Bertha Meriton Gardiner: A Forgotten Historian

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Introduction

Bertha Meriton Gardiner (1845-1925) was the second wife of the famous historian Samuel Rawson Gardiner whom she married in July 1882.[1] Before her marriage, when her family name was Cordery, the 1881 census listed her occupation as "authoress (history)."

Bertha Meriton Cordery was born in Hampstead as part of a large upper middle-class family.[2] It seems to have been an Evangelical household.[3] This did not make it dull. Her "Hampstead home [was] full of gaiety and *joie de vivre*" (Todd 66). It also was an intellectual family. Her *Times* obituary called it "literary." Bertha Cordery's oldest brother John Graham Cordery translated Homer into English blank verse.[4] She is a link to other intellectual women as three of her nieces headed women's colleges.[5] Two of her four brothers earned Oxford degrees and a third attended Winchester College, but she apparently was educated at home.[6] Despite the lack of a formal

[1] Sophia Jex-Blake, a close friend who knew her as Bertie, did not welcome the news that Bertha Cordery was to marry. When she heard about her engagement, Jex-Blake told her: "You are quite right in thinking that I do not by any means as a matter of course congratulate people on their marriage, but when you say that 'having met, no other result was possible,' I think you express the essence of a good marriage with the terseness worthy of the distinguished historian" (Todd 503). A pioneer in Scotland of medical education for women, Jex-Blake was unhappy when her students sacrificed their medical careers by marrying, but she came to like her English friend's husband. When research brought S.R. Gardiner to Edinburgh, the Gardiners were welcomed as guests at the Jex-Blake home (Todd 631).

[2] Her parents were John Cordery (1794-1868), a wealthy merchant, and his wife Henrietta Atkins (1804-89). Married in 1826, the Cordery couple had twelve children, eight daughters and four sons. FamilySearch posted a family tree for the children. They included two named Henrietta and two named Jane: when a child died young, the family reused the name. In July 1844 John Cordery was one of the men who dissolved a partnership as grocery and tea dealers. Three of the partners belonged to a Graham family, a father, his son, and a nephew, which explains the middle name of John Cordery's eldest son (*London Gazette* 2635). When the oldest Graham died in 1846, Cordery was one of the executors for his estate of £60,000 (*Gentleman's Magazine* 657).

[3] According to the reviewer of *The Struggle against Absolute Monarchy* in the *Saturday Review*, 23 November 1878, p. 666, Bertha Cordery assumed that the Calvinist interpretation of the Eucharist was a Church of England doctrine, an assumption which the reviewer said would have "staggered" many Anglican clergymen. Only a minority of Anglican clergymen were Evangelicals.

[4] Cordery published three different blank verse translations of the *Iliad* in 1871, 1886, and 1890 and one of the *Odyssey* in 1897.

[5] Katharine Jex-Blake (1860-1951), a classicist, headed Girton College in Cambridge, 1916-22, Henrietta Jex-Blake (1862-1953), a violinist, was principal of Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford, 1909-21, and Dame Bertha Surtees Phillpotts (1877-1932), an Icelandic scholar, succeeded her cousin as mistress of Girton College, 1922-25. A few months before her death, she married and took her husband's surname Newell. See Poole and Melman.

[6] While nothing can be found about the schooling of one brother, Henry Cordery, the 1881 census listed his livelihood as "independent." His brother, James Cordery, attended Winchester College but apparently not university. He became a solicitor, but the 1881 census listed him as a fellmonger, a dealer in sheepskins and other hides. The two other sons earned degrees at Oxford. The oldest son, John Graham Cordery (1833-1900), was a student at Rugby, where he was head boy and in sports the captain of the eleven. He then studied at Balliol College, Oxford. In 1856 he entered the Indian Civil Service. After holding many high offices, he retired in 1888. The youngest son, Arthur Cordery (1847-1922), began his studies at Marlborough but later enrolled at Rugby. He then studied at

education, she made herself into a serious scholar who at the age of thirty wrote a long review article for the *Edinburgh Review*. In it, she chastised the Stuart kings and criticized her future husband for the moderation of his account.[7]

Cordery's focus on political and military history made her unusual among Victorian women historians. As one scholar pointed out, "few women wrote national history" (Logan 14). Cordery seems to have been the only Victorian woman who published national histories about two different countries during two different times, seventeenth-century England and late eighteenth-century France.

Cordery can be called a Whig historian for her books on seventeenth-century England, a champion of Parliament and hostile to the Stuart kings, but there was more than one kind of Whig historian.[8] For instance, as an unabashed friend of Parliament, Cordery differed from the more moderate Henry Hallam who lost sympathy with the Long Parliament after the early enactment of consensus reforms. Reared in an Evangelical home, Cordery was more friendly than many Whigs to the Puritans and defended Oliver Cromwell.

Even before publishing her first two books, Bertha Cordery had decided to leave English history.[9] She wanted to write about the great political event that occurred less than a century before her birth, the French Revolution. In this, Gardiner (as her name had become when her book was published) may be compared with Western scholars who after 1917 wrote about the Bolshevik Revolution, another world turning point. In 1883 Gardiner published her book about the French Revolution. It was directed at English readers who were not specialists. The book was based on recent French and German scholarship, but her own scholarly contribution was limited. Gardiner made "no pretence to originality."[10] Despite this lack of originality, readers during her lifetime liked Gardiner's *French Revolution*, as shown by the book reaching a sixteenth impression in 1921. Presumably readers still like her *French Revolution* as it has been made available on Kindle.

Lincoln College, Oxford, and the Inner Temple. He became a barrister. In 1878 he published *Law Relating to Solicitors* which was revised and republished long after his death.

[7] Little is known about Bertha Gardiner other than what she wrote, but references to adult tricycles sometimes include her. J.S.A. Adamson began a *Historical Journal* article about S.R. Gardiner with what he called an "eccentrically endearing" image of the historian, "in the summer of 1885, on his Humber Tandem Tricycle, pedalling his way … across the battlefield of Marston Moor" with his second wife, Bertha Meriton Gardiner, also a historian (Adamson 641; Garritzen 2021). The couple did not confine their tricycle riding to Civil War battlefields. Sophia Jex-Blake discovered Bertha Gardiner on holiday, tricycling with her husband in the south of France. (Todd 531). The Gardiners occasionally were European tourists. In 1896, they moved their family from Bedford to Sevenoaks in Kent. The adults took advantage of their temporary homelessness to visit Italy, mostly as tourists, although S.R. Gardiner did research at the Vatican archives and in Venice. Writing to James Bryce on 30 May 1896, S.R. Gardiner said: "three weeks sight seeing [sic] is enough for any mortal" (Fahey 1971, 129).

[8] For a brief account of the Whig interpretation of history, see Key; for a deeper analysis of Whig history particularly as illustrated by Macaulay, see Burrow.

[9] In 1875 Longmans advertised a book in preparation, as part of its Epochs of Modern History series, by Bertha Meriton Cordery, *The French Revolution to the Battle of Waterloo, 1789-1815*.

[10] H. Morse Stephens in the *Academy*, 13 January 1883. Stephens published a three-volume history of the French Revolution in 1886-91.

Cordery (later Gardiner) was a scholar, but except in her book reviews, her work did not address scholars. She is not associated with any original interpretation influencing how others understand the past. She never did archival research. As a result, she is mostly remembered as having been a great historian's wife who herself wrote a few books for a popular audience, students and other non-scholarly readers. This is too harsh a verdict. Bertha Meriton Gardiner was a minor historian but a respected one. For instance, after Sir John Seeley's death, she was asked to critique his manuscript, published posthumously as *The Growth of British Policy* (1895) (Wormell 90; Nolan 63). She was also a contributor of book reviews to the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Academy*, and the *English Historical Review*.

Forgotten

My article addresses three overlapping questions. The easiest to answer is the first. Is the subtitle correct, that Bertha Meriton Gardiner is a forgotten historian? The related question, why? Finally, does she deserve to be remembered?

When Bertha Gardiner died at almost the age of 80, she had been a widow for more than two decades and lived in retirement at the Red House in Dover with her eldest son, a garage owner and automobile dealer.[11] The *Times* published an obituary which praised her as a "real helpmate" in her husband's work, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* tucked a few lines about her inside S.R. Gardiner's entry, and Wikipedia provided a short, not entirely accurate biographical article.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, interest in the women who wrote histories in Victorian England created a lively scholarly literature which strangely ignored Bertha Meriton Gardiner. She is not mentioned in *Clio's Daughters: British Women Making History, 1790-1899* (2007), edited by Lynette Felber, or in Deborah A. Logan's chapter, "History Writing," in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women's Writing* (2015). Nor does she appear in Rosemary Ann Mitchell, "'The Busy Daughters of Clio': Women Writers of History from 1820 to 1880" (1998), although as Cordery she had published two books in the 1870s. As an exception, Joan Thirsk in "The History Women" (1995) mentioned her as the author of two books with her different family names. Unfortunately, Thirsk chose Cordery as her example in the paragraph which said: "When women wrote in the same vein [as men about high politics], the explanation often turns out to be that they were the wives or family members of male historians. In other words, … [women] undertook some tasks which had been handed their way by the menfolk" (O'Dowd and Wicket 6). Cordery had no family members who were male historians. The book on the French Revolution published the year after her marriage, had been mostly written when she was unmarried. Her husband, S.R. Gardiner, never wrote French history. Unfortunately, too, Hedva Ben-Israel's *English Historians on the French Revolution* (1968) ignored her.

[11] Oliver Cordery Gardiner (1884-1955) earned an engineering degree at Christ's College, Cambridge. In the First World War, he was a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. After the war, he acquired a garage in Dover where he prospered by selling automobiles and motorcycles. He stood for election to the Dover town council in 1927 as "a staunch Conservative" (*History of Dover Garages*). His son, Brian O.C. Gardiner (1923-2014) was a respected entomologist who specialized in butterflies.

Bertha Gardiner's most scholarly book was her history of the French Revolution. Although it occasionally was used as a textbook, it was part of a series, Epochs in Modern History, directed at the non-scholarly but educated general reader. The historian H. Morse Stephens, one of the few French Revolution specialists in England, reviewed Gardiner's book in the *Academy*, 13 January 1883. In the review he said that Gardiner, although unoriginal in her interpretations, deserves "the credit of being the first author to give in English the results of modern French [scholarship]." Thomas Carlyle did not appear in her annotated bibliography, only French and occasionally German scholars.[12]

Why has Bertha Meriton Cordery Gardiner been forgotten? She is regarded as unoriginal, did not do archival research, and did not write much. A further reason for her neglect she shared with other women. The Anglo-Saxon scholar J.M. Kemble grumbled, "we [men] must plead guilty, to a great dislike for the growing tendency among women to become writers of history" (Kemble 149). Recognizing this attitude, Cordery concealed her gender under the name B. Meriton Cordery, when she wrote her first book, and listed as a nominal co-author a schoolmaster brother-in law, J. Surtees Phillpotts, who acknowledged that he had done none of the research and none of the writing for the book. He called himself its editor and said that he had proposed the topic for the book to serve students preparing for certificate examinations administered by Oxford and Cambridge. His presence on the title page helped legitimate a book by an unknown author. This scepticism about women as historians endured throughout Cordery's career. "The idea of a woman being able to produce serious historical studies was new in the 1880s," according to Elise Garritzen (2018). Did acceptance of women as serious historians become common even then? As an exception to her neglect of unpublished sources, the Camden Society in 1883 published Gardiner's edition of *A Secret Negociation* [sic] *with Charles the First, 1643-1644*, derived from the Tanner manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, which a lengthy review in the *Athenaeum* (5 January 1884), described as "ably edited."

Her Books

Before her marriage Bertha Meriton Cordery published two books*, King and Commonwealth: A History of the Great Rebellion* (1875) and *The Struggle against Absolute Monarchy, 1603-1688* (1877), and after her marriage as Bertha Meriton Gardiner one book, *The French Revolution, 1789-1795* (1883).[13] She based them on the best available secondary literature and printed primary sources.

Her first book, *King and Commonwealth*, was a substantial volume of over 400 pages, based on research at the British Museum and the Bodleian. Ordinary schoolchildren were not expected to read this fat book. It apparently was intended to help students preparing for a Stuart period certificate exam administered by Oxford and Cambridge. The *Saturday Review*, 12 December 1874, reported that the book "will be found suitable not only for the student who has some

[12] Gardiner must have been optimistic about her readers being able to read French. This is true too of some of her book reviews as they included untranslated paragraphs in French. See, for instance, her reviews of *Brief des Grafen Mercy-Argenteau*, in *Academy*, 22 August 1885; and *Preussen und Frankreich von 1795 bis 1807*, edited by Paul Baillieu, in *English Historical Review*, January 1890.

[13] Some reprints of Cordery's first book change the subtitle to "A History of Charles I, and the Great Rebellion." All three books are available today, reprinted by antiquarian booksellers. They also are available online at Google Books.

examination for which to prepare, for whom it seems primarily to have been written, but also for the general reader." The general reader seemed to have liked it. An 1880 reprint was called "3rd thousand" which presumably meant a third printing for a thousand copies.

Bertha Meriton Cordery used her full name as author of *The Struggle against Absolute Monarchy, 1603-1688*. It galloped across nearly a century of history in a very few pages, as Cordery meant her book to be read by schoolchildren. Because of its brevity the *Academy* feared parents might not recognize the "real goodness of the book" (*Academy* 136). It was part of the Epochs of English History series which Mandell Creighton edited for Longmans. He wanted the books in this series directed at young people to be about eighty pages in length and written "in the simplest possible way for beginners." Creighton must have been pleased when the *Revue Historique* praised Cordery's style as simple and lucid as he hoped that his series would be used in the lower forms of public schools, in grammar schools, and in board schools:[14] "They would be a great service in Girls' Schools, which seems to me to be just now an element in the demand for school books" (Covert 156). It also was published in the United States. A popular little book, it reached its twenty-second printing in 1921.

Gardiner's most important book, *The French Revolution, 1789-1795*, was only about 250 pages in length. It was a book of analysis enlivened by brief biographical sketches. She did most of her research and writing as a single woman. A version of the book, with 1815 as the concluding date, was advertised in 1875 and again in 1881, so ending it in 1795 was a late decision.[15] A year after her marriage the book was published in the Epochs of Modern History series which offered non-academic books for adults. Her brother-in-law J. Surtees Phillpotts was one of the series editors. A reviewer thought that "at least originally" the book had been intended for "boys and girls of sixteen" (*Spectator*). It sometimes was used as a university textbook, as the American novelist Stephen Crane retained a copy of it from his days as a student at Syracuse University.[16] In practice, non-scholarly but educated general readers probably made up much of the book's audience. For the first time they were provided a summary in English of recent research by French and German scholars.[17] Libraries and bookstores in the United States made Gardiner's *French Revolution* available to American readers. The *Classified Catalogue of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh* (p. 2265) quoted guides to publications that recommended Gardiner's book. *Leopoldt & Isles's Books for Girls and Women* called Gardiner's *French Revolution* "a thoroughly reliable hand book," while *Larned's History for Ready Reference* described it as "a sketch condensed to the last degree, and yet not lifeless."

Writing On Men's Topics

The topics that Cordery / Gardiner) chose distinguished her from most other women historians of the Victorian period. Women historians generally chose what were considered feminine topics. Gardiner never wrote a biography, but so many other women wrote biographies that the genre

[14] A. Stern, in *Revue Historique* 5: 2 (1877): 430.
[15] An 1875 edition of Macaulay's *Works* listed in its Longmans advertising pages a book in preparation for the Epochs of Modern History series by Bertha Meriton Cordery, *The French Revolution to the Battle of Waterloo, 1789-1815*. In other advertising pages Longmans listed it as in preparation with that title as late as 1881.
[16] See Bertha Gardiner's Wikipedia entry.
[17] H. Morse Stephens in the *Academy*, 13 January 1883.

was called a "feminine preserve" (Maitzen 1995). For instance, Agnes Strickland and her sister Elizabeth wrote about queens, princesses, and other royalty. Other seemingly acceptable feminine topics included art history, cultural and social history, and local history.

The medievalist Edward Freeman argued that female delicacy made women poor historians. He wrote that in history one encounters "some things which an old man can deal with less shrinking than a young woman" (Garritzen 2018). This attitude helps explain why it was rare for women historians to do what Bertha Cordery did (and continued to do as Bertha Gardiner), write on what were considered men's topics, political and even military history.[18] The most important historical topics were seen as masculine and thus "the elevation of certain categories of history—the political and diplomatic story of a 'public' past—above those concerned with the everyday and 'private' past" (Walton 226).

Other than Gardiner only a few women historians wrote general history. Although Harriet Martineau is not generally remembered as a historian, she wrote a two-volume study in contemporary history, *History of England during the Thirty Years Peace*, for the period 1816-46 (Charles Knight, 1849-50). She later added an introduction for 1800-15 and a sequel, 1847-54. In 1857, the year of the Mutiny, she published *British Rule in India: A Historical Sketch*.[19] An archivist in the Public Record Office, Mary Anne Everett Green, wrote introductions to Calendars of documents which amount to general histories. The medievalist Kate Norgate wrote a history of the Angevin kings as *England under the Angevin Kings* (1887), *John Lackland* (1902) for King John, and *Richard the Lion Heart* (1924). Scholars criticized them for a lack of primary source citations (Hartley 333).

Not Doing Archival Research was Commonplace

Bertha Gardiner was not alone in writing without archival research, and its prevalence in the late nineteenth century should not be exaggerated. A few women historians in the nineteenth century such as Agnes and Elizabeth Strickland used archives, but only a few (Laurence *passim*). For instance, Martineau is rightly praised for her history of England but as a contemporary history it was not based on archival research.

The celebrated historians Henry Hallam and Henry Thomas Buckle wrote simply after reading other people's books, but more ambitious successors in the late-Victorian years sometimes ransacked the archives. Bertha Gardiner's husband is an eminent example, but he was not typical. Compared with Germany, the professionalization of history came late to England, and at universities it meant more history lectures rather than training a new generation to do archival work.

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[18] Christine L. Krueger argued that the archivist Mary Anne Everett Green (1818-95) was England's first professional historian and that by editing Calendars she wrote political history (Krueger 65-90). Unlike Gardiner, Green also wrote books about female royalty, an accepted feminine genre. No woman historian in the Victorian era did what Catharine Macaulay (1731-91) did in the eighteenth century, write a multi-volume narrative political history, in her case from a republican perspective.

[19] Deborah A. Logan has spent most of her career editing and writing about Martineau. She provided an impressive section on Martineau as a historian in her chapter, "History Writing," but I beg to disagree when she said that Martineau "represents the only example of a Victorian woman historian whose history can be called *national*" (Logan 209). Gardiner was another such Victorian woman historian.

A glance at the Regius Professors of History shows the limitations of the great universities. William Stubbs became Regius Professor at Oxford in 1866 and held the chair until 1884. In his younger days he was a pioneering medievalist and a model archival researcher, but after he became a bishop, he published little that was original. He was succeeded by another medievalist, Edward Freeman, who read printed primary sources at home using his personal library. In 1892 the controversial James Anthony Froude took the chair briefly. As a younger man, he had done pathbreaking archival work for the Tudor period but did not seem to have trained any pupils. Frederick York Powell, who served for a decade, 1894-1904, published almost nothing. At Cambridge Sir John Seeley was Regius Professor for many years, 1869-95. Other than an early book about Prussian statesman Baron von Stein, he did little archival work. His most famous books belong to a tradition of history as literature and as a discussion of ideas and not of systematic archival research. Seeley's successor Lord Acton, perhaps Victorian England's most esteemed historian, did not do archival research. He enjoyed a personal library, almost 60,000 volumes at the time of his death. As late as 1898 the positivist scholar Frederic Harrison warned against "exaggerating the importance of what is known as 'new material' and 'unpublished manuscripts'" (33).

Husbands and Children as a Problem

Husbands and children were a handicap for female scholars in Victorian England, as was caring for an elderly parent.[20] Most women historians never married, and a few were widows. A sampling of women historians suggests that not having children or husbands was an advantage. Among the women historians who overlapped Gardiner's life, most of them did not marry. Unmarried historians include Lucy Toulmin Smith (1838-1911), Edith Thompson (1848-1929), Kate Norgate (1853-1935), and Mary Dormer Harris (1867-1936). Alice Stopford Green (1847-1929), who was widowed early in her marriage to J.R. Green, had no children. Ellen Creathorne Clayton (1834-1900) published little after she married in her mid-forties. An exception, a stalwart of the Public Record Office staff, Mary Anne Everett Green (1838-95), was married and had four children. After her much older husband became disabled, she was the family's sole breadwinner. She continued to edit Calendars, but her busy archival schedule prevented her from completing and publishing her private research on the Hanoverian queens.

A Long Silence

When at the age of 37 Bertha Meriton Cordery married, she made more work as a historian difficult. She took responsibility for a household which included her husband's dependent children, three of them teenagers.[21] During her marriage she added to the household with her

[20] For instance, Dame Bertha Surtees Phillpotts resigned as mistress of Girton College to care for her elderly father.
[21] The arrival of a stepmother must have been a relief for S.R. Gardiner's oldest daughter, Margaret Isabella Gardiner (1858-1944) who had left her studies at Bedford College when she became responsible for her orphaned siblings. Her mother had died in 1878. After her father remarried, she was able to pursue a career as scientist and teacher. She was educated at Newnham College, Cambridge, with a specialization in geology. In 1897, she founded St. Felix School in Suffolk and was its headmistress until 1908 when ill health forced her retirement. At the age of fourteen, she had declared that "when I am grown up I am going to make a school where girls are treated like sensible beings." (St. Felix)

own four sons, one of whom died as a child.[22] Gardiner's youngest son was born in 1890 when she was 45. Hers was a middle-class household. In the year of his second marriage, S.R. Gardiner was awarded a civil list annual pension of £150. When he died, his widow got a civil list pension of £75. In S.R. Gardiner's will, three female servants received bequests.

Why did Gardiner write no book after 1883 and no reviews after 1892? Caring for her young children explains her decision not to write more books. The reason why she wrote no more reviews is harder to understand as they took less time. Perhaps when her husband became editor of the *English Historical Review*, he may have considered it inappropriate to assign reviews to his wife. More likely, she no longer wanted to write reviews. Her last review published in the *Academy* was in 1891, only a year before her last appearance in the *English Historical Review*. Perhaps the crucial year was 1890 when she gave birth to her youngest son, Francis Allen. Information about his later life suggests that he may have been born suffering from severe vision problems. According to his mother's *Times* obituary, Francis was not accepted for wartime military service because of his poor eyesight.[23]

Gardiner's scholarly life should be compared with that of her friend Louise Creighton, five years younger than Bertha Gardiner. Louise Creighton was a mother of seven children, the youngest born in 1887. Her husband, who was a historian and a bishop, died a year before S.R. Gardiner. As a widow, Louise Creighton wrote or edited thirteen books including a two-volume biography of her husband, Mandell Creighton, and a memoir of her own life. She had wide scholarly interests. For instance, she wrote a biography of Thomas Hodgkin, a pathologist and champion of indigenous peoples. Creighton was more than a historian. For instance, as a widow she served on two Royal Commissions.

Gardiner was not similarly productive. There was a long silence of over thirty years from the time that Bertha Gardiner wrote her last review in the *English Historical Review* until her death at Dover. It was more than forty years since she had published her last book. In her widowhood, she only collected references to her husband's publications for *A Bibliography of the Historical Works of Dr. Creighton, late Bishop of London; Dr. Stubbs, late Bishop of Oxford; Dr. S.R. Gardiner and the late Lord Acton*, edited by William Arthur Shaw (Royal Historical Society, 1903), and published two short letters that appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 November and 4 December 1919, in defence of her husband's historical method.[24]

Sadly, Gardiner contributed to her obscurity by what she did not do. Unlike Louise Creighton, she wrote no memoir and no biography of a famous husband. It is frustrating that we know so little about her. She was one of the few women historians in the Victorian era to compete with men by writing books about national political history. Gardiner's books were directed at a popular audience, but her book reviews reveal a serious minded and insightful historian. What she wrote for the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Academy*, and the *English Historical Review* hints that she was fully capable of writing other books, which, like her history of the French Revolution, would appeal to readers who did not make history their profession.

[22] Born in 1885, Thomas John was her second child.
[23] Bertha Gardiner's older sons served as Army officers, Oliver Cordery as a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers and Arthur James as a major in the field artillery.
[24] For the controversy, see Fahey 1967-68.

Bertha Meriton Gardiner deserves belated recognition. She was a minor historian but a respectable one. She may not deserve celebratory trumpets, but she also does not deserve being ignored.

Appendix: Books and Reviews

This appendix provides material for the reader to judge Bertha Cordery (later Gardiner) as a historian.

Cordery's *King and Commonwealth* is a better book than modern historians who have not read it might imagine. It is mostly, but not entirely, political and military history. Its eleventh chapter surveyed social and economic history. Otherwise, the book was a strongly Whig political narrative, sometimes interrupted for biographical sketches such as for her favourite Sir Henry Vane. She ended the book with his execution. She provided detailed accounts of battles illustrated with her handwritten maps. There is no bibliography. Some of her footnotes are discursive supplements to the main text. They occasionally cited printed primary sources, early biographies and other old books. In the footnotes Cordery also cited nineteenth-century historians: most often Guizot (in French), less frequently John Forster and Lingard. Cordery's future husband Gardiner also was cited, as was Macaulay. When Cordery discussed Cromwell's posthumous reputation, she praised Carlyle. Not interested in old historiographic debates among Tories, Whigs and republicans, she ignored Hume, Rapin, and Catharine Macaulay.

Cordery quoted Henry Hallam in the body of the text. When she discussed Strafford's lengthy impeachment, followed by an act of attainder and his execution, she reminded readers what Hallam had written: "it may be reckoned as a sufficient ground for distrusting anyone's attachment to the English constitution that he reveres the name of the Earl of Strafford." Cordery was silent about Hallam having condemned the act of attainder and Strafford's execution as vindictive.

Although Cordery thought that two-thirds of the people favoured the king's restoration, she considered the revolutionary government justified in deposing Charles I as king and abolishing the monarchy. She regretted his execution as a political mistake. After abolishing the House of Lords, the House of Commons was by itself the government of the new republic. It could not risk new elections which the Presbyterians and the Royalists would have won: "The Commonwealth had so many enemies that, but for the support of Cromwell and the army, it could not have stood for a day" (278).

Despite recognizing his faults, Cordery judged Cromwell favourably: "History will always judge by very different standards the arbitrary acts that break up an existing order [such as by Charles I] with those which restores order out of disorder" (337). Another general who ruled a state after a revolution, Napoleon was unscrupulous while Cromwell was "generous and trustful." Cordery compared Cromwell and his Ironsides with the abolitionist John Brown and his sons as brave men of principle.

A pamphlet by James Baker, chaplain of Winchester College, entitled *King Charles and His Murderers* (1875), regarded Cordery and Phillpotts as too generous toward the regicides. Although they disapproved of the execution of the king, they had approved of his having been deposed as monarch.

Cordery's little book, *The Struggle against Absolute Monarchy*, in about eighty pages, extended her story to the Glorious Revolution. The *Saturday Review*, 23 November 1878, described "the early part of the book [as] being almost an epitome of [S.R. Gardiner's] *Puritan Revolution*." Although generally favourable to Cordery's little book, the reviewer criticized her as prejudiced in favour of the Calvinists. Readers probably enjoyed her many biographical sketches. For instance, Cromwell "seemed by nature born to rule. He knew how to make himself obeyed and feared; he knew also how to win men's trust and love." After describing how the Puritans irritated most people, she called John Milton what a Puritan could be "at his best." She had her villains: Anthony Ashley Cooper (Lord Shaftesbury) "was a little man, of a restless spirit, very clever, very ambitious, and, like the statesmen of his time, very heedless what he did to gain his ends."

Gardiner's most important book analysed the French Revolution in about 250 pages. It was reviewed favourably in *Notes & Queries*, 24 March 1883. The anonymous reviewer said that it was "one of the best written little books which has appeared in the 'Epochs' series" and compared it in quality with two earlier books in the series by S.R. Gardiner. The reviewer pointed out that "a small book may represent as much labour and historical insight as far bulkier ones." Written for the educated general reader, it did what it intended to do. The reviewer remembered having met Gardiner when her name was Cordery. A local newspaper, the *Hampshire Advertiser*, 3 March 1883, drew attention to the book's useful maps.

In a bibliographical essay in the book, Bertha Gardiner suggested Michelet and Louis Blanc for more detailed general histories. Her sources were French, other than a few German ones. For the diplomatic history of the period, she recommended Heinrich von Sybel and, a rival who disagreed with him, Hermann Hüffer. Another German language book that she recommended was Charles Schmidt on the economic conditions of Paris. Mostly she referred to specialized books in French such as the study of the province of Auvergne by Francisque Mège.

Gardiner knew her audience: "As it is improbable that those for whom this book is in the first place intended have any idea of the amount represented by so many thousand or million livres, I have invariably given the English equivalent" (vii). It is puzzling that, aware of the limitations of her intended audience, she recommended books in foreign languages not easily found in British libraries.

H. Morse Stephens in the *Academy*, 13 January 1883, disagreed at times about how Gardiner presented events or about the sources on which she relied in writing about them. On the other hand, he warmly praised what she wrote about the French economy. Stephens regarded her last chapter on foreign policy after the fall of Robespierre as "certainly the best" in her book. The chapter was about more than foreign policy. Gardiner skilfully explained how France accommodated Prussia's desire for peace at the treaty of Basel, but she also explained in this chapter the domestic politics that led to the creation of the Directory and the help that the young

general Napoleon Bonaparte gave it. Although Stephens said that Gardiner's book for the 1789-1795 period lacked originality, he thought it was a good book, as he ended his review with the hope that she would write a sequel for the Directory, the Consulate, and the Empire. A book that extended to 1815 had been her original plan.

In January 1883, an anonymous review in the prestigious *Westminster Review* offered the most detail:

> The best features in Mrs. Gardiner's 'French Revolution' … are the accurate description of the state of French society during the monarchy and the clearness with which she discriminates between the aims and principles of the different parties and leaders who brought about the Revolution.

She did not bother with biographical anecdotes available in much larger books: "The account of the composition of the Assembly, in 1789, is particularly good and so is the comparison of the policy of the Girondists and Montagnards." The reviewer said that "the fairness with which opposite views are represented claims the reader's confidence," but complained that using the sporting term "elect" as a synonym for choose was "curiously out of place in a scholarly history, especially one written by a lady."

Although the 13 July 1883 *Spectator* review had some negative criticisms, it said, summing up, "we ought to be content with the fact that Mrs. Gardiner supplies us with a great deal, – impartiality, method, clearness of statement, caution in judgment." The reviewer particularly praised her explanation of the events that led to the Revolution.

Gardiner's book fits in the mainstream of English interpretation of the French Revolution. Her book combined detailed description of political struggles and wars with a balanced analysis of the role of personalities, ideas, and a populace in economic distress. Here are a few examples from Gardiner's book that show what she emphasized.

Gardiner began with a description of the poverty of the peasantry, aggravated by heavy taxation and the privileges of the nobility. Although well-meaning, Louis XVI did nothing to help: "The Monarchy was in its decline, not because it was intentionally tyrannical but because it had ceased to do its duty" (3). Gardiner argued that "the misery of the working classes presented in itself reason enough for revolution; but revolution only comes when there are men of ideas to lead the unlettered masses" (13). She then turned to Voltaire and other *philosophes* (whom she called Voltairians). They demanded religious toleration and a free press. She also saw as important the Economists who advocated the end of governmental restrictions on trade and agriculture: "The Voltairians were specially characterized by their attacks upon the Church and Christianity; the Economists upon the importance which they attached to individual liberty" (16). Both looked to the monarchy and not to the people for reform. Rousseau was an exception. He taught that the simple peasant and artisan were superior to cultured intellectuals because they had retained humanity's natural virtue. During the Revolution, ultra-democrats such as Robespierre often saw themselves as disciples of Rousseau.

Gardiner found two heroic figures early in her book. The first was Turgot, whom in 1774 the king appointed as his principal minister. According to Gardiner, he was "the greatest statesman that France had seen since Richelieu." He recognized what problems crippled France and knew how to solve them. He advocated the ideas of Adam Smith before the Scotchman had published them. Turgot's reforms, attacking privileges and old customs, infuriated enemies such as Queen Marie Antoinette. The King, although well-meaning, lacked self-confidence, was irresolute, and listened to the Queen's bad advice. In 1776 she persuaded him to dismiss Turgot: "Revolution, that is to say change accompanied by violence and convulsion, became inevitable**"** (21). Gardiner's other heroic figure was Mirabeau. His personal reputation was unsavoury, but he "comprehended the real meaning of the revolution" (35). Like most members of the Assembly, Mirabeau wanted a constitutional monarchy with the government controlled by the middle classes. He advised Louis to "accept the abolition of all class distinctions" (33). If he did not, Mirabeau foresaw the grim fate of the King and Queen: "the mob will trample over their corpses" (84).

Gardiner pointed out that republican ultra-democrats, although few in the Assembly, became powerful through the Jacobin Club, which had affiliates throughout the country, and the Paris Commune. Foreshadowing the Reign of Terror, radical revolutionaries sanctioned a massacre of a thousand political prisoners in September 1792. They were "prepared to shed blood like water," Gardiner wrote (178). In early 1793 the revolutionaries executed the King and a few months later the Queen, who gained respect by her dignity at the guillotine. Gardiner recounted the bloody end of the monarchs only briefly. They had become unimportant.

Gardiner's least favourite revolutionary was Hébert, "a coarse and low-minded adventurer" (169). An atheist hostile to religion, he attacked even the constitutional clergy who had accepted the revolution. All priests who dared to remain in France were to be executed. He proclaimed a religion of reason and held a public celebration with a goddess of reason. When Robespierre sent Hébert to the guillotine, he behaved as a coward, which Gardiner did not mention. She was not one to gloat.

Robespierre's own execution ended the Reign of Terror. Gardiner described the government which followed his beheading as corrupt and incompetent, unable to provide the Paris poor with food. This weak and unpopular government survived its enemies in Paris because the cannon of the young general Napoleon Bonaparte crushed a revolt.

Gardiner concluded her book by acknowledging that the French people accepted the Revolution: "It is because these [revolutionary] ideas were so many-sided and so powerful that the French nation accepts the Revolution in spite of the errors and crimes of the revolutionists, as the sources of its mental as well as its political life" (253). She did not specifically refer to the Rights of Man, whose declaration by the Assembly in 1791 she had passed over in a paragraph.

Bertha Gardiner should be remembered as a reviewer as well as a writer of books.[25] Her reviews were meant to be read by scholars. How many times she published anonymously in the

[25] She was not considered important enough to be cited in the index to Barbara Onslow, *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2000). Onslow does not discuss women who reviewed history exclusively. She never mentions the *English Historical Review*.

Edinburgh Review is unknown. Fortunately, a long review in the January 1876 issue, "Gardiner's Reign of James I," and another in October 1878, "Gardiner's Government of Charles I," can be identified as by Bertha Meriton Cordery.[26] The first one was a footnoted commentary and criticism of six volumes for the period 1603-28 written by her future husband Samuel Rawson Gardiner. The second article looked at another two volumes by S.R. Gardiner.

In the first review Cordery pointed out that what was distinctive about S.R. Gardiner was his commitment to impartiality. He assumed that "each person honestly believed in the excellence of its own political creed." Unfortunately, Gardiner's desire to see the best in everyone led Tories to regard him as an ally. Cordery spent several pages arguing that a review article in the *Quarterly Review* (July 1875) had misrepresented him. Gardiner admired the objectives of James I, religious toleration and European peace, but not how he ineptly pursued them. After Cordery sketched what Gardiner said on behalf of James I and what he said against him, she politely concluded: "Whether Mr. Gardiner in his estimate has fairly hit the balance, we recommend our readers to judge for themselves." Although she did not say so explicitly, she thought him too generous. Cordery was an unapologetic Whig historian who had little sympathy for the Stuart kings. In her review essay she often chastised Gardiner for what he left out: "Mr. Gardiner always writes from an impartial point of view. Whether he has in all cases given a complete representation of the standpoint of either party is, we think, open to question." Writing about Charles I and the House of Commons, she complained that "no prominence whatever is given in Mr. Gardiner's book" to the motives of parliamentary leaders. She disagreed too about how he represented struggles over religion: "Mr. Gardiner is inclined to lay too much emphasis on the liberality of the High Church party." Regarding his account of the battle over the customs levy without the consent of Parliament, "we dissent." Cordery ended with a discussion of the Petition of Right and concluded that, "with all deference to Mr. Gardiner, we cannot help thinking … he has failed to place before his readers a true representation of the standpoint of the Commons."

In Cordery's review of Charles' reign after the death of Buckingham she seems gentler toward Gardiner except in the matter of ship-money. Minimizing it, he said that ship-money was only £70,000 a year more than the average of royal taxes in the first four years of the reign of Charles. Cordery complained that Gardiner had only stated what that average had been and did not "let the reader know in what proportion taxation was in 1636 than in 1628." Cordery pointed out that ship-money increased direct taxation by two-thirds, a burden in some counties felt particularly by the lower classes (403). Cordery ended her review by conceding that Gardiner presented a balanced judgment on Strafford and Laud: "He gave them honourable motives and a mistaken zeal in the service of the Crown; but he does not forget that the lesson of their failure and their fall rendered a lasting service to the liberties of England" (409). An ardent Whig, she was less generous toward Strafford and Laud in her two books about seventeenth century England.

Cordery / Gardiner wrote all her reviews in the *Academy* and the *English Historical Review* about French history in the period of the Revolution and Napoleon. She published in the *Academy* as late as 1891, a year before her final contribution to the *English Historical Review*.

[26] Despite its title, the article went beyond the death of James I. It was republished as a short book with Cordery's name. In a footnote about the dullness of S.R. Gardiner's books, Ian Hesketh cites the *Edinburgh Review* essay with Cordery as the author (Hesketh 46). Did Hesketh know that Cordery became Mrs. Gardiner? For the historiographic context, see Jaffin.

One reviewed book has a title that suggested it was about Herbert Spencer, but it was about France.[27] Published on 1 April 1882, it was the first of her *Academy* reviews. A few reviews were essentially summaries.[28] Most contained insightful judgments.

In the *Academy* (4 April 1885) Bertha Gardiner criticized the famous historian Hippolyte Taine. She said that his methods prevent "the production of sound historical work of any kind." Taine explained the French Revolution, from anarchy to despotism, as being a result of Rousseau's *Social Contract*. According to Gardiner, Taine cited only sources that supported his interpretation and ignored those that did not.

She disagreed with another famous historian, Sir John Seeley, in a short *Academy* review (13 March 1886). She said: "Bonaparte, Prof. Seeley argues, from the time that he became first consul, was actuated by a single motive – the subjugation of England." Gardiner challenged this interpretation.

Her review of *The Last Days of the Consulate*, published in the *Academy* on 17 July 1886, began by saying the book was of "much historical interest." An unsigned manuscript found in the papers of Condorcet (best known as a proponent of human rights) was identified as written by Claude Fauriel. The Fauriel manuscript was incomplete and did not address the much-debated question why Napoleon chose to execute the Duc d'Enghien, a Bourbon prince, which shocked European royalty and aristocracy. Much of the book concerns the trial of the Breton royalist, Georges Cadoudal, whom Fauriel admired.

Gardiner's final review in the *Academy* (18 July 1891) summarized *The Correspondence of William Augustus Miles on the French Revolution, 1789-1817*, edited by his son Charles Popham Miles. Celebrating Miles's life and career, Gardiner said that he had "visited America before the Declaration of Independence, held diplomatic posts on the Continent before 1789, numbered Lafayette amongst his friends, conversed with Mirabeau, and sat shoulder to shoulder with Robespierre in the Jacobin club." Gardiner thought that Miles was a keen judge of character and of events, but for an explanation of the outbreak of war between Britain and revolutionary France he "gave additional rather than new" information.

In the newly founded *English Historical Review* (1886—), Bertha Gardiner published five reviews. Unfortunately, Rosemary Mitchell's 2018 article, "Women in *The English Historical Review*," was confined to women who wrote articles and did not include reviewers, so she said nothing about Gardiner.

The most surprising of Gardiner's reviews was the first, for a book edited by S.R. Gardiner's friend Oscar Browning with whom he sought advice about tricycles. In her review published in October 1886, Bertha Gardiner described as disappointing *The Despatches of Earl Gower,*

[27] "Descriptive Sociology; or, Groups of Sociological Facts, Classified and Arranged by Herbert Spencer," in *Academy* 21 (1 April 1882): 223-34. The article was a list of facts about France as edited by John Collier.

[28] *Brief des Grafen Mercy-Argenteau*, in *Academy* 28 (22 August 1885). She agreed with Mercy that the retreat of the Austrian army was for military reasons and not part of a strategy to get a larger share in the partitions of Poland.

English Ambassador at Paris from June 1790 to August 1792. The best she could say on behalf of the editor was "that [Lord Gower] was a singularly dull correspondent is not Mr. Browning's fault." However, it was Browning's fault, she believed, that he misused his introduction by writing "as if he was appealing to readers ignorant of the commonest facts of the revolution."

In the January 1889 issue Gardiner reviewed a book entitled *Georges Cadoudal et la Chouannerie*, "a valuable contribution" to the history of the resistance to the Revolution in the west of France, especially Brittany. The book was the work of a Georges Cadoudal, a nephew of the famous man with the same name. The Breton peasants initially greeted the Revolution sympathetically, but when it persecuted their priests, they rebelled. Gardiner praised the author for having acquired new sources but was disappointed that throughout his book he did not make clear which sources he was using. She warned readers that the book did not provide a biography of the original Georges Cadoudal or a full account of the war in Brittany.

Gardiner's review of *Preussen und Frankreich von 1795 bis 1807*, in the January 1890 issue, demonstrated her knowledge of German, although much of the book consisted of diplomatic correspondence in French. Paul Baillieu edited the documents (sometimes extracts) from the Prussian state archives. Most of these documents had been referenced in books by von Sybel and Ranke, so they were not unfamiliar. Gardiner found it "interesting" that Baillieu's book showed that in his continental policy Napoleon borrowed the ideas of Sièyes.

Gardiner in a short review, published in April 1890, rejected the assumption underlying the *Histoire de la Constitution Civile du Clergé sous la Terreur et la Directoire, 1790-1801*, an abridgment of a four-volume work by Ludovic Sciout. Sciout took for granted that the civil constitution was the work of a small band of freethinkers. Instead, Gardiner said, it represented what the country wanted. In Gardiner's judgment, Sciout's work is "far better described as a history of the persecution of the clergy than as a history of the civil constitution." He wrongly explained massacres of Catholics as happening because of their religion. As mobs and the revolutionary government killed thousands for all sorts of reasons, Gardiner would not single out those whom Sciout considered martyrs. In her history of the French Revolution, she had pointed out that as late as 1762 Huguenot clergy had been put to death.

Gardiner's final review, published in October 1892, concerned a collection of documents by H. Morse Stephens, *The Principal Speeches of the Statesmen and Orators of the French Revolution, 1789-1795*. She regarded the book as useful to students, although she disagreed with some of Stephens' choices - for instance, many speeches by the unimportant Barère and only one selection by Cambon, whose speeches about economic conditions remain valuable. She also regretted Stephens using a book meant for students to present his interpretation of events.

After this 1892 review, Bertha Meriton Gardiner no longer published.

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