suited to their strength and good;
9. That there should be no legal subordination in marriage;
10. That the same wages should be given to women for the same work as performed by men.

She founded her proposals on hope- "the day will be sad when we become sceptical of individual and social progress", she said, and ended:

We hope and wish to try if an infusion of justice, of new vigour and new life, and warmer sympathies and larger hopes in women's lives, will not alleviate some of the suffering of this struggling life.⁴⁰

After the meeting, Lord Amberley, who had been asked by the Chairman to reply to objections, stated that he had made no objection to Lady Amberley coming forward to deliver her lecture, for "she felt that as there was a battle to be fought which must be fought by women themselves, she ought to be ready to bear the brunt of any censure that might be directed against its advocates".⁴¹

As in Lord Amberley's experience of 1868-69, the press was quick to pour forth its disapproval and indignation,

which it did for several days. In its repudiation of Lady Amberley's lecture and her "claims" for women, the press incorporated and reflected the wide range of arguments endlessly repeated against the greater social and political equality of women throughout the nineteenth and greater part of the twentieth century.⁴² Several newspapers expressed their surprise, as did the Echo, finding it "a little novel to see the daughter of a Stanley addressing a public meeting, and urging, moreover, the adopting of one of the most sweeping reforms ever proposed".⁴³ The Times criticized Lady Amberley, but in a restrained and somewhat condescending manner. The best and most suitable occupation for a woman was the management of a house and family, but "in the absence of that employment other work is certainly needed, and, within certain limits, the more of it there is the better".⁴⁴ Lady Amberley was thus justified in claiming the rights of men for unprovided-for women, but the Times felt that the substitute for women's natural rights was not well chosen: "A woman waiting to be married will not make a better wife when the time arrives from being put on the footing of a man in the interval". Women's work would be hindered rather than forwarded by turning them into politicians and agitators. Furthermore, the Times found that Lady Amberley's charter, as well as being immoderate,

showed in many instances "a woman's hand, and a political comprehension not quite equal to that of a man". The newspaper was horrified at her proposals, as it misunderstood them, for universal female suffrage and the imposition of legislation on the wages of women.

The Times concluded that Lady Amberley's concern for women unhappily excluded from natural duties was commendable, but the solutions she and her bolder colleagues pressed upon society were ultimately to be rejected. For, "by her own estimate she is proposing to unsex all of the women of the country for the sake of one out of three". The remedy to these misfortunes could certainly not be found "in a proposal to efface the eternal distinctions of sex and for the future to reckon women as men". In conclusion, women themselves, if properly polled, would "unhesitatingly reject the character which these noisy agitators would fain thrust upon them".

Lady Amberley's critics condemned her demand, as they interpreted it, for the complete sameness of the sexes, rather than complete equality and justice between them. One newspaper flatly stated that Lady Amberley's cause had "no logic in its armoury, and that the battery against

which she hurls herself is one not of feeling but of hard facts".

There cannot be a natural equality of the sexes, simply because they are not the same; and if there is not a natural equality, it is simply impossible that there can be a political and social equality. A man is not a woman, nor is a woman a man, do and say what you like. In the genus man, as in all other genuses, nature has assigned the two sexes differently powers, capacities, and functions; and it is utterly vain to attempt to proceed irrespective of that fact in political and social arrangements.⁴⁵

Lady Amberley was calling for the creation of a "third sex", one citizen believed:

The moment women begin to touch pursuits which nature has marked out as specially masculine they lose their delicacy of character; in trying to acquire the qualities of the other sex they lose the characteristics of their own; and they become neither properly woman nor man - neither, fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring.⁴⁶

Once the natural divisions of society and the experience and instincts of thousands of generations were cast aside, this self-labelled "He-Critter" believed Home would become

"an effete institution and Love an ancient superstition", and a "deteriorated race of men" would perform domestic duties. One newspaper hoped the "slashing and temerarious manner" of Lady Amberley would swiftly alienate the very women she addressed and hoped to convert to her argument.⁴⁷ Her appearance in Stroud provoked Queen Victoria to express her horror of the Women's Rights women, reflecting the sensibilities of the typical middle class mind as well as the opinion of a sizeable majority of British women. To Theodore Martin the queen wrote:

The Queen is most anxious to enlist anyone who can speak and write... (against) this mad, wicked folly of 'women's rights' with all the attendant horrors on which her poor feeble sex seems bent... Lady Amberley ought to get a good whipping. It is a subject which makes the queen so furious she can hardly contain herself. God created man and woman different and let each remain in their position.⁴⁸

Luckily for Lady Amberley, this letter was not made public for forty years and even then her name was concealed.

"The Claims of Women" met with varying degrees of approval from a few newspapers. These found that the lecture represented a concise and convincing summary of ideas rapidly gaining favour, to which social conservatism would

shortly have to submit. The aim of Lady Amberley and her colleagues was not the unsexing of women, the Echo argued: "They are not to be taken forcibly from their homes and taught to hate all domestic duties and ties".⁴⁹ A less enthusiastically inclined paper admitted that Lady Amberley would more suitably have filled the position of matron nursing her child or getting ready a meal for her husband than lecturer; however, "oratory on the part of women need not be absolutely condemned"- afterall, "If young Russell takes the measles mamma will surely keep at home".⁵⁰

Lady Amberley's lecture had surprised and shocked her family and friends. Her Aunt Louisa wrote to tell her that she was terribly ashamed of her Goddaughter: "I wonder you do not go & settle in America their ways wd suit you far better, I do not suppose you find many English women who will help you in crying out for their rights..."⁵¹ On a more gentle tone, Lady Amberley's friend John S. Blackie wrote to tell her that "Betwixt a man and a woman nevertheless I recognize a great and characteristic difference; the man is made altogether of a rougher texture, and adapted for rougher work. Ladies walk in silken shoes, and should thank heaven that they are not called on to wade through the mud".⁵²

The publicity and general criticism succeeded in lowering Lady Amberley's spirits. Writing to Crompton, for example, she confided that she had feared from the tardiness of his letter that he had been "disgusted" with her "leaving the old land marks of feminine conduct behind & did not like to blame & so took refuge in silence". In a subsequent letter she sent her love to his mother, hoping that the lady did not "feel disgusted" with her for giving a lecture "...assure her that I took every precaution to have it unreported & unnoticed & then perhaps I shall not sink so in her estimation".⁵³ To her friend she confided that, while not shy, she hated the publicity that surrounded her:

...I hate my name being in everyone's mouth- I hate being misinterpreted & I shrink from the low & sometimes mean interpretations that are put on my & other women's conduct by anonymous writers- I do not either like that friends whose opinions I value shd differ with me & think me either stupid or wrong. But all this and more would I brave, rather than be a coward; & shrink from sharing with others, more timid than myself, such as Miss Taylor, that ridicule & that opposition which meets women who speak out on behalf of the wrongs of others.⁵⁴

To Helen Taylor, who had prompted Kate to lecture, she

told her woes; she had received insulting anonymous letters and had heard that she had been made "great fun of" at the Carlton Club. "Remember me to Mr. Mill", Lady Amberley wrote, "I hope he will be pleased at my having made the effort and taken my share of ridicule which falls to the lot of women who advocate this cause..."⁵⁵

Taylor's supportive and laudatory letters helped counter-balance the criticism and ridicule that Lady Amberley had suffered. "It is noble of you to be so brave and resolute", she wrote, "but I do not doubt you underestimate the success of your lecture." Lady Amberley's name and social position had no doubt attracted the most curious and least sympathetic class of persons possible; however, Taylor assured her, this was all the better, for she had made "a raid into the enemy's country", introduced ideas to the most obdurate and difficult to get at. "The work you have done therefore is just that sort which shows least evidence at first and gives most in the long run". As to the unpleasantness of it,

I sympathize with you heart and soul.
It is painful to be abused and
laughed at; and to a woman of the
rank of a lady it is disagreeable
to be dragged into publicity, even
to be praised, much less to be
attacked...⁵⁶

In her next letter to Kate, Helen Taylor assured her once again that her lecture had been a complete success and a credit to the cause. "You will have done immense good by it, and encouraged numbers of women- the poor to rise up in just rebellion, the happy to open their eyes a little and see what is really going on in the world about them".⁵⁷ Taylor also greatly encouraged Lady Amberley to publish her article, so as to maximize the exposure.⁵⁸

Lady Amberley's defiant spirit and devotion to the cause were too great to allow for any regret or lapse in activity. In a burst of spirit, she wrote to Crompton:

If you & others will preach it will do for me, but to convince you, men, we women must come out of our shell & must show that those who have trodden in soft & downy paths will no longer submit to being pampered at the expense of thousands whose case you ignore when you talk of 'home duties' & 'the beauty of feminine purity' - you utter your cry for social improvement in one key- I in another- Let us all whether we be men or women join in that, not a cry only, but one strong & continuous effort for improvement & if we all strive though we diverge a little in the road we shall reach the same goal.⁵⁹

Lady Amberley had set herself against "the dead weight of

passive ignorance", and no amount of ridicule would deter her from her call. "I think Dante was right to assign the lowest place in hell to those who were too selfish and apathetic to take either side in a contest", she later wrote. "we must, I think, pass over the indifference to social questions bred by the comfort and luxury of the upper and middle classes, and seek aid in our struggle as to the questions concerning women from those who come face to face with the hard and unpleasant realities of the existing state of things".⁶⁰

Although Lady Russell had been dismayed by her daughter-in-law's unfeminine conduct, she shortly evinced a change of heart: "I don't think there is any inconsistency in my saying how heartily glad I am of K's success- but even if there were I'm afraid I shd be glad all the same..."⁶¹. To Kate she wrote: "My dear Child Why don't you want yr lecture seen? Once spoken the more known the better.... Besides, the reason for a public lecture ought to be the belief in its usefulness to the public- however I won't quarrel with this little remnant of feminine diffidence!"⁶² John Blackie also modified his opinion: "I pray God to give you always as much male vigour as you may employ without prejudice to your female grace", he wrote. "It is a difficult thing to be both flower and tree- lily and

oak".⁶³

Praise for Lady Amberley's lecture also came from America. Mrs. Forbes, the American godmother of Kate's daughter, Rachel, very much liked "The Claims of Women" and expressed her pleasure that Lord Amberley was also involved in the woman's movement. "...to me who am of Quaker descent, there is nothing strange in a woman speaking in public & being at the same time truly modest and feminine- Why we who are the mothers & sisters of men, should not speak in their presence for the welfare of women & the welfare of men- involved by necessity in theirs I cannot see".⁶⁴ American feminists praised Lady Amberley for making good progress in England; Harriet Beecher Stowe felt that the "Claims", which Lady Amberley had sent to her, was "one of the best and most complete presentation of the whole subject I have ever saw & we in America must thank you for it".⁶⁵ Shortly after the Stroud lecture Pauline W. Davis* urged Lady Amberley to return to America, to attend the Second Decade Meeting of the Woman's Suffrage Association, celebrating the twenty-two years since the first National Convention. Lady Amberley, however, never returned to America.

Both Lady and Lord Amberley were recognized as notable
 * Reformer and Chairwoman of the American Woman's Suffrage Association.

members of the woman's movement in England. In July 1870, the Dialectical Society made an effort to lure the Amberleys into renewed patronage, urging one or the other to favour the society with an address at an inaugural meeting:

It is felt that perhaps among the numerous topics now occupying the attention of thinkers there are few which seem to command so much attention as those questions which relate to the position of women, such at least appears to be the opinion in a large number of the members of the society & they would feel particularly delighted if her Ladyship should think fit to honour the Society with a visit & short address on this or any other topic her ladyship might prefer.⁶⁶

The impetus of the suffrage movement led many women's rights women to hopeful spirits. On May 4th, 1870 the Woman's Disability Bill was introduced by Jacob Bright, Liberal for Manchester, and passed the second reading with a majority of thirty-three votes in favour. "You see the H. of C. has pronounced in my favour", Lady Amberley wrote to Crompton, "but it has not passed yet & I fear the anti-women advocates may make a whip now they find it is no longer a question beneath notice".⁶⁷ The woman suffrage movement, however, would get no further, as this and similar Bills stalled in the House until 1918.

On June 6 1870 a branch of the Women's Suffrage Society was formed at Stroud, Lord Amberley in the chair. Lady Amberley formed the executive committee along with four others, and Lord Amberley was included in the general committee. By 1872, no less than twenty provincial associations had allied themselves to the London Central Committee, the major ones being London, Manchester, Birmingham, and Bristol. The Society, though locally independent, held regular meetings and lectures, petitioned for Bright's Bill, and was engaged in printing and circulating pamphlets advocating the cause.

Lady Amberley contributed significantly to the Stroud branch, lecturing regularly to small groups of men and women. Public attention was once more turned to her early in 1872, nearly two years after her "Claims of Women". On February 3rd she rose to speak at Bristol as President of the Bristol and West of England Women's Suffrage Society.

The meeting, held in the Broadmead Rooms, was large, composed largely of women. Lady Amberley took the chair and was "most cordially received" on rising, the Bristol Mirror and Times reported.⁶⁸ "Her introductory speech was delivered with great earnestness, and without the

slightest exhibition of nervousness". In her speech she announced that the purpose of the meeting was to support Bright's woman suffrage Bill. Through the system of public meetings, she said, the Society hoped "to convince the Women's Rights opponents - even though they were told by Mr. Bouverie that 'the women's question had been pretty well played out by this time' - of the justice and propriety of their claims...the 'women's question', however, would never be 'played out' until they were granted the suffrage".⁶⁹ When they had gained it they would agitate for further reforms in the laws respecting women. In concluding her speech, Lady Amberley contended that those who opposed the granting to women of their just rights were attempting to suffocate all their best and noblest desires.

Lord Amberley, who rose to propose the first resolution, was also received with loud applause. As the Western Daily Press reported, he began by saying that "willing as he always was to say whatever he might be in his power to say in behalf of women's suffrage, he could not but think that the cause had now reached a stage at which more would depend on the conduct and example of women themselves than on the speeches which might be made by men". Abstract arguments in favour of women's suffrage at public

meetings were no longer sufficient, Amberley said, feeling that women might rely more on the example they set in those semi-political spheres already open to them, such as the municipal suffrage and the school board suffrage. Amberley's concluding statement was rather original and daring; he did not think it likely that "men should ever have to take women's present place in society, but even if it should come to that, men would be none the worse for understanding something of the management of children".⁷⁰

Other persons rose to speak during this successful, one-and-a-half hour long meeting. Lady Amberley terminated the meeting, trusting that the room, "which had always been witness to the triumph of so many great causes... might also be hallowed by the success of that cause".⁷¹

Lady Amberley again surprised her family, though this time the shock was significantly less. "We had been surprised by the announcement in Jonny's letter", Lady Stanley wrote to her daughter, "we did not know you were anything so long & great as P.W.B.W.S.S.!"* She warmly congratulated Kate and supported her attachment to the

* President of the Bristol and West of England Woman's Suffrage Society, according to Bertrand Russell, in the Amberley Papers, Vol. 2, p.484.

cause: "I congratulate you on getting so well thro' what must no doubt have made you somewhat nervous...I am not in the least disposed to make fun of you-"

I am strongly for the cause, you feel that speaking for it in public is yr vocation & if so it's all right you shd do so- One of yr vocations, I prefer to say- neither the greatest, highest, not most difficult- but let it by all means have its place in yr life if it takes the form of duty to yr mind- If you never do anything naughtier than presiding & speaking at public meetings, we may well be proud of you- if you never do anything better we may well be ashamed of you! The greater part of Johnny's speech was very good...⁷²

The press reaction to this meeting was itself very subdued, the meeting being reported in a matter-of-fact way. This would perhaps indicate that by 1872 the novelty of female public speaking was beginning to wear thin.

The early woman suffrage movement in England was eager for publicity, yet careful and circumspect in its campaigning. Activists like Lady Amberley sought to set a good example to the public, that their very appearance be "a refutation of the vulgar nonsense talked about 'women's rights women'", as J.S. Mill wrote, that their

"manner of looking, moving, and speaking" be sure to make "a favourable impression from the purely feminine as well as from the human point of view".⁷³ Lady Amberley was herself an eminently reasonable and "sensible" woman's rights activist, as she was once described.⁷⁴ She reflected the nature of the early woman suffrage movement in England when she asked for the franchise for women as a protection, and not as a right and end in itself.⁷⁵ She thus set herself apart from the minority extreme feminists. This latter class of feminists inspired particular horror in those opposed to woman suffrage: "There are women who want...equal rights- in short, the equality of the sexes-" the Times noted, "not as the means of rectifying certain unfortunate conditions of society, but in satisfaction of an abstract principle adapted, as they hold, to modern times".⁷⁶ Lady Amberley never endangered her femininity, for she combined, as the press frequently noted, her forceful public speaking with the greatest of grace and elegance.

Lady Amberley's social position and association with the Russell house gave her some influence and attracted publicity, but her interests lay more in the impoverished classes than in her own. In a time when female public

speaking was considered daring, Lady Amberley and her colleagues disgraced themselves in the eyes of the public for the greater freedom of all women, to challenge the image of woman as a passive, ornamental creature.

Lady Amberley pursued her calling, aided by her husband, in the years following the Bristol woman suffrage meeting. Various branches of the National Society for Women's Suffrage sought the influence of her presence, and to these she often lent her energy. In June 1874, however, the woman's movement in England lost her active and enthusiastic contribution, as she suddenly succumbed to diptheria, which she caught while nursing her child Rachel, who also died. She died at the age of 32, a respected member of the woman's movement, though she had only had less than five years active involvement in the cause.

Some of the most distinguished names in the early history of the woman's movement in England belong to such as John Stuart Mill, Lydia Ernestine Becker, Mrs. Fawcett, and Emily Davies. Though Lady Amberley's name and contribution has been forgotten, her brief career reveals to us the experience of a minor but brave activist who experienced all the difficulties attendant on the advocacy of such a cause, and who was greatly

influenced by some of the greater names in the movement. Her career, in addition, outlines the experience and perceptions of an upper class, noble feminist, in a movement that was predominantly middle class.

NOTES

1. AC 1 4/1, Lady Amberley's journal, April 15, 1865.
2. AC, 1 4/1 unidentified newsclipping, 1865.
3. AC 1 3/4, Helen Taylor to Lady Amberley, June 21 1865.
4. David Morgan, Suffragists and Liberals: The Politics of Woman Suffrage in England (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), p. 9.
5. Roger Fulford, Votes For Women (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), p. 48.
6. From the Times, April 28 1866, quoted in Marian Ramelson, The Petticoat Rebellion: A Century of Struggle for Women's Rights (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1967), p. 77.
7. AC 1 4/1, Lady Amberley's journal, May 20, 1867.
8. Quoted in Michael St. John Packe, The Life of John Stuart Mill (London: Secker & Warburg, 1954), p. 492.
9. Sir Fitzjames Stephens, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity (London, 1874), quoted in Michael St. John Packe, op.cit., p. 495.
10. AC 1 3/6, Lady Amberley to Mrs. Forbes, September 4 1869.
11. Constance Rover, Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain 1866-1914 (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 28.
12. AC, 1 4/1 "Ladies At Elections", Daily Bristol Times, May 8, 1866.
13. AC 1 4/1, Lady Amberley's journal, May 11 1867.
14. Ibid., May 14, 1867.

15. AC 1 3/4, Lady Amberley to Henry Crompton, December 26 1868.
16. AC 1 3/4, Helen Taylor to Lady Amberley, February 13 1868.
17. AC 1 4/1, Lady Amberley's journal 1869-72.
18. AC 1 3/4, Lady Amberley to Henry Crompton, January 3 1869.
19. See for Example, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Public Women Private Man: Women in Social & Political Thought (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).
20. AC 1 3/4, Lady Amberley's journal to Henry Crompton, January 19, 1869.
21. Ibid., May 5 1870.
22. John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women (London: M.I.T. Press, 1970, original edition 1869), p. 21.
23. Ibid., pp. 27-8.
24. AC 1 3/4, John S. Blackie to Lady Amberley, May 30 1870.
25. AC 1 4/1, Lady Amberley's journal, April 11 1869.
26. Ibid., May 7 1869.
27. AC 1 3/4, Helen Taylor to Lady Amberley, September 11 1869.
28. AC 1 4/1, Lady Amberley's journal, March 26 1870.
29. AC 1 1/2, Lady Russell to Lord Amberley, no date. The Daily Telegraph of March 28 1870 reported Lord Amberley's speech as follows: "LORD AMBERLEY, in seconding the resolution, said they ought to welcome, as a thing good and desirable in itself, the wish of any class for political equality. This was a time when social questions were becoming everyday more important, and were more than ever engaging the attention of the Legislature, and upon

29. (continued) such questions women were eminently competent to give advice and assistance. Another reason why women should be admitted to the franchise was that he did not think the law would ever do justice between man and woman unless they were placed on a footing of political equality. (Hear, hear.) The most grave objection urged was that a deteriorating influence might be exercised on the character of women. This was an imaginary, undefined feeling, which would not bear investigation. It was, no doubt, a very terrible prospect to think of women going about the country delivering speeches, lectures, and, instead of amusing themselves by reading the latest novels, being occupied in studying such pernicious and corrupting books as 'Mill's Logic.' (Laughter.) For his part, he had no fear of that dreadful result. There would probably always be a sufficient supply of frivolous women, as, notwithstanding all their advantages, there was a sufficient number of frivolous men. (Laughter and cheers.)"

30. AC 1 3/2, Lady Amberley to Lady Russell, June 2 1870.

31. AC 1 4/1, Lady Amberley's journal, May 25 1870.

32. AC 1 3/2, Lady Amberley to Lady Stanley of Alderley, May 26 1870.

33. AC, 1 4/1 "Lady Amberley on The Claims of Women", the Times, Friday May 27 1870.

34. Lady Amberley, "The Claims of Women", in The Fortnightly Review 15 (Jan-June 1871), p. 95.

35. Ibid., p. 99.

36. Ibid., p. 100.

37. Ibid., p. 102.

38. Ibid., p. 107.

39. Ibid., p. 109.

40. Ibid., p. 110.

41. AC, 1 4/1 The Stroud Journal, Saturday May 28, 1870.
42. There is extensive secondary literature on both the pro- and anti- women arguments. For the opposition to woman suffrage, see Brian Harrison, Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain (London: Croom Helm, 1978), and Patricia Branca, Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class in the Victorian Home (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University Press; London: Croom Helm, 1975). For a good general account of the woman's suffrage movement see Roger Fulford, op.cit.
43. AC, 1 4/1 the Echo, Saturday May 28 1870.
44. AC, 1 4/1 the Times, Saturday May 28 1870.
45. AC, 1 4/1 "Female Rights and Wrongs", unidentified newsclipping, January, 1871.
46. AC, 1 4/1 "The Proposal Unsexing of Women"; "He-Critter", to the Editor of the Stroud Journal, no date.
47. AC, 1 4/1 "Female Rights and Wrongs", op.cit.
48. Quoted in G.M. Young, Portrait of an Age: Victorian England (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 319-20. Queen Victoria to Theodore Martin, May 29 1870.
49. AC, 1 4/1 the Echo, June 1 1871.
50. AC, 1 4/1 unidentified newsclipping, no date.
51. AC 1 3/2, Aunt Louisa Stanley to Lady Amberley, June 20, 1870.
52. AC 1 3/4, John S. Blackie to Lady Amberley, May 30 1870.
53. AC 1 3/4, Lady Amberley to Henry Crompton, June 5 1870, and June 10 1870.
54. Ibid., June 5, 1870.
55. AC 1 3/4, Lady Amberley to Helen Taylor, May 26 1870.
56. AC 1 3/4, Helen Taylor to Lady Amberley, May 29 1870.

57. Ibid., May 30 1870.
58. The publishing of Lady Amberley's lecture was also largely due to John Stuart Mill's enthusiasm: "I have been much disappointed at not seeing Lady Amberley's lecture in the Fortnightly yet", he wrote to John Morley, editor, "I hope it is to be in the December issue." The following cancelled passage appears in the draft after the opening clause: "as you seemed to agree with me in thinking well of it & as it is important not to let pass a good opportunity of occasionally returning to the charge on a subject of women's emancipation. Her name position are of great use to the cause as may be seen from the attacks which are continually made on her for her support of it. We should therefore take all the advantage we can of that support it will give me very great pleasure if you will print it in the next number." Francis E. Mincka and Dwight N. Lindley, eds. The Later Letters of John Stuart Mill, 1849-1873 (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1972), vol. 4, p. 1774.
59. AG 1 3/4, Lady Amberley to Henry Crompton, June 5 1870.
60. AC, 1 4/1 Lady Amberley to the Committee for Woman Suffrage, February 17 1873, read by Professor Young at unidentified woman suffrage meeting.
61. AC 1 1/2, Lady Russell to Lord Amberley, May 27 1870.
62. AC 1 1/2, Lady Russell to Lady Amberley, June 1 1870.
63. AC 1 3/4, John S. Blackie to Lady Amberley, June 12 1870.
64. AC 1 3/6, Mrs. Forbes to Lady Amberley, no date.
65. AC 1 3/6 Harriet Beecher Stowe to Lady Amberley, June 23 1870.
66. AC 1 3/5, F.A. Ford of the Dialectical Society to Lord Amberley, July 18 1870. Amberley did not entirely abandon the Dialectical Society; on April 19, 1871, for example, he went to London to hear a discussion on Conway's paper on marriage. Amberley spoke against freedom of divorce, which Conway had advocated.

67. AC 1 3/4, Lady Amberley to Henry Crompton, May 5 1870.
68. AC, 1 4/1 Bristol Times and Mirror, February 3 1872.
69. AC, 1 4/1 Western Telegraph, February 3 1872.
70. AC, 1 4/1 Western Daily Press, February 3 1872.
71. Ibid.
72. AC 1 2/2, Lady Stanley of Alderly to Lady Amberley, February 6 1872.
73. John Stuart Mill to Mrs. P.A. Taylor, quoted in Michael St. John Packe, op.cit., p. 497.
74. AC 1 3/5, R.S. Wright to Lady Stanley, March 15 1872. The letter is as follows: "I return Lady Amberley's speech. She is much more sensible than the rest and does more good accordingly for her cause". Wright was a classical scholar, barrister, later judge.
75. Mrs. Fawcett, later president of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, defined the position of the early women's suffrage movement in England as follows: "The suffrage has not been claimed for women in England as an abstract and inalienable right, but has been claimed upon the claims of expediency; that is to say, on the grounds that the good resulting from it would far outweigh any evils that might possibly attend it..." From The Woman Question in Europe, Theo. Stanton ed. (London: Sampson Low, 1884), pp. 4-6, quoted in Constance Rover, op.cit., p. 30.
76. AC, 1 1/4 The Times, Saturday May 28 1870.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PERSONAL UNORTHODOXY OF LORD AND

LADY AMBERLEY

The preceding chapters have concerned themselves with outlining the efforts and contributions of the Amberleys with respect to the sensitive and unpopular issues of birth control and the emancipation of women. In advocating such issues, the Amberleys immediately and recognizably set themselves apart from the greater number of their contemporaries. The couple, however, also differed from their society in less obvious, non public, though equally interesting ways. Their unconventionality can also be seen to occur in wide-ranging fashion in their private lives; these atypical positions can be traced from the particularities of their domestic arrangements, to moral and attitudinal tenets unorthodox even by today's standards.

Current interest of social historians in such questions as childhood, women, the family, and leisure, has led to greater attention to these topics in the history of the English upper classes.¹ The Amberleys' private papers

offer an insight into, as David Cannadine puts it, "the life that was lived inside and outside the great houses; the outlook of the aristocracy themselves; the nature of their upbringing and recreations".² The irregularities of the Amberleys' domestic patterns serves to distance them even from the variety of their own class, and, in the end, enables the reader to arrive at a more complete picture and appreciation of these unusual Victorians.

John Amberley and Katherine Louisa Stanley began their friendship shortly after a ball in June 1863. After a few conversations Amberley declared that he found Kate Stanley "wonderfully intellectual", and Kate was similarly impressed.³ She had often expressed her interest in Lyluph's intellectual friends, but had found them all so ugly. Amberley, on the other hand, though his "whole being manifestly yearned after truth and freedom", was quite handsome.⁴ Their son Frank, Earl Russell later described the attraction in a somewhat more prosaic fashion: Kate discovered in John Amberley "a passionate idealism coupled with a pathetic helplessness which aroused both romantic love and that maternal passion which exists in every woman worth the name".⁵

The pair often had serious conversations, on such

topics as Utilitarianism and toleration, and agreed very well "as usual"⁶. Their courtship appears to have been highly intellectual in nature; they had long discussions and quarrels on divorce, baptism, and Amberley's religious views, all of which resulted in exchanges of educational articles and explanatory letters. Amberley was quite taken by Kate, and wrote in his journal:

My whole life is filled with the thought of this one dearest being, she is so noble, so good, to me so beautiful in every way that I scarcely dare to think of her as one who could return my love...⁷

Lady Russell was greatly displeased with the affection that was developing between the two. She implored Amberley, much to this disgust, to be "prudent" and not to get "involved", as he was so "very young" that he could not be trusted to judge for himself.⁸ She imposed a six months' separation between them in an attempt to prevent an engagement, during which time there was to be no correspondence. The separation was very difficult; "Alas, dear K, when shall I see thee & when enjoy again that pure happiness which seems to have fled for so long, so very long an interval, if not for ever? When, when, when? It is the cry of my soul",

Amberley wrote in his journal.⁹ Despite Lady Russell's efforts, the two were married on November the eighth 1864, Amberley still in his twenty-first year and Kate in her twenty-second. Lady Russell decided to make the best of it:

...we might have wished him to marry a little later, to have him a little longer a child of home. But, on the other hand, there is something to me very delightful in his marrying while heart & mind are fresh and innocent and unwordly, and I even add inexperienced....¹⁰

The Amberleys' courtship was based on genuine and demonstrated love, which often was not the case in the unions of the landed gentry and aristocracy. In many instances such courtships appear to have been formal and brief, born of the assurances of convenience. Emily Eden, aristocratic novelist of the 1860s, described the courtship of Lord and Lady Teviot: the young lady had "accepted the Lord Teviot on an acquaintance of very few weeks, and that carried on solely in a ball-room or at a breakfast. She knew that her sisters had married in the same way, and were very happy".¹¹ concern for the formation of desirable connections and the advancement

of the family's standing often precluded the idea of romance. Lord Salisbury in 1861 described the "bargain and sale" unions of his class:

Our romance is shocked at the idea of finding a husband for a young lady, and our delicacy revolts at the idea of her finding one for herself; and the feeling, from which the French system took its rise, that children are a species of capital to be invested judiciously in a remunerative marriage, is still extensively prevalent among us.... The arrangement is that the mother is to choose really, and the daughter to choose apparently. The lacquer of romance is to cover the homely reality of bargain and sale.¹²

A family friend confided to Lady Amberley that he had once thought her marriage had been for "ambition not love"; Lady Amberley was greatly shocked at his impertinence and informed him that she "did not want to see him again".¹³

The Amberleys married at an earlier age than was common among the nobility throughout the nineteenth century. Demographic studies have shown that the mean age of marriage for those born between 1825-1849 was 33.7 years for males, and 26.6 years for females. As a general rule, brides were younger than their spouses by a considerable

number of years.¹⁴

The Amberleys were well suited; John Amberley's "unsocial, morose", and "unsympathetic" habits, which he passionately deplored himself, were balanced by Lady Amberley's gaiety and liveliness. Kate, for her part, found inspiration in his "holy seriousness" and earnestness.¹⁵ In certain respects, the Amberleys' marriage appears to conform to and even exemplify the very ideal of middle-class matrimony. Several scholars have traced the rise, from the sixteenth century, of a new conception of marriage that emphasized the compatibility of husband and wife, and viewed mutual affection and companionship as the ideal of married life.¹⁶ A new family type emerged in the 18th century in the higher ranks of society - a more conjugal unit, stressing ties of affection and sexual commitment, and a greater concern for children and their needs.¹⁷ The Victorian home was a private, intensely emotional and hierarchical unit, the latter reinforced by the spread of evangelical piety. The middle-class home in this period is often described as greatly idealized, a "haven from a heartless world", as Christopher Lasch has put it.¹⁸

Neither the lower- or upper-class Victorian families conformed to this middle-class ideal. It is probable that

the landed aristocracy did not emulate middle-class respectability or betray the "starchy idolization of etiquette", as F.M.L. Thompson described it, having the necessary independence to choose freely among domestic patterns on the basis of their own needs and desires.¹⁹ According to Thompson, "the landed gentleman could afford to be unconventional without endangering his standing because the solid guarantee of his estate lay behind him".²⁰ However, the influence of middle-class ideals and of what has been called "bourgeois austerity in the shape of evangelical religion" on the upper classes cannot be dismissed.²¹ Such influence is apparent in the Amberleys' own private lives; the independence which their class position accorded them, however, had the final say.

The outstanding characteristic of the Amberleys' married life was the great love and respect they held for each other, which only increased during the course of their ten years together. Lady Amberley believed a happy marriage to be "the very greatest of all earthly blessings".²² Their private papers are littered with charming expressions of their love, such as the end of this letter, written in 1868:

...Now old angel I shall stop for
 it is absurd of yr old wifie
 after nearly 4 years of wedded
 life to write only a love letter
 but we shall be lovers to the end
 I am sure, what a blessing to
 have such a darling to come back to
 one, one that makes all life have
 a meaning & a reality to its ever
 faithful adoring loving little
 Wifie Blumschen.²³

The Amberleys' home was indeed a shelter, from which
 the reproaches of their contemporaries scarcely
 reached them. In 1872 Lady Amberley wrote of her love
 for her husband as follows:

...ever since I have known my own
 one life has been perfect, blissful,
 & full of meaning, joy & purpose.
 He has been all in all to me & my
 happiness in him even surpassed my
 highest expectations, & they were very
 high to begin with. Were there
 more marriages such as ours life
 wd indeed be bright. He has been
 goodness, kindness, patience,
 forbearance, tenderness itself to
 me & I have loved him most ardently
 & truly, more & more day by day.
 The only thing I need never reproach
 myself with is not to have loved
 him enough, for more I cd not. I
 have done so with my whole soul and
 strength & the happiest days of my
 life have been those alone with him
 & face to face with nature...²⁴

Lord Amberley also cherished their love; reflecting upon

seven years of wedded life, he wrote in his journal:
 "...how happy to have passed these years in such
 constant love of one another & to go on loving still
 as if we had only been married today. One cannot be
 too thankful for this great joy..."²⁵

The Amberleys took the Victorian ideal of companionship
 in married life to its height. They developed their
 intellectual enthusiasms together, and supported and aided
 one another in the tasks they had set out for themselves.
 They were one in every thought, aim, and hope. "You
 were the world to each other", Lyluph Stanley wrote to
 Amberley after the death of his wife, "and no one could
 have been more in sympathy with anyone than you both
 were".²⁶

The early nineteenth century witnessed a reassertion
 of patriarchal authority in both the middle and upper
 classes.²⁷ Reflecting this situation, an anonymous
 author in 1846 wrote: "the government of a household,
 for the sake of all its inmates, should be a monarchy,
 but a limited monarchy; of all forms, a democracy is most
 uncomfortable in domestic life".²⁸ In the 1860s John Stuart
 Mill shocked his society by calling for the complete
 and formal equality of the sexes. "The moral regeneration

of mankind will only really commence, when the most fundamental of the social relations is placed under the rule of equal justice", he wrote of the marital relation.²⁹ In 1867 Lady Amberley received the following advice from an American friend and feminist: "In the true marriage relation, the independence of the husband and the wife is equal, their dependence mutual, and their obligations mutual."³⁰ Though rather commonplace by today's standards, such advice was daring for the nineteenth century. Lady Amberley herself had believed that the marriage relation should be made more egalitarian, a belief which had shocked her Stroud audience in 1870.

The Amberleys' marriage relation was very much egalitarian in spirit, which serves to remove them from the norm of both middle and upper class marriages of the period. Lady Amberley did not ponder the "great mystery" of middle class marriage, as one author put it in 1877, of

...how best the soul may cling
To her celestial Spouse and King,
How He should rule, and she with meek desire approve.
31

Nor could Lord Amberley claim, as did J.M. Dent, landed gentleman and publisher, that his wife was an "entirely self-sacrificing...a self abnegating and self forgetting

creature".³² The Amberleys' egalitarian beliefs were translated into a high level of sensitivity to each others' needs, independence, and work. Neither one nor the other's work or passions were deemed to take precedence; rather, they took great interest in each other's pursuits, and aided one another in the achievement of their aims. Lady Amberley, for example, participated in her husband's candidatures, following him to the hustings, which was an unusual practice. She attended the Commons debates several times weekly to keep herself informed, and assiduously recorded in her journal Amberley's political experiences and fortunes, as if they were her own. Amberley, for his part, gave free rein to his wife to pursue her calling in whichever way she deemed fit. He even urged her greater involvement in the woman's movement, though such activity was seen as unladylike and shocking. They attended woman suffrage meetings together, as Chapter Three illustrated, Amberley at times taking the chair when Lady Amberley presided. It is interesting to note that, perhaps as a reflection of the renewed formality and patriarchalism of the period, Kate referred to her husband as Amberley, while he addressed her as Kate. Similarly, in Emily Eden's novel, The Semi-Attached Couple (1859), Lord Teviot calls his wife 'Helen' but she calls him 'Teviot'.³³

Considering Lady Amberley's feminism, her role in their domestic arrangements becomes an interesting question. It has been established that Lady Amberley combined her feminism with the greatest of femininity and womanly discretion. Though she did not believe matrimony and home duties to be the sole or most important vocation of woman, she did not neglect these in her private life. A review of The Amberley Papers in 1937 praised the balance Lady Amberley had achieved: she, "who bore the standards of feminism so bravely aloft on earth, and who read Emerson and Huxley, and who was adored by John Stuart Mill", contrived, "despite all this mental ferment, to remain a sensible, fragrant daughter of a distinguished British nobility".³⁴ Her duty to express herself and to work for the greater freedom of women did not diminish her devotion to her husband and children. An American friend of the Amberleys wrote the following after Lady Amberley's death:

It is in home life that woman shows her true worth. Many believe that when she takes an interest in public affairs the duties of domestic life are sure to be overlooked. But to this Lady Amberley was a marked exception. One rarely meets with so sweet and even a temper, so faithful and judicious a mother,

— and a wife so devoted and sympathizing.³⁵ —

Lady Stanley in 1870 praised her daughter for following the position of not letting "even duties separate you from your husband".³⁶ Lady Amberley thus possessed the "efficiency, sympathy, cheerfulness, unselfishness and sweet temper" that made the "real helpmeet wife",³⁷ in a marriage and household as egalitarian as possible by nineteenth century standards.

It is Lord Amberley, perhaps unexpectedly, who appears to fall outside the norm and stereotypes of the Victorian aristocratic male. He showed no interest in the traditional upper class male world of hunting, horse-racing or shooting. He displayed, rather, a great sensitivity to his wife's needs and comfort, and a remarkable interest in childbirth and childrearing in an age, as shall be seen, when aristocratic fathers were particularly remote and lacking in interest.

Whereas childbirth was usually concealed and rarely described in literature in England, Lord Amberley participated in most of his wife's three confinements, and described them with considerable detail and feeling in his journal. Of Lady Amberley's first confinement in 1865 he wrote:

Waking at 4 a.m. I was informed by Kate that she was in pain. It was slight and she tried to prevent my leaving her. However, after a brief struggle, I got up & told her mother who, finding there was no doubt, at once sent for Merriman. The pains rapidly increased, & by 5 became terrible. From that time until delivery they never ceased. Merriman arrived at 6.30 & at 6.50 I heard him say 'It's a boy,' & heard its sweet little cry.... K calm & happy after it. The baby was washed & brought to her. I thought it a very pretty child & felt very proud of it as a part of her. Very delightful to hear her talking to it...³⁸

Lord Amberley was vexed by the first child's, Frank, refusal to suckle, and repeatedly worried over the fact in his journal. The following passage illustrates his interest and curiosity in the matter, as well as a complete freedom from prudery or discomfort in the matter:

Tho' perfectly well K. had much trouble today from baby not sucking. He would not or could not do it. Another baby took a little but K. still suffered much pain in her breasts. In the evg. b.d.* I sucked a little thinking it might do good, but I could not get much. Since I had to apply all my sucking power to get any milk it is no wonder the infant found it too hard for him. The milk was not nasty, but much too sweet to be pleasant; like the sweetest of syrup. It seems very badly

* Before dinner.

managed by nature that little babies should not always find it as easy to suck as little puppies...39

Amberley was very solicitous with regard to his wife's comfort during her confinement, which endeared him to her heart:

A has been too dear & tender all the time of my confinement; full of care gentleness & thought for me, very low several times which made me sad when I did not feel strong enough to cheer him up. He is very dear too about his boy very fond of him & admires him as much as I do...40

He was equally pleased with the birth of their third child, Bertrand, in 1872, and as anxious for his wife's well-being. "Amberley is so pleased with his new treasure", Lady Amberley wrote to her mother, "& has been as usual the best & tenderest of nurses".⁴¹ Amberley's attitude to babies contrasts sharply with that of Lord Rosebery's; this latter, when congratulated in 1882 upon the birth of a son, replied that not only did this "very common event" not excite him, but it "may cause a good deal of annoyance to me".⁴²

The Amberleys' union was thus one of deep love and respect, which earned them Michael St. John's description of a "fairy-tale couple".⁴³ Their marriage and the expressions of their love offer an exception both to the "stern and decorous days"⁴⁴ of the 1860s and 70s and the "bargain and sale" marriages of the aristocracy. Lady Amberley appears to be the ideal wife, devoted companion to her husband, even-tempered and gracious. Amberley's own ideal attentiveness, however, as well as the egalitarian spirit of their marriage, find their mould in the domestic patterns of neither the middle or the upper classes.

A more detailed examination of the Amberleys' domestic arrangements irretrievably removes them from all further comparisons to the middle class ideal of matrimony. Their surprising deviation reflects both the freedom they obtained from their class position, and their independence of spirit.

Shortly after the birth of Bertrand Russell in 1872 began an arrangement with D.A. Spalding, a young scientist studying instinct in chickens, who in 1873 had been employed as a tutor for Frank. "Apparently on the grounds of pure theory", Bertrand later wrote, "my father and mother

decided that although (Spalding) ought to remain childless on account of his tuberculosis, it was unfair to expect him to remain celibate. My mother, therefore, allowed him to live with her, although I know of no evidence that she derived any pleasure from doing so".⁴⁵ As Lady Amberley died in 1874, the arrangement lasted only for a very short time. The disclosure of this state of affairs deeply shocked the Russells; all documents after Lady Amberley's death were destroyed to prevent a scandal, and almost forty years later the then Duke of Bedford was still destroying the Amberleys' correspondence.⁴⁶

Such an arrangement can only be said to be highly unusual. While sexual promiscuity by both partners was common in arranged marriages of the nobility, the Amberleys' marriage was clearly one of love. Such sexual and marital experimentation, as it can only be described, is an indication of the remarkable open-mindedness of the couple, in an age notorious for its prudery and sexual repression.

In January 1873, Amberley wrote in his journal of a conversation with a friend, Edith Story. They discussed "complete openness in Marriage", and Story professed herself to be in complete agreement with the Amberleys' views.⁴⁷ It is impossible to determine what Amberley

might have meant by "complete openness", as he neglects to inform us himself. On the one hand, he may have meant a philosophy of egalitarian matrimony, and on the other he may have meant "openness" as we understand it today- complete and mutual extra-marital sexual freedom. If the latter is what Amberley had meant, then there is evidence that the couple had arrived at an astonishing openmindedness before their arrangement with the consumptive Spalding. For in the same entry, Amberley calmly noted Spalding's "confession" of love for Lady Amberley.

The couple's open-mindedness can be traced as far back as 1866, two years after their marriage. In this instance, a curious relationship was born between the Amberleys and Thomas Cobden-Sanderson, an old Cambridge friend of Amberley's and later godfather to Bertrand. As Amberley related in his journal in 1871, Cobden-Sanderson loved "M'amie", as he called Kate, "more than any one on earth".

Apparently he has always loved her, although of course he has never said a word that was not proper: his devotion to her is extraordinary & he calls her his wife & says he could not think of marrying anyone else while he has her; this sounds odd

& hardly proper, yet his character is such that I feel there is no harm in it.

"All he says is said in a pure spirit", Amberley wrote.

"Besides he abstains altogether from any sort of unchaste relations with women, leading a life of perfect continence: in this he says he is determined to continue".

I allow him & have allowed him ever since his visit in the winter of 1866 to touch & caress Kate & even to kiss her. When he first began doing this he was in a sad state & in great want of consolation. Now, however, Kate thinks he ought to leave off & has told him so. He has agreed yet cannot resist.

Revealing the great generosity of his spirit, Amberley writes, "I feel so sorry for his lonely & unhappy condition that I do not want to stop it altogether. A kiss is a little thing to give when one has everything that love can grant". It appears that the Amberleys tolerated this chaste love affair, though it sounded so "odd & hardly proper", on account of the uplifting effect it had on their forlorn friend:

His feeling & manner to her are reverential as well as intensely

affectionate & I think her kindness which never goes the least bit too far does him some good. However now the experiment has some restrictions (?) made I earnestly hope it may succeed. Her charm & the beauty of her character come out in a marvelous way in this relation. She is so kind & delightful & yet also makes it so clear that she does not at all reciprocate his ardent affection. I do not think I ought to repress his friendship for her because I believe that her influence always does him some good & her sympathy comforts him.⁴⁸

It would appear that the Amberleys were willing, in their great generosity and open-mindedness, to impart to others some of the blessings of their own abundant love. As Amberley wrote in his journal, "strange it is that one should be so fortunate in love, winning a jewel which he can wear all his life, while others as good & as pure as he are left out in comfortless & melancholy single life".⁴⁹ As their arrangement with Spalding was rather less chaste, it would also appear that they were not beyond experimenting in modified love and marital relationships.⁵⁰ On a deeper level, thus, the Amberleys' marriage contrasts sharply with the Victorian ideal of pure, monogamous matrimony. Lady Amberley herself, though she does not reciprocate her admirers' ardent affections, jars with the middle-class

pure and chaste mother ideal.

Childrearing

The Amberleys had three children, spaced over seven years. Frank was born in 1865, Rachel, the survivor of twins, in 1868, and Bertrand in 1872. A family size of two or three children was popular for the British nobility during the nineteenth century.⁵¹ This indicates that some means of family limitation was being used; the Amberleys were no exception, for Lord Amberley practiced his Malthusian beliefs. Bertrand Russell was born, as he eventually learnt, in a misadventure in the practice of birth control.⁵² The Amberleys were exceptionally interested and conscientious parents; the remaining chapter will illustrate how their childrearing patterns differed from those of their own class, the landed aristocracy and gentry.

The Amberleys' interest in the well-being of their children is discernible from the moment they became parents. Short of milk, their first child was not thriving; the couple realized a wet-nurse had to be found. The nineteenth century, however, witnessed the disappearance of the wet-nurse, as it rapidly became more common for mothers to suckle their children.⁵³ "K. cannot bear the notion of a wet-nurse",

Amberley wrote in his journal, "& I dislike it nearly as much, but there seems no hope of her nursing now...." With great difficulty the Amberleys found a wetnurse, though Lady Amberley "struggled hard against the idea". "A terrible disappointment to her", Amberley wrote, "for we both care very much about ladies nursing..."⁵⁴ Lady Amberley determinedly suckled her next two children, though it often tired her.

The trend to breastfeeding infants would seem to indicate a growing concern for children in the upper classes, but the use of other servants in childcare implies the opposite, according to Theresa McBride.⁵⁵ The custom in middle and upper class homes of raising children under the care of nurses, nannies and governesses often led to a distance between parents and children. Parents, relieved of the day to day process of childrearing, appeared cool and remote. The upper class mother was only seen by her children for half-an hour or so in the afternoon, and as a result she was "idealized by the children as something distant, fragile, chaste".⁵⁶ Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy has suggested that nannies, nurses and governesses were more important to some English children than their own parents.⁵⁷ In an early draft of his autobiography, John Stuart Mill referred to "that rarity in England, a

really warm-hearted mother".⁵⁸ Anthony Ashley Cooper, the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, grew up without any experience of parental love. "He saw little of his parents", Geoffrey Best has written, "and when duty or necessity compelled them to take notice of him they were formal and frightening. They left their children to be looked after by servants and school teachers, and were satisfied so long as the children were presentable for inspection when required".⁵⁹

Lady Amberley appears to have been a more devoted mother; she superintended her first child's washing and dressing, put him to bed herself occasionally, and at times had the care of the child to herself for an entire afternoon.. She read out loud to him and took charge of his entire education until 1873, when a tutor was found. Rather than relegating the children to the nursery, both the Amberleys spent much time with their children. This is illustrated by a letter to a prospective governess, written in 1871:

Both (children) get up at 6 &
are with me fr 7 to 8 at 8
breakfast with me at 9 go out
till 12 or 1 part of the time on
a pony that they ride in turn &
part of the time alone- I like them

to be much alone & unwatched.
 At 1.30 they dine with us & often
 go out with us after at 5 have
 tea with us & stay with their
 father till near 6 at 7 go to
 bed.⁶⁰

In between governesses, Lady Amberley had the children under her sole care, which she did not mind: "I am in no hurry as I like having the children much with me it suits me just now", she wrote to her mother.⁶¹ "I was kept far more in touch with my parents that was common in those days, or even now", Frank, Earl Russell recalled in his memoirs, "and I spent a very considerable part of the day with one or other of them".⁶²

Leaving children in the care of a nurse often led to bad situations for children. Even Lady Amberley, devoted as she was to her children, was not aware that baby Frank was being starved, abused and neglected by nurse Davies. She was informed by her servants.

Lord Amberley was a particularly interested and affectionate father, more so than most upper class fathers were until the end of the nineteenth century. According to David Roberts, the predominant trait of these fathers was physical and psychological remoteness.⁶³ This

remoteness and indifference to children was the result of several factors; the isolation of the nursery, the business of government at Westminster or in the colonies, participation in the pleasures and engagements of Society life, preoccupation with hunting, racing, or shooting, and long trips abroad. A custom which emphasized male ascendancy and manly virtues also made the father a formidable, distant figure. In the middle classes, evangelicalism stressed patriarchalism, the notion that

Our God is a household God,
as well as a heavenly one.⁶⁴

Recalling his middle class childhood in the 1860s, Austin Harrison wrote "respect was the injunction of the family". He described his father as an "emanation which periodically took shape", a "detachable", "non-serviceable parent".⁶⁵

Upper class fathers simply avoided their children.

Shaftesbury's father was "callous and peremptory" toward his children: - "his natural inclination is to avoid me and all his children", he wrote.⁶⁶ William Keppel, a landed gentleman of Norfolk, frankly avowed that he disliked small children.⁶⁷ There were exceptions, of course. Earl Russell was a "singularly good father", which probably accounts for Lord Amberley's own fatherly

attentiveness. As Stuart J. Reid wrote in 1895:

Even when the cares of State pressed most heavily on him he always seemed to the children about him to have leisure to enter with gay alacrity into their plans and amusements. When at home, no matter how urgent the business at hand, he always saw them either in the house or the garden everyday, and took the liveliest interest in the round of their life, alike in work and play.⁶⁸

Once relieved of parliamentary duties, Amberley spent much time with his children. He even took seven-year-old Frank with him on a resting holiday in Scotland in 1872, although he soon regretted doing so. His kindness is evident in the fact that he spared Frank from the miseries of boarding school, customary in the upper classes, hiring Spalding as tutor in Frank's eighth year instead.

Frank was a particularly unruly child, despite an assortment of "calming medicines", which greatly troubled his father. "Sometimes I am quite sad about his ways", Lord Amberley wrote to his wife during his two-week holiday. "His total indifference to the convenience or wishes of other people, either the people of the house

or me makes him an annoying child to have".⁶⁹ Frank's "troublesome humours" led Amberley to seek advice and ponder various methods of child management. The Amberleys' friend W.F. Collier believed that children should not be disciplined:

I cannot help thinking that the teaching of manner must result in failure. I think bona fide candour and sincerity, with gentleness & amiability must be the foundation....as we are such very imitative creatures the society of those who have really pleasing manners is the only necessary teaching that we require, with now and then a little rational conversation on the subject as we draw toward years of discretion. You see children never used to be very much in the society of their Parents, but chiefly in the nursery....But if Parents are their chief companions, talking to them as rational being or equals according to their capacity, they will only require the example which is before them.⁷⁰

Collier's views are an extreme example of a pattern of childraising in the nineteenth century, which Lloyd DeMause has called the "socialization mode": a pattern where the raising of a child "became less a process of conquering its will than of training it, guiding it into proper paths, teaching it to conform, socializing it".

In this model, as well, the father for the first time begins to take an interest in the child and its training.⁷¹ Punishment in this model was frequent and often severe, but it was now less physical than "the newer, more devastating methods of withdrawal of affection, coupled with food and sensory deprivation".⁷² This mode is less evident in the upper classes, where the entire process of socialization was often left to the nurse and the nursery.

Bereft of nanny and even his wife, Amberley was left to decide for himself which course to take with Frank. Collier was opposed to all punishment of children, but Amberley felt this view unsatisfactory. "I agree with his general views, but the application I think must be governed by circumstances, & Frank seems to want very strict discipline", he wrote to Lady Amberley. "As to managing a boy like Frank by love I do not believe in it."⁷³ Amberley believed that in certain cases "a good boxing of the ears wd be far the best treatment & make him much happier afterwards".⁷⁴ Amberley was extraordinarily patient, however, responding to Frank's tyranny with emotional and food deprivation; he ignored him or threatened dry bread for dinner. Amberley was quite weighed with the responsibilities of active

fatherhood. No doubt this was the first time a child had been entirely in his care for a protracted period of time. "I know it is quite my fault he is with me & I have no right to complain", he wrote to his wife, "but it will be a warning to me not to take him anywhere again, even with you".⁷⁵

The frequent mentioning of children in Amberley's journal and letters is rather unusual. As David Roberts writes, the letters of Anglican landowners and military men as a rule spoke only of politics, society, war, and empire, "but very little if anything of their children". In some memoirs "they are mentioned only when born".⁷⁶

The Amberleys settled on an indulgent method of child rearing, very much similar to Collier's. They gave the utmost freedom to their children, in the hope of developing and exercising their in good sense and rationality. As a result, Frank's naughtiness was uncorrected, and, as Lady Stanley later told him, he was "an unwashed, ill-bred, impertinent little child dressed in rags". "It would appear", he reflected in his memoirs, "therefore that the education which so entirely satisfied my parents and myself...was not equally pleasing to the conventional when they were brought into contact with its results".⁷⁷

Lady Amberley firmly believed in an education of usefulness, however, perhaps out of what Lord Percy called in his autobiography the fear of "infectious idleness that haunts a leisured society".⁷⁸ "They make their own beds fold up their own things at night & on coming home & I like & care for them to be useful & independent as much as anything else. Work of all sorts is to be taught them as necessary & desirable", she wrote to the governess Miss Hentze.⁷⁹ She taught Frank to cook and to sew, as well as other domestic arts, that he not be unable to look after himself.

The Amberleys were agnostics and therefore anxious to protect their children from the evils of a religious education. To Miss Hentze Lady Amberley wrote: "I do not care what yr religion is but I like no one to speak to the children on that subject but myself".⁸⁰ The children were brought up not in a defiant or aggressive attitude to the tenets of Christian religion, but rather in "complete ignorance of, and indifference to, them". Wrote Frank Russell,

I was never taken to church, I never heard of God, I was never troubled with the desires, wishes, or purposes of a Supreme Being. The only definite threat to religion

in my early education was the fact that I was taught to think for myself and to use and trust my reason.⁸¹

The Amberleys were anxious to find non-religious godparents for their last son, Bertrand. John Stuart Mill and his stepdaughter Helen Taylor agreed with pleasure to fulfill this function, as did Cobden-Sanderson, who was an avowed atheist. After the death of Lady Amberley in 1874, Amberley appointed as guardians to his children Cobden-Sanderson and the tutor Spalding, who was also an atheist. Amberley died soon after his wife and daughter, Rachel. According to his wishes, Cobden-Sanderson took Frank and Bertrand and their governess with him to London. "It is possible", writes Ronald Clark, "that Russell's grandparents would have condoned Cobden-Sanderson's lack of faith, much though they regretted it. Spalding was another matter".⁸² Discovery of Spalding's relationship with the Amberleys convinced the Russells to go against Amberley's wishes. An action was commenced, and the two atheists capitulated without a fight. In February 1876, Frank, eleven, and Bertrand, four, were delivered to their grandparents' home, Pembroke Lodge.

Frank Russell referred in his memoirs to the "strange"

household of the Amberleys. And strange it must have been, with Lady Amberley's efforts to escape the persistent attentions of Cobden-Sanderson, the arrangement with the scientist Spalding, who allowed chickens in the Ravenscroft drawing room and library, and the permissive childraising method the Amberleys employed. The Amberleys publicly defied convention by advocating unpopular social issues, but the other facet of their unconventionality remained and remains discretely ensconced in their private papers. The couple, if they were not strange, were certainly unusual, unrepresentative of both their class and mid-Victorian society. Of open and enquiring mind, they went above the sexual and marital mores of their society. Their marriage resulted in a more genuine and profound love than many marriages of the landed aristocracy, and they were more affectionate and caring parents than those of their class usually were before the late-Victorian period.

1874 proved to be an unlucky year for the Amberleys. On their return from a trip abroad in May, Frank contracted diphtheria. He was at once isolated and nursed by his mother and by his aunt Maude Stanley. Despite all precautions, Rachel soon fell ill as well. While nursing her, Lady Amberley caught the disease and died in three days, on the twenty-eight of June, 1874. Rachel died a few days later, on the third of July, at the age of

six-and-a-half: "...my two greatest treasures in this world are gone almost at one blow", Amberley wrote to his mother. "It is cruel, unspeakably cruel!"⁸³ He spent his time at Ravenscroft, finishing his book, The Analysis of Religious Belief. Eighteen months later, on the ninth of January 1876, Amberley died as well. The immediate cause of his death was bronchitis, Bertrand Russell wrote, "but he seems to have grown steadily weaker from grief".⁸⁴ Before Lord Amberley's death the two children were taken to his room:

Frank remained sobbing & crying so that his Father's hand was wet with his tears. The Dr. lifted Bertrand up & he kissed him gently & softly said "Goodbye my little dears for ever".⁸⁵

NOTES

1. David Spring's article, "The Role of the Aristocracy in the Late Nineteenth Century", Victorian Studies 4 (1960-61), drew attention to the family as "the primary group of aristocratic society", and urged closer study of it. No detailed study of the Victorian aristocratic family has been attempted to date, however. David Roberts has produced an interesting article, "The Paterfamilias of the Victorian Governing Classes", in Anthony S. Wohl, ed., The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses (London: Croom Helm, 1978).
2. David Cannadine, "The Theory and Practice of the English Leisure Classes", Historical Journal 21 No. 2 (1978), p. 449.
3. AC 1 4/1, Lord Amberley's journal, July 11, 1863.
4. The British Standard, April 28 1865, quoted in Bertrand and Patricia Russell, eds., The Amberley Papers: the Letters and Diaries of Lord and Lady Amberley (London: Hogarth Press, 1937), vol. 1, pp. 252-53.
5. Frank, Earl Russell, My Life and Adventures (London: Cassell & Co., 1923), p. 11.
6. AC 1 4/1, Lord Amberley's journal, October 19, 1863.
7. Ibid., March 6, 1864.
8. Ibid., February 17, 1864.
9. Ibid., May 13, 1864.
10. Lady Russell to Lady Georgiana Russell, no date, quoted in Ethel Peel, ed., Recollections of Lady Georgiana Peel (London and New York: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1920), p. 158.

11. Emily Eden, The Semi-Attached Couple (London: Virago Press, 1979, original ed. 1859), p. 40.
12. Lord Salisbury, "Match-Making Mammals", The Saturday Review XII, October 12, 1861, p. 61. The article was written anonymously, but David Cannadine's sources identify it as Salisbury's.
13. AC 1 4/1, Lady Amberley's journal, March 26, 1867. The person in question is Thomas Cobden-Sanderson.
14. T.H. Hollingsworth, "The Demography of the British Peerage", Population Studies 18 No.2 (1964), pp. 11-12.
15. AC 14/1, Lord Amberley's journal, April 10 1864, and AC 1 3/2, Lady Amberley to Lord Amberley, October 14 1864.
16. Philippe Ariès, Centuries of Childhood, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage Press, 1962), and Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 (London: Harper & Row, 1977).
17. Lawrence Stone, op.cit., p. 657.
18. Christopher Lasch, Haven in a Heartless World: the Family Besieged (New York: Basic Books, 1975). For more on the rise of the modern family, see Lawrence Stone, "The Rise of the Nuclear Family in Early Modern England", in Charles E. Rosenberg, eds., The Family in History (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975).
19. F.M.L. Thompson, English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 15, and Edward Shorter, "Commentary", History of Childhood Quarterly 1 (1973-74), p. 594.
20. F.M.L. Thompson, op.cit., p. 15.
21. David Cannadine, op.cit., p. 61.
22. AC 1 3/4, Lady Amberley to Henry Crompton, July 27, 1870.
23. AC 1 3/2, Lady Amberley to Lord Amberley, October 11, 1868.

24. AC 1 3/7, Lady Amberley's last wishes, April 28, 1872.
25. AC 1 4/1, Lord Amberley's journal, November 8, 1871.
26. AC 1 3/7, Lyluph Stanley, Kate's brother, to Lord Amberley, June 28, 1874.
27. David Spring, op.cit., p. 61, and Lawrence, Stone, op.cit., p. 667.
28. Anonymous, The English Matron (London, 1846), p. 17, quoted in Lawrence Stone, op.cit., p. 667.
29. John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women (London: M.-I.T. Press, 1970, original ed., 1869), p. 95.
30. AC 1 3/6, Lucretia Mott, American philanthropist and suffrage campaigner, to Lady Amberley, November 26, 1867.
31. Charlotte M. Yonge, Womankind (London: Mozley & Smith, 1877), p. 178.
32. H.R. Dent, Memoir of J.M. Dent, 1849-1920 (London, 1928), pp. 45-46, quoted in David Roberts, op.cit., p. 63.
33. Emily Eden, op.cit. Lawrence Stone, in a similar vein, has written: "Formality was revived and by the 1830s wives were once more addressing their husbands in public, and apparently in private, as 'Mr. Douglas', while in general social intercourse the use of familiar name like Dick, Tom or Jack gave way to 'Mr. Darcy', 'Mr. Bingley', and 'Mr. Collins', as is found in the novels of Jane Austen." Op.cit., p. 668.
34. AC 1 4/1, New York Tribune Books, Sunday May 16, 1937.
35. AC 1 4/1, The Argus, Albany, Saturday July 25, 1874.
36. AC 1 2/2, Lady Stanley to Lady Amberley, December 6, 1870.
37. Charlotte M. Yonge, op.cit., p. 188.
38. AC 1 4/1, Lord Amberley's writing, Kate's journal, August 12, 1865.

39. Ibid., August 14, 1865.
40. AC 1 4/1, Lady Amberley's journal, September 5, 1865.
41. AC 1 3/2, Lady Amberley to Lady Stanley, May 21, 1872.
42. Robert Rhodes James, Rosebery (London, 1963), p. 125, quoted in David Roberts, op.cit., p. 62.
43. See Chapter Two, endnote 21.
44. Austin Harrison, Frederic Harrison: Thoughts and Memories (London: William Heinemann, 1926), p. 50.
45. Bertrand Russell, The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 1872-1914 (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1967), vol. 1, p. 10.
46. Ronald W. Clark, The Life of Bertrand Russell (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), pp. 25, 26.
47. AC 1 4/1, Lord Amberley's journal, January 29, 1873.
48. Ibid., November 8, 1871.
49. Ibid.
50. Amberley's unconventionality in "sexual" matters may perhaps even be traced as far back as 1862. While at Edinburgh, living with the Frasers, Amberley rejoiced in the "beautiful freedom" of a little "club"; this club was "founded on love" and its "principle" was "kissing". The club was made up of the Frasers, Amberley, and Annie Stoddart, with whom Amberley had a very flirtatious relationship. see Amberley's journal, AC 1 4/1, August 20, 1862.
51. T.H. Hollingsworth, op.cit., p. 51.
52. Ronald W. Clark, op.cit., pp. 22-23.
53. Johathan Gathorne-Hardy, The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1972), p. 41. The medical profession strongly disapproved of wetnursing: see The British Medical Journal June 19, 1869.

54. AC 1 4/1, Lord Amberley's journal, August 21, 22, 1865.
55. Theresa McBride, "'As the Twig is Bent': the Victorian Nanny", in Anthony S. Wohl, ed., op.cit., p.47.
56. David Cannadine, op.cit., pp. 451-52.
57. Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, op.cit., p. 19.
58. This passage was subsequently expunged. Quoted in Priscilla Robertson, "The Home as a Nest: Middle Class Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Europe", in Lloyd deMause, ed., The History of Childhood (New York: The Psychohistory Press, 1974), p. 423.
59. G.F.A. Best, Lord Shaftesbury (New York: Arco Publishing, 1964), p. 15.
60. Lady Amberley to Miss Hentze, governess, October 8, 1871, in Bertrand and Patricia Russell eds., The Amberley Papers: the Letters and Diaries of Lord and Lady Amberley (London: Hogarth Press, 1937), vol. 2, pp. 416-17.
61. AC 1 3/2, Lady Amberley to Lady Stanley, December 7, 1871.
62. Frank, Earl Russell, op.cit., p. 4.
63. David Roberts, op.cit., p. 62.
64. The Lamp of Memory, quoted in Michael Brooks, "Love and Possession in a Victorian Household: the Example of the Ruskins", in Anthony S. Wohl, ed., op.cit., p. 82.
65. Austin Harrison, op.cit., p. 51, 49.
66. G.F.A. Best, op.cit., pp. 41, 47.
67. Quoted in David Roberts, op.cit., p. 62.
68. Stuart J. Reid, Lord John Russell (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1895), p. 256.

69. AC 1 3/1, Lord Amberley to Lady Amberley, August 11, 1872. In the hope of ameliorating his health, Amberley visited his wife's sister, Rosalind, and her husband George Howard, later Earl of Carlisle, at Castle Howard, Naworth. In Yarrow, Scotland, Amberley and Frank visited Professor Fraser and his wife.
70. AC 1 3/4, W.F. Collier to Lady Amberley, February 7, 1869.
71. Lloyd deMause, "The Evolution of Childhood", History of Childhood Quarterly 1 (1974), p. 554.
72. Lawrence Stone, op.cit., p. 669.
73. AC 1 3/1, Lord Amberley to Lady Amberley, August 14, 1872.
74. Ibid., August 20, 1872. Lord Amberley did lose his temper on one occasion. As Frank recalled in his memoirs, "I remember one occasion when my father beat me on my bare flesh with the prickly side of a hair brush, which looks as if I must have been very naughty." Frank, Earl Russell, op.cit., p. 22.
75. AC 1 3/1, Lord Amberley to Lady Amberley, August 9, 1872.
76. David Roberts, op.cit., p. 69.
77. Frank, Earl Russell, op.cit., p. 22.
78. Quoted in David Cannadine, op.cit., p. 61.
79. Lady Amberley to Miss Hentze, October 8, 1871, in Bertrand and Patricia Russell, eds., op.cit., vol. 2, p. 416.
80. Ibid.
81. Frank, Earl Russell, op.cit., p. 334.
82. Frank, Ronald W. Clark, op.cit., p. 25.
83. AC 1 3/7, Lord Amberley to Lady Russell, July 3, 1874.
84. Quoted in Ronald W. Clark, op.cit., p. 25.
85. AC 1 3/7, Maude Stanley to Lady Russell, January 13, 1876.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE AMBERLEYS AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES

That the Amberleys were considered unconventional by their contemporaries is well illustrated by a wry comment of Herbert Spencer's; upon being invited to a Tuesday night salon of Lady Amberley's, he replied: "My nonconformity in the matter of social usages comes within very moderate limits...Guests of your choosing will, I am sure, have other attractions than the negative one of being 'unconventional'".¹ The Amberleys' own radical friends and acquaintances viewed them to be rather too radical; these, in their uncompromising attachment to intellectual and moral integrity, the Amberleys gradually distanced themselves from. As the Sunday Times has noted, "There was...in these two young people a centrifugal independence of mind, which, as their lives went on, tended to drive them towards the outer circumference of intellectual rebels and social reformers."²

Their unconventionality and seeming indifference to the disapproval of those around them provoked frequent

criticism. The Duchess of Cambridge, for example, once remarked very loudly to Kate at a garden party:

I hear that you only like dirty
Radicals and dirty Americans.
All of London is full of it; all
the clubs are talking of it. I
must look at your petticoats and
see if they are dirty.³

Kate's Aunt Louisa quite agreed with the Duchess: "She served you right & you deserve it for you have a strange turn for all sorts of queer company and since your exhibition at that very low place in Bristol where you stood up and harangued about women's rights I shd wonder at nothing odd you may do..."⁴ Lady Amberley was also made the subject of criticism by Punch, The London Charivari:

Talking of Lady Politicians, I heard the other day a story of Lady Amberley. A gentleman who was very desirous of meeting Mr. Bright, was invited by Lord Amberley to a party at which that eminent party was to be present. When he arrived, he found to his mortification that the lion had gone away, most probably to roar against the aristocracy in the House of Commons. Lady Amberley expressed her regret to the gentleman, that he should be disappointed, but added- 'though Mr. Bright has gone, I think I can find

you somebody to talk to. The room is full of Atheists and Comtists, and the air is loaded with intellect'. If poor Lord Amberley is often exposed to such a fire himself, no wonder that he takes refuge in the House of Commons.⁵

While Lady Amberley has often portrayed as an aggressive and strong-minded female, both in flattering and less flattering terms, Lord Amberley was for his part ridiculed on account of his lack of stature and extreme youth. He was often described in terms of his "freshness, of manhood", portrayed as barely tottering from the cradle. In the hopes of silencing him, the Times depicted Amberley as a "young and fervid" politician, deplorably immature of judgment and "ridiculous in his precipitancy".⁶ The Illustrated News in 1865 dwelled at length upon Amberley's smallness. As Lord Amberley and his father sat together in the House of Commons, Amberley for the first time, the paper remarked that "it is no exaggeration to say that Lord Russell looked gigantic by the side of Lord Amberley."

Much has been said about the smallness of stature of the noble Lord- and certainly he is not tall- but we have men as short he in the House; and

one-Lord Milton - is shorter by an inch. Lord Amberley is as tall as Butler Johnstone and Hanbury Tracy, and, it may be, one or two more; but he is not quite so tall as Earl Russell, his father.⁷

Commenting on Amberley's Leeds speech of 1865, the Leeds Times wrote: "The language even of wisdom and eloquence loses inevitably some of its power due to its intrinsic merit when addressed to a popular audience by a person like Lord Amberley, of low stature, slight figure, and extremely youthful appearance."⁸

From the press reaction to the Amberley's respective involvements in birth control and woman's emancipation surfaces an eloquent picture of mid-Victorian society's appreciation of the Amberley's and their activities. To this storm of disapproval the Amberleys seemed to pay little attention; events relating to the Malthusian scandal are only occasionally, perfunctorily noted in their records of the South Devon election, and the events surrounding Lady Amberley's lecture are but briefly mentioned in her journal. Only sympathetic letters from family and friends and the press clippings themselves reveal the extent of their society's distaste for the Amberley's opinions. While the couple were at

times grieved at the violence of public opposition, they were but little surprised, as Chapter one has shown, for they seemed to expect unpopularity to arise from their advanced beliefs. Their intimate family life was almost untouched by the frequent bursts of public indignation and outrage, for they found support in the strength of each other's convictions. They also found support in their radical friends, particularly John Stuart Mill and Helen Taylor, who helped them through the worst moments of Amberley's electoral defeat in 1868 and Kate's discomfort following her lecture in 1871.

Those who spoke favourably of the couple viewed Lord Amberley as a promising young politician, with the full blessings of a radical tradition behind him; Lady Amberley was praised as a strong and accomplished woman, whose noble qualities society could only benefit from. As the New York Herald commented during the couple's visit to America in 1867:

Lady Amberley has created
no small impression in Washington
Society during her brief visit,
not so much on account of the
exceeding richness of her
attire* as by her very superior

* Valued at over \$50,000.

mental accomplishments. She is a lady of unusual attainments, of enquiring and intellectual turn, and in many points resembling a former illustrious visitor, Lady Mary Wortley Montague.⁹

For those who disapproved, the one circumstance of belonging by birth and association to the aristocratic Whig house of Russell, spoke "volumes of discouragement".¹⁰

Although much of what was publicly said of the Amberleys during their lifetimes was abusive, particularly from 1869 on, their deaths prompted the press to remember them not unkindly. "Lord Amberley died young, very young", one paper wrote, "but his convictions, we are assured, cost sacrifice of cherished opinions and feelings, and it is added that had his life been ever so prolonged he would never have ceased to enquire".¹¹ Those Liberal papers that had supported Amberley during 1868-9 praised him one last time. The Western Daily Mercury portrayed Lord Amberley as "one of the most promising members of the youthful aristocracy of England". According to this newspaper, Amberley had always been ready, in deeds as well as in words, "to help onward any cause aiming at the improvement of his race".

If "he did not fill so illustrious a page in history as that which his father will occupy", the paper concluded "he would at least not prove himself unworthy of his parentage..."¹³

The Daily News mourned the loss of Lady Amberley as follows: "Her bright and keen intelligence, her cordial and cheerful temper, and the courage and zeal with which she gave help to every movement in which she discerned the elements of usefulness, will cause to be felt as a loss in a circle wider than that of her family and immediate connections."¹⁴ Such brief tributes marked the end of all further press references to the Amberleys.

The Amberleys' deaths in 1874 and 1876 elicited the condolences of their own radical circle; from these friends and those who had worked closely with the Amberleys in various causes and issues, emerges a warm, positive estimation of the Amberleys and their accomplishments. The National Society for Women's Suffrage, of which Lady Amberley had been an active member, deemed her death a great loss to the woman's movement:

...we have to mourn the loss
of one whose sense of justice

and moral courage led her to step out from amongst most of the women of her own rank and station to help in every attempt to elevate the condition of her sex. Lady Amberley's early and unlooked-for death has filled many hearts with sorrow beyond those of her own family circle. Women everywhere have lost in her a friend. We must not count her life a short one. Though young in years, she has lived a long life in generous thoughts and deeds, and we must hope some who have known her, and who may have preferred a life of easy acquiescence in less enlightened thought, may have their consciences roused and their hearts touched by the beautiful halo which will surround the memory of one who stood forth so boldly to advocate what she believed to be just and true, so that while dead she may yet speak.¹⁵

Professor Jowett,* who had known Amberley well, wrote to Lady Russell that Amberley "was one of the best men I ever knew - most truthful and disinterested".¹⁶ Amberley's sister, Adelaide Drummond, believed the death of Kate Amberley to have been "also a general loss - she was no ordinary woman, and would have done much good".¹⁷

The opposition to the Amberleys' opinions ranged in expression from outright abuse to a mild, respectful, but firm repudiation of the positions they represented.

* Professor of Greek, Master of Balliol College, Oxford.

James Froude wrote of the Amberleys in 1879, three years after the death of Lord Amberley; it is history's only published tribute to the aristocratic couple. His essay is an example of the more mild representation of the Amberleys and of the certainly subdued reproaches held against them:

Amberley was carried away, it was said, into extreme opinions. It is no unpardonable crime. His father too, in his young days, had admired Napoleon and the French Revolution; had admired many things of which in age he formed a juster estimate. We do not augur well of the two-year old colt whose paces are as sedate as those of an established roadster, who never rears when he is mounted, or who flings out his heels in the overflow of heart and spirit. Our age has travelled fast and far in new ways, tossing off traditions old as the world as if they were no better than wornout rags; and the ardent and hopeful Amberley galloped far in front in pursuit of what he called Liberty, not knowing that it was a false phantom which he was following; not freedom at all-but anarchy. The wise world held up its hands in horror; as if any man was ever good for anything whose enthusiasm in youth has not outrun his understanding. Amberley too would have learnt his lesson had time been granted him. He would have learnt it in the best of schools-by his own experience.¹⁸

Amberley's youthfulness was thus brought against him once more. Froude also described Lady Amberley as having been swept away by the folly of youth, the more to be excused by her feminine innocence:

She too, his companion, went along with him in his philosophy of progress, each most extravagant opinion tempting her to play with it. True and simple in herself, she had been bred in disdain of unreality. Transparent as air, pure as the fountain which bubbles up from below a glacier, she was encouraged by her very innocence in speculations against which a nature more earthly would have been on its guard. She so hated insincerity that in mere wantonness she trampled on affectation and conventionality; and she would take up and advocate theories which, if put in practice, would make society impossible, while she seemed as little touched by them herself as the seagull's wings are wetted when it plunges into the waves.

The singular ways of the Amberleys were "the world's wonder for a season or two". Having thus reduced the Amberleys' philosophy of progress to an excusable, youthful aberration of mind, Froude concluded that the world may as well "have left them alone".

The Amberleys, who went farther

than Lord Russell had ever done in the pursuit of imaginary Utopias, might have recoiled further when they learnt that they were hunting after a dream. Peace be with them. They may dream on now, where the world's idle tattle can touch them no more.¹⁹

Froude's appraisal of the Amberleys is remarkable for its charity. However, as Bertrand Russell has noted,²⁰ this very charity reveals the depths of horror in which Froude must have held the Amberleys' opinions: "And if one so charitable was so horrified", he writes, "we may infer the severity of the censure of those whom he called 'the world,'".²⁰ A review of Amberley's Analysis of Religious Belief in 1877 described him as a "chivalrous seeker for divine truth", whose "pilgrimage around the whole world of free-thinking" and studies had wasted his own precious life.²¹

While the Amberleys excited considerable interest in their brief lives, there stands out the unfortunate fact that, as Froude noted in his "Essay", they were two "of whom the world spoke much, and knew but little". None but the couple's immediate family and closest associates could have known the extent of the Amberley's devotion to their causes and to the good of humankind,

the sincerity of their beliefs. In its reaction to the Amberleys, mid-Victorian society made little effort to understand either the ideas or the personalities of these two individuals. When aired to the public, their beliefs were often misunderstood or misrepresented, or, described as chasing "false phantoms" and "imaginary Utopias", the Amberleys views efforts, and accomplishments are devalued, diminished. They were given little credit for their efforts outside their own intellectual circle; once the scandals were forgotten, so too were the Amberleys forgotten.

A journalistic perspective of the couple may offer insight into the beliefs and mores of the period, but does an injustice to the Amberleys' convictions. The philosophical underpinnings of their intellectual enthusiasms and activities, which chapter one has analysed, pushed the couple onto the path they took. The Amberleys' -- motivations and devotion to their causes, which a journalistic perspective fails to capture, is illuminated by passages from their private papers. A sense of duty compelled the Amberleys to voice their differences with the world. Following the call of duty, Lady Amberley sought public attention to further her cause, whatever the consequences for herself. Although Lord Amberley

was an unwilling actor in the birth control affair, his own formulation of duty, that of intellectual integrity, prevented him from backing entirely away from the issue.

The "rigid intellectual honesty" Bertrand Russell wrote of describing his father may have contributed to Amberley's difficulty in accepting his share of misrepresentation and abuse. He approached all questions and opponents openly, fairly, and in return expected the same fairness and tolerance. "No one likes to be evil-spoken of by others", he wrote as a youth, many years before the 1868 scandal; "no one likes his own character to be the subject of unkind remarks, which, though he may not have heard them himself, may bring him into evil repute with those who have heard them."²² Amberley's ideas themselves he expressed with a kind of freshness, an idealistic, almost innocent quality which some of his contemporaries and even ours have noticed. A review of the Amberley Papers in 1937 aptly described Amberley as "innocently radical".²³ The South Devon election of 1868, in which nearly all parties had acted in violation of all honourable and discrete codes of behavior had no doubt rather shocked the idealistic Amberley.

The Amberleys' friends, as had the Amberleys themselves, had recognized the inevitability of opposition.

Helen Taylor believed misrepresentation sadly "to be borne by everyone with strong individual convictions".

"Few men", she wrote to Lady Amberley, "would have much chance of becoming distinguished in afterlife who are not already in their youth far in advance of the current ideas of their times as to fundamental principles."²⁴ Professor Jowett in 1876 offered an apt summation of Amberley and his intellectual position: "He was not of the world, and therefore not likely to be popular with the world. He had chosen a path that was very difficult, and could hardly have been carried out in practical politics."²⁵

NOTES

1. AC 1 3/4, Herbert Spencer to Lady Amberley, June 19, 1866.
2. AC 1 4/1, Sunday Times, March 14, 1937.
3. Quoted in Bertrand Russell, The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 1872-1914 (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1967), vol. 1, p. 8.
4. AC 1 3/2, Louisa Stanley to Lady Amberley, August 12, 1872.
5. AC 1 4/1, Punch, or the London Charivari, June 29, 1867.
6. AC 1 4/1, The Times, March 17, 1865.
7. AC 1 4/1, The Illustrated News, Saturday May 19, 1866.
8. AC 1 4/1, The Leeds Times, Saturday February 4, 1865.
9. AC 1 4/1, quoted in an unidentified American paper, no date.
10. AC 1 4/1, Nottingham Daily Guardian, February 22, 1868.
11. AC 1 4/1, Unidentified newsclipping, no date.
12. AC 1 4/1, Western Daily Mercury, January 11, 1876.
13. Ibid.
14. AC 1 4/1, Daily News, June 30, 1874.
15. AC 1 4/1, Daily Review, July 7, 1874.

16. AC 1 3/7, Professor Jowett to Lady Russell, January 14, 1876.
17. AC 1 3/7, Adelaide Drummond to Lord Amberley, June 30, 1874.
18. James Froude, "Cheneys and the House of Russell" (1879), in Bertrand and Patricia Russell, eds., The Amberley Papers: the Letters and Diaries of Lord and Lady Amberley (London: Hogarth Press, 1937), vol. 1, p. 37.
19. Ibid., p. 38 .
20. Bertrand and Patricia Russell, eds., op.cit., vol. 1, p. 38.
21. "Religious Belief Analysed", New York Times, April 22, 1877, p. 10.
22. AC 1 4/1, from Lord Amberley's "Collection of Miscellaneous Thoughts", September 1860-February 1864, pp. 7-8.
23. AC 1 4/1, New York Herald Tribune Books, Sunday May 16, 1937, p. 1.
24. AC 1 3/4, Helen Taylor to Lady Amberley, April 22, 1865.
25. AC 1 3/7, Professor Jowett to Lady Russell, January 14, 1876.

END

CONCLUSIONS

Research provides us with a contradictory perception of Lord and Lady Amberley. On the one hand, the press remarks that span their careers are a legacy of disapproval; the Amberleys emerge as ruthless firebrands, cranks, traitors to their class. On the other hand, this image is counterbalanced by the warm praise and commendation of their own intellectual circle. Depending on the viewpoint, the Amberleys respectively appear to embody the best or the worst possible sentiments, and to offer the most advanced or most pernicious opinions possible. At its origin, it was not the intention of this thesis to uphold any image of the Amberleys, but simply, in lifting them from their present obscurity, to offer as balanced and human an image of them as possible. However, the conviction grew with close association with their personal papers, that here were oft maligned Victorians more deserving of recognition and of their rightful place in history.

The reader of the Amberley story cannot easily be left unmoved. As a review of The Amberley Papers noted,

"The book can make the reader sad, respectful or amused. It will depend on how he reacts to the sanguine crusaders for perfection".¹ That such gifted, sympathetic, and altruistic individuals should have been so little appreciated in their own day and so easily forgotten is regretful, as is the briefness of their lives. Lord Amberley had little time for, as he once wrote to his wife, "the objects I set before me, the thoughts I crave to utter", the tasks for which he felt himself "called & even inspired".²

After several decades of silence, the Amberleys were once more discovered, with the publication of Russell's Amberley Papers in 1937. Sixty years later, the Amberleys' critics proved the fickleness and cruelty of time and its values; the Amberleys were forgiven and even highly praised. The Morning Post wrote of the Amberley story:

Impossible, inconceivable now, one can only look back to it with respect and regret. After all, human spirits of such intellect and integrity and freedom and culture are the best product, the justification of humanity.³

Another review found them "very appealing, these Victorian peers and peeresses"⁴. In hindsight, the Amberleys no longer

seem to be the threats to society they once were judged to be. Indeed, as the New York Times commented, "As we now look at things, they seem to have been fairly harmless and even somewhat timid".⁵ The world eventually caught up to the Amberleys, and six decades later found that "Lady Amberley's theories and her husband's so-called phantoms now seem pretty real and conventional".⁶ Individuals then considered extreme radicals are seen from today's perspective as appealing, harmless; the causes they espoused, though once thought to be shocking and immoral, are almost ordinary today. Of the Amberleys' passions the New York Times in 1937 commented:

To extend the franchise still further, to make Sunday lectures legal, to advocate non-denominational education and Woman's suffrage, to encourage professions for women and their higher education, to discuss the question of birth control, and to foreshadow a League of Nations do not strike us as the marks of violent extremists. Yet to the Amberleys' contemporaries they were.⁷

It would be inaccurate to judge the Amberleys' intellectual enthusiasms as innocent, for they appear daring in their historical perspective. In the 1860s

some of Amberley's proposals earned him venomous attacks and the end of his political career. The Queen herself was stirred to speak against Lady Amberley and her "mad, wicked folly". Though they did not accomplish all they had wished, and did not rock their world, the Amberleys played a brief but notable part in an age of questioning. They stood in sharp contrast to the prevailing spirit of the day; their story thus exemplifies the perennial impact of the questioning by youth of conventions, social and religious, and the perennial endeavor by an older generation to keep back the tides of change. The unconventional Amberleys prove to of value to present-day researchers, as the Sunday Times in 1937 elegantly put it:

There are two ways in which the lives of the dead may be illuminating to historians. Those lives may be either so typical of their times that in them posterity can read the dominant characteristics of a period, or by being in advance of them the contrasts between past and present may be brought home more vividly than before. John and Kate Amberley were very much in advance of their times, and through the clash of their convictions with the prevailing spirit of the day, we understand the sixties better.⁸

This thesis has attempted to clarify our understanding of an atypical couple of the 1860s, and through them cast light on their time. It has provided another angle from which to view mid-Victorian English society. That angle has been narrow rather than comprehensive; it has focused particularly upon the areas of Malthusian birth control and the emancipation of women, and has viewed the Amberleys from a domestic perspective. There remain in regard to the couple many interesting aspects worthy of further exploration only touched upon here in other social areas. These include, for example, Lord Amberley's pioneering views on international peace and the Amberleys' philosophy of religion. One topic which might be particularly rewarding in this or other disciplines is further examination of the role of the partisan press of the era in the political process: how it set the agenda for social issues, and affected the strategies of political candidates.

It is hoped that this study of the Amberleys has provided a broader and fairer view of two individuals who dared, at risk of reputation and career, to stand outside the norm of their society. In the process it may

have cast some light upon mid-Victorian society and upon the topics of birth control and women's emancipation, with which it was so unwilling to contend. In this regard, history should perhaps remember the Amberleys not as misguided utopians, but rather as reformers, for, as Brian Harrison has reminded us,

The reformer's role is to ensure that what seems natural in one generation seems unnatural in the next. 9

NOTES

1. AC 1 4/1, Washington Star, Saturday May 15, 1937.
2. AC 1 3/1, Lord Amberley to Lady Amberley, October 25, 1864.
3. AC 1 4/1, Morning Post, March 19, 1937.
4. AC 1 4/1, The New York Herald Tribune Books, April 29, 1937.
5. AC 1 4/1, The New York Times, May 1, 1937.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. AC 1 4/1, The Sunday Times, March 14, 1937.
9. Brian Harrison, Separate Spheres: the Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 58.

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