

# Nonconformist Women Writers, 1720–1840

Edited by  
Timothy Whelan



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NONCONFORMIST WOMEN WRITERS,  
1720–1840

# CONTENTS OF THE EDITION

## PART I

### VOLUME 1

General Introduction

Anne Steele, *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional* (1780)

### VOLUME 2

Anne Steele, *Miscellaneous Pieces in Verse and Prose* (1780)

Anne Steele, *Verses for Children* (1788)

Unpublished Poetry, Prose and Correspondence of Anne Steele

### VOLUME 3

Poetry, Prose and Correspondence of Mary Steele

### VOLUME 4

Poetry and Correspondence of Mary Scott

Poetry of Hannah Towgood Wakeford

Poetry of Mary Steele Wakeford

Poetry of Marianna Attwater

Poetry of Jane Attwater

Poetry and Periodical Prose of Elizabeth Coltman

## PART II

### VOLUME 5

Poetry of Maria Grace Saffery

### VOLUME 6

Correspondence of Maria Grace Saffery and Anne Andrews Whitaker

### VOLUME 7

Juvenile Fiction of Maria Grace Andrews Saffery

Religious Prose of Mary Egerton Scott

Religious Prose of Elizabeth Coltman

Religious Prose of Jane Adams Houseman

### VOLUME 8

Diary and Meditations of Mrs John Walrond

Poetry, Prose, Letters and Selections from the Diary of Anne Cator Steele

Letters, Prose, and Poetry of Hannah Towgood Wakeford

Prose Writings of Jane Attwater

Diary of Frances Barrett Ryland

Diary of Elizabeth Horsey Saffery

Diary of Sophia Williams

Fragment of the Diary of Caroline Attwater Whitaker

Diary of Anne Andrews Whitaker

Index

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1720–1840

GENERAL EDITOR

Timothy Whelan

VOLUME 5

Poetry of Maria Grace Saffery

EDITED BY

Timothy Whelan

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# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	xiii
Note on the Texts	xv
INTRODUCTION	1

## Poetry of Maria Grace Saffery

<b>I. POEMS, 1790–1833</b>	<b>55</b>
1. <i>Chey Sing</i> (1790)	55
2. Reflections on the New-Year	70
3. The Complaint – Sabbath Day, December 13, 1795	71
4. Wednesday, December 16, 1795	71
5. Mourning an Absent God	71
6. Sabbath Evening, December 20, 1795 – Despondancy Reproved	72
7. On Hearing Bells at Midnight, for the Closing Year	72
8. Pensive Desire	73
9. January 6, 1797	73
10. On seeing the following Inscription on a Sun-dial: “ <i>Be gone about your business</i> ”	73
11. Sung at a Baptizing, August 3, 1800	74
12. Sung at a Baptizing, December 28, 1800	75
13. On the Death of Miss S—, at five years of age, who gave remarkable Evidences of a Divine Change	75
14. The Wish	76
15. Conflict	77
16. On Peace	77
17. An Elegy	78
18. New Year’s Gift	79
19. Evening	79
20. On Sin	80
21. Consolation in Christ	81
22. Sung after a Sermon preached to the Sunday School Society in Brown Street and the Children whom they teach, on September 20, 1802	82

23. On Ezekiel XXXIV	82
24. On John 12.27	83
25. [Tired of the labours that employ]	84
26. For a Ladies Pocket Book	84
27. [Yes, I am sad, the starting tear]	84
28. Baptizing Hymn	85
29. [If ever sinner turned away]	85
30. On Parting from a dear Friend	86
31. On Psalm 94 and 19 <sup>th</sup> Verse	87
32. On 2 <sup>nd</sup> Epistle Thessalonians, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Chapter and 1 <sup>st</sup> Verse	87
33. Happiness of the Righteous after Death	87
34. True Liberty	88
35. Nearness to God	89
36. Perfect Love	89
37. A Mother's Address to a Child	90
38. Sabbath Evening Reflexion	91
39. The Saviour's Triumph over Death and Hell	92
40. To Jane on the first return of her Birthday	92
41. To a Friend with a Roasting Pig	93
42. To the Same Friend with a Turkey during the War with Turkey	93
43. Love to Christ	94
44. Sonnet	94
45. Christian Heroism	95
46. Hymn	95
47. Ordination Hymn	96
48. Sunday School Hymn	97
49. Association Hymn	97
50. Introductory Apostrophe, On the Commencement of the second Volume of the <i>Baptist Magazine</i>	98
51. Jubilee Hymn, Sung at several Baptist Meeting Houses	99
52. A Funeral Thought	100
53. Missionary Hymn	100
54. Hymn on Baptism	101
55. The Choice of Moses	102
56. To M. Saffery	102
57. To P. J. Saffery	103
58. From Jane to Philip, enclosed in a purse she had worked for him	103
59. Missionary Hymn, sung December 8 <sup>th</sup> , 1813, at the Ordination of a Missionary going to Jamaica	103
60. Isaiah lx. 1	105

61. From Jane to Philip in answer to a letter congratulating her on her birth-day, written just after the death of Edwin Saffery – composed by M. G. S. for Jane	105
62. To Jane Saffery in London, from her mother, June 1814	106
63. On the death of ...	107
64. Complaint to Java on the Death of the Rev. T. Trowt	109
65. To Philip on sending him Eustace's Classical Tour instead of a religious work for which he had written	109
66. To the same after he had asked her if she did not <i>forget</i> him	110
67. To Little Jane, without a garland, on her cold birthday, May 1 <sup>st</sup> 1817	110
68. To some dear one with peaches	111
69. Lines written at the request of S. W., December 1822	111
70. Written in my Sister's Album, March 1823	112
71. Lines suggested on reading a beautiful address to a Child by Alaric C. Watts Esq <sup>r</sup> , August 1823	112
72. [She "sleeps in Jesus." Happy thus to rest]	113
73. [These little records of departed days]	114
74. To the Baby Maria	115
75. Poem for the Gravestone of John Saffery	115
76. To Jane Saffery, on her birthday, May 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1825, a few weeks after the death of her Father	116
77. To Jane, May 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1828	116
78. A Baptizing Hymn	117
79. Baptizing Hymn	118
80. 'For the Album of a Very Little Child'	118
81. To E. A. Bisdee, seven years old on her Birthday	119
82. ["She beareth gules" and warrior's crest]	119
83. Reminiscences of the 20 <sup>th</sup> and the 21 <sup>st</sup> Addressed to my dear Mary	120
84. To Alfred Romilly Whitaker on 'the plain' at Stonehenge, August 1831	120
85. To the Memory of the Same	121
86. To Anna, November 7 <sup>th</sup> , 1832	121
87. To a Child one year old with her first Alphabet	122
88. A Plea for Infant Schools	122
89. Addressed to the Contributors of an Infant School Bazaar held at Salisbury, 1833	123
90. To — in November, 1833	123
<b>II. POEMS ON SACRED SUBJECTS (1834)</b>	<b>125</b>
91. Sonnet to John Saffery	126
92. The Flowers of the Desert	127

93. Enoch	127
94. The World After the Flood	127
95. Hagar in the Desert	130
96. Hagar again in the Desert	131
97. Hagar. Continued	131
98. [Then who would ask, if such a boon were meet]	132
99. The Exodus	132
100. The Pass of Pihahiroth	135
101. Jonathan's Friendship	140
102. The Widow of Zarephath	141
103. The Widow's Son Restored	142
104. The Meeting of Elijah and Obadiah	144
105. The Meeting of Elijah with Ahab	146
106. Elijah on Mount Carmel	148
107. Elijah in the Desert	150
108. Meditation on Psalm XCI	154
109. Silent Prayer	155
110. [There is a peace so permanent, – so pure]	155
111. Jonah. Chap. i	156
112. Jonah. Chap. ii	158
113. Jonah. Chap. iii	159
114. Jonah. Chap. iv	159
115. Jonah. Chap. iv. – Part 2	160
116. ["Arise and shine! thy light is come"]	162
117. [When light and loveliness had sprung]	162
118. Apostrophe to Jeremiah	164
119. [Pilgrim in sorrow's path below]	166
120. The Hebrew Worthies	167
121. The Idol of Dura	170
122. Daniel in the Den	171
123. [Was that the Shepherd's sigh in Jesse's bow'r]	173
124. [Oh! when shall Zion for her Lord prepare]	173
125. [It was amid the gath'ring gloom]	174
126. Judah Restored	176
127. The Star of Bethlehem	178
128. The First and Second Advent	179
129. [When Eden, in her guiltless joy]	179
130. [Oh! let the tear of anguish flow]	180
131. Jesus Walking on the Sea	181
132. Continued	181
133. The Home of Bethany	182

134. [Did not the Lord's bright armies sing]	184
135. [Jerusalem is still! her feast is o'er]	185
136. John, Chap. XVII	186
137. Continued	186
138. Gethsemane	187
139. The Centurion at the Cross	188
140. The Walk to Emmaus	188
141. [And is the Mightiest heark'ning from above?]	191
142. The Choice of Moses	191
143. [O poor ambition! – vain, ignoble boast]	192
144. Faith, Hope, and Charity	193
145. Receiving the Kingdom of God as a Little Child	193
146. The Fold	194
147. The Garden	195
148. The Temple	196
149. The Mercy-Seat Below, and that Above	196
150. Hymn at the Consecration of a Place of Worship	197
151. A Morning Hymn	197
152. Thought before Sunset	198
153. Address to the Opening Year	199
154. Address to the Last Hours of the Closing Year	200
155. Funeral Thought	200
156. Address to a Mother on the Death of her Child	201
157. To a Little Babe, buried early on a Beautiful Spring Morning	201
158. On the Death of a Long-Suffering Saint, remarkable for the ardour of her sensibility through advancing years	202
159. Address to Christian Ministers. Suggested by the Death of One Deeply Lamented	203
160. The Character of the Rev. T. Scott. By a Personal Friend, on a Review of his Commentary	204
161. The Philanthropy of Wilberforce	204
162. Sonnet to the Memory of Mrs. More	204
163. [The generations, how they fade!]	205
164. To Africa Delivered from Captivity	206
165. The Christian Sabbath	206
166. Continued	207
167. Patmos	207
<b>III. POEMS, 1835–44</b>	<b>209</b>
168. To the Memory of Mrs. H. More	209
169. To the Memory of Dr Carey of Serampore	210

170. To the Memory of D <sup>r</sup> Carey	210
171. A Birthday Wish for November 9, 1835 – “The peace that passeth understanding”	211
172. Edith’s infant Smile, a song, for —	212
173. A Birthday Thought, 1 March 1836	212
174. For July 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 1836	213
175. To my only Sister on her Birthday, 23 June 1837	213
176. Composed during the Banquet given in honour of the Queen’s visit to the City, 9 November 1837	214
177. To Jane, on the Birth of her First Child	215
178. Sonnet for the Coronation	215
179. To the Queen Dowager with “Sacred Poems”	216
180. To little Mary Bisdee born in Van Dieman’s land & left in England by her mother – on her Birthday, 4 October 1838	216
181. To Rosalie Anne Green on her fifth Birthday, 6 March 1839	217
182. To an affectionate Domestic in the family of a friend with Spectacles once my own	217
183. From a Child to its Foster Mother with a Heath-Plant (“To M <sup>rs</sup> Boys from Ellen Maria Saffery”)	218
184. Lines for Music	218
185. Acrostic addressed to Rev. E. Phillips of East Tytherley	218
186. Addressed to the Rev. Alfred Phillips, Kilmersdon, Somerset	219
187. Addressed to the Rev. W. Lisle Bowles	219
188. To R. F. – M. D. in Sickness	220
189. To D. C. Read Esq. Artist	220
190. Funeral Hymn suggested by the Death of a Friend distinguished for Benevolence	220
191. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord	221
192. Sabbath Solitude, addressed to a Sick Friend	222
193. Sabbath-hours	222
194. Sabbath-hours. Second part	223
195. Sabbath-hours. Third part	224
196. To a Silent Dove in a far Country	224
197. Child’s Hymn, composed for Rosalie Anne Green	225
198. The Closing Year	225
199. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!”	226
200. “Come over ... and help us”	226
201. Hymn for the Consecration of a Place of Worship erected as a Thank-Offering	227

202. The Missionary	228
203. A Funeral Thought	228
204. [O Dear Annie on thy baby bliss]	229
205. To little Anna Jane – one year old – March 12 <sup>th</sup> '39	229
206. On a Butterfly, taken asleep on Sunday, 14 August 1839	229
207. Sonnet for the birthday of the Beloved Samuel Saffery – Lord's Day, February 21 <sup>st</sup> , 1841	230
208. To Mary Attwater on the Eve of her Marriage	230
209. To Edith on her ninth Birthday	231
210. Sonnet – Intended for the Album of Lucy Stapleton addressed to her during her last Illness.	231
211. To a Friend, known from early Childhood	232
212. To my young friend E. M. Betts, confined to her Couch by sickness	232
213. Retrospect	233
214. To a young Friend	233
215. [Maiden smile; – for Life is sweet]	234
216. To a deaf Friend, in acknowledgment of her parting blessing	235
217. Dedicatory to a beloved and only Sister	235
218. Sonnet Written in the album of Mrs P.Whitaker Jun.	236
219. Written at the request of a friend, after a long delay	236
220. To a Dejected Friend	237
221. To a Young Friend on leaving her Home. A Simile	237
222. To Margretta Macdonald, for whom I could not find a flower on a winter day due to her for personating the Lady in <i>Comus</i>	238
<b>IV. MISCELLANEOUS POEMS, FRAGMENTS AND PROSE PIECES</b>	<b>239</b>
223. Lacock Abbey	239
224. [A little something to provide]	239
225. [Swift as a dart my longing Soul shall fly]	240
226. To a very dear and very distant friend	240
227. I cannot see, thy shaded brow	240
228. Harvest Hymn	241
229. [Since Eden's roses faded, since her bowers]	241
230. [There are who know not how to prove]	242
231. "That you sorrow not as those without hope" [fragment]	242
232. The Beetle	242
233. Disappointment	243
234. Fragments	244
235. Four Prose Pieces by Maria Grace Saffery	244

<b>V. POEMS BY WOMEN WITHIN THE SAFFERY CIRCLE</b>	<b>247</b>
Anne Andrews Whitaker	
236. To my little Son Edwin Eugene on his Birthday June 22 <sup>nd</sup> 1820	247
237. A Mother's Wish, August 3 <sup>rd</sup> 1820	248
238. To Mrs Caroline Whitaker on the seventy-eighth Anniversary of her birth, January 29 <sup>th</sup> 1824	249
Jane Saffery Whitaker	
239. Four Fragments	250
240. To my fondly loved, but ever doubting one	251
241. For my dear Children	252
242. Jane to Philip	252
243. [The Neriads are swelling the wint'ry wave]	253
244. Fragment	253
245. The Pulpit Cushion	253
Miscellaneous Poems	
246. Lines addressed to Philip Whitaker on his 54 <sup>th</sup> birthday by his three youngest children, composed in 1820	255
247. To my Friend and Pastor Revd P. J. Saffery	257
248. Memorial Poem for Maria Saffery, composed by her children	259
Editorial Notes	261

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## NOTE ON THE TEXTS

With the publication of the final four volumes in this edition, it seems appropriate to provide a more detailed account of the provenance of the materials used in these volumes. Jennifer Thorp, former archivist at the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, first introduced me to the Steele Collection in 1999, when I was checking on a reference to a Joseph Cottle in one of the letters in that collection. I discovered it was *not* a letter by Joseph Cottle of Bristol, friend and publisher of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey, but rather his grandfather. After skimming through some letters from Jane Attwater to Mary Steele, composed during the 1770s and '80s, I made a note to myself that these letters 'would be an excellent project'. Little did I know that my failure that day to find what I was looking for would indeed lead to 'an excellent project', the publication more than a decade later of the writings of a remarkable group of nonconformist women writers that now comprise the eight volumes in this edition.

Jennifer Thorpe mentioned to me that I might want to meet Marjorie Reeves, a resident of Oxford and former professor at St Anne's College who had just published, at the age of 92, *Pursuing the Muses: Female Education and Non-conformist Culture 1700–1900* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997). This book provided an overview of a considerable amount of material in the Steele Collection, which had been deposited at the Angus Library in 1992 by Hugh Steele-Smith. Reeves's book also brought to light a considerable amount of previously unknown material in her own possession, which she had been depositing at various times in the Angus Library throughout the 1990s (now known as the Reeves Collection, Saffery Papers and the Attwater/Whitaker Papers), some of which had appeared previously in her first book on her West Country family history, *Sheep Bell and Ploughshare* (Bradford-on-Avon: Moonraker Press, 1978). Other projects took my interest and time for the next seven years, and not until 2007 did I turn my attention once again to the Steele Collection. Unfortunately, Reeves died in 2003, and I was never able to meet and discuss my ideas with her, something I deeply regret. I proceeded nevertheless to make a much more thorough exploration of the Steele Collection and the materials left to the Angus

Library by Reeves, much of which had not been catalogued. I realized there was far more to this material than Reeves had explored in *Pursuing the Muses*.

After viewing what I thought was all the material used by Reeves in her book, assuming that after her death any material she owned concerning the Steele, Attwater and Saffery families not previously deposited was now safely in the library's possession, I presented a proposal early in 2008 to Pickering & Chatto to publish a series of volumes based on these materials. I was on an extended research trip at Oxford at that time, making sure that all the materials I wished to include in the volumes were indeed at the Angus Library. However, I discovered that two important manuscript collections of poetry were missing: a chapbook of poems by Marianna Attwater from the late 1760s and a larger bound volume of poems by Maria Grace Saffery from the late 1830s and early 1840s, titled 'Lyra Domestica'. After searching through all the material left by Reeves in the Angus Library, even asking Thorpe (now the archivist at New College, Oxford) to assist me in my search of the library's archives, I came to the conclusion the missing materials were not there. I contacted the executor of Marjorie Reeves's estate, Anthony Sheppard, as well as Madeline Barber of Oxford, seeking guidance as to where these missing materials might be. I was informed that Reeves had not left everything to the Angus Library, as I had assumed, but instead deposited materials at St Anne's College and the Bodleian. I immediately went to the library at St Anne's and examined a large collection of manuscript and printed sources left by Reeves, but found nothing pertaining to the West Country women writers I was seeking. I contacted two archivists at the Bodleian, but received no response. After several weeks, I went to the Special Collections at the Bodleian to see if I could find someone who knew about Marjorie Reeves and the collection of materials she had left with the library. I met Colin Harris, now superintendent of Reading Rooms, Special Collections, at the Bodleian and he informed me that the archivists I had previously contacted had retired, which explained the lack of a response to my query, but he did indeed know about the Reeves deposit and was fairly sure he could find it for me. Harris took me into a large room inside the New Bodleian building filled with stacks of un-catalogued material, only a fraction, he informed me, of the un-catalogued holdings of the Bodleian. About halfway along the right-hand wall we came to a group of boxes marked 'Reeves'. As I looked at the top box, I saw immediately in Marjorie Reeves's hand an envelope marked 'Saffery poems, Lyra Domestica', and I knew we had come to the right place. The boxes were in poor condition and the materials disorganized. Reeves had placed the materials into hundreds of envelopes, adding identifying notes above the address labels. Manuscript letters, including many she used in *Pursuing the Muses*, had been folded and placed into envelopes, with hundreds of letters from the early and mid-nineteenth century having never been opened. Reeves left the Bodleian six boxes of material, and I proceeded to make a pre-

liminary examination of each box, locating all the manuscript letters pertaining to the women writers I wanted to use in my volumes and all their manuscript poems. I eventually found Marianna Atwater's book of poems, and in the last box and last envelope I opened, the only extant complete copy of Anne Steele's *Verses for Children* (1788). At this point I had finally completed the checklist I had begun in the Angus Library, discovering along the way a significant body of material I did not know existed, material Reeves did not mention and did not use in her book but which I knew was important to telling the entire story of this remarkable coterie of West Country women writers.

I was now confronted by two large collections of material in two libraries, the overwhelming majority of which was un-catalogued and un-calendared. I proceeded that spring and on successive trips for the next three years to calendar as much as possible all the materials in both libraries. Thanks to the librarians and staff at both the Angus and the Bodleian, I was given boxes, envelopes and plastic sleeves that enabled me to organize, separate, flatten, identify and date hundreds of manuscript letters and poems, preserving in many cases some very fragile material. Overall, the letters that Marjorie Reeves deposited to the Angus Library were in better condition than those she left with the Bodleian. Why Reeves split the collection between the two libraries is not known, but her decision created considerable difficulties in organizing and identifying the correspondence between Maria Grace Andrews Saffery and her sister Anne Andrews Whitaker, as well as correspondence by other individuals, all of which appear in Volumes 6 and 8 of this edition. The letters were not divided according to a logical pattern, and a perusal of the locations of the letters as they are presented in these volumes makes that very clear, as the citations jump repeatedly from one library to the next. The letters deposited at the Angus were better organized and preserved than those at the Bodleian due to some careful, preliminary work performed by Thorpe. All of the material left by Marjorie Reeves at both libraries pertaining to the individuals appearing in these volumes has now been calendared, and considerable genealogical research (much of it greatly indebted to the work of Reeves, John Broome and Serena McLaren, a descendant of Maria Saffery) completed on the Steele, Atwater, Whitaker and Saffery families. A massive amount of material related to the Victorian generation of these families, however, remains un-calendared in both libraries, including hundreds of letters still in their original envelopes and still retaining their Queen Victoria stamps, a collection deserving further exploration.

Explanatory notes appear at the end of the volume and are cited numerically in the text. All variants, interpolations, authorial corrections and editorial asides appear in alphabetical notes at the foot of each page. Variants within the copy-text are placed before a single bracket, followed by 'MS' (see example 1). Variants between the copy-text and other texts are placed before a single bracket,

followed by the manuscript location (see example 2). All references to the Steele or Reeves Collections are cited by class mark, such as 5/2, 3/3/1, Box 17/2, etc. References to manuscripts from other collections are cited by the collection name, followed by class mark, i.e., Attwater Papers, acc. 76, II.A.2. Interpolations are marked by two carats (see example 3). Authorial corrections include mark-throughs within the poetic line (see example 4) and mark-throughs when one word is written above the other word (see example 5). In some cases, a variant word choice is written above a word in the poetic line, but neither is marked through. All multiple word choices are separated by a slash mark, with the word from the poetic line preceding the slash mark, and the word written above following the slash mark (see example 6). In these cases, the editor has chosen one of the words. In some cases, multiple variants have been included in the same note (see example 7). Extraneous textual notes by the editor are marked 'Ed.' (see example 8). When a variant choice has been used as part of this text, both the MS and variant source have been listed on the same line, enabling the reader to see the applicable word(s) (see example 9). In those cases where the variants are taken from a printed text, the variant is denoted by date (see example 10). References in the notes to previous volumes in this series are designated 'see Volume 1', 'see Volume 2', etc.

- Example 1   noisy] MS
- Example 2   Soul] 5/3
- Example 3   Poet's ^tuneful^ Art] 5/1
- Example 4   can hast] 3/3/1
- Example 5   May/And] 5/3
- Example 6   May/And] 5/1
- Example 7   attun'd/awak'd] MS; attun'd] Attwater Papers, acc. 76, II.A.1
- Example 8   Line is incomplete in MS [Ed.]
- Example 9   right] MS; righteousness] 5/2
- Example 10  cheard] 1774

The manuscripts that appear in these volumes vary widely in quality. Some are in pristine condition; others have suffered considerable damage due to moisture, mice, mutilation and general deterioration. Some letters are in the later stages of complete dissolution, in which the slightest touch can result in the paper tearing. Both the Angus and the Bodleian libraries graciously provided the editor with clear plastic sleeves in which to place the most delicate of these letters, protecting them from further deterioration and damage. In some instances, the editor required the use of an ultraviolet lamp to transcribe (one or two words at a time) what at first glance appeared to be virtually unreadable letters. Some of these letters took the better part of a day to transcribe; those letters in good condition only minutes. Those words that are only partially visible in a manuscript due to some damage or deterioration in the paper but nevertheless can be ascertained have been included in the final text but placed in square brackets. Those words

or words that are impossible to read have been noted in the final text by the use of angled brackets. When substantial sections of a manuscript cannot be read, a statement has been provided for the reader. Authorial deletions in the manuscripts denoted by ellipses have been retained as they appear in the original; deletions made by the editor have been denoted by an ellipsis in square brackets.

The manuscripts have been transcribed as closely as possible to the way they appear in the original. Abbreviated words, such as *y<sup>e</sup>* (the), *y<sup>n</sup>* (then), *y<sup>r</sup>* (that), *w<sup>ch</sup>* (which), *d<sup>r</sup>* (both 'dear' and 'doctor'), etc, have been retained, even the occasional use of @, which generally stands for 'about'. Alterations to the text have been kept to a minimum, but in some instances corrections have been necessary. Some have been added silently, others noted at the foot of the page. Spelling variants that have the most probability of suggesting the presence of a typographical error to the reader have been standardized. Throughout the material included in these volumes, the writers have often reversed numerous instances of words employing a modern spelling of 'ie', such as 'greif', 'breif', 'yeild', 'neice' (this occurs almost exclusively in the letters of Jane Attwater), and in some few instances, 'thier'. These have been silently amended. Other variant spellings, if changed in the text, have been duly noted at the foot of the page. In some instances, inadvertent errors, such as the repetition of the same word, i.e. 'into into', 'have have', etc, have been silently corrected. In many instances, words have been inadvertently left out; these have been inserted in square brackets. Because of the length of Volumes 6 and 8, interpolations and mark-throughs in the manuscripts have not been noted.

A common practice in letter writing at this time was to use the end of a line as an end stop, but without attaching any closing punctuation. The next line will most always begin with a capital letter, but the close of the previous line will not have a period. In other instances, especially the letters of Maria Grace Andrews Saffery and Jane Attwater Blatch and the diaries of Anne Cator Steele and Jane Attwater Blatch, periods between sentences can be few and far between. For the most part, these sentences have been left as they are; in certain instances periods have been silently added to avoid confusion for the reader. In a related issue, capital letters have been silently added to the beginning of some sentences that follow a closing period but begin without a capital letter. Another common practice in the manuscripts in these volumes is the inconsistent use of quotation marks to set off quoted material. In most instances in which quoted material has been inserted into the original text, only one quotation mark has been used, sometimes at the beginning of the quotation and sometimes at the end, leaving the placement of the other quotation mark to the judgement of the reader. The locations of the missing quotation marks are easily ascertained and have been added silently to the text. As a general rule, the use of punctuation in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century letters varied widely from writer to

writer, and even among well-educated writers was generally loosely employed. In some cases, punctuation is virtually non-existent, in others widely inconsistent. Dashes represent almost any punctuation mark, such as commas, semicolons and periods. I have reproduced the actual punctuation of these manuscripts except when the absence of a punctuation mark or the actual mark used by the writer creates undue difficulty for the reader. In some cases, especially the letters of Maria Grace Saffery, over-punctuation occurs in a way that hinders the flow of the prose; in these instances, certain commas, semicolons, colons and dashes have been silently removed. Editorial comments within the diary entries appear in italics inside square brackets. In the case of the opening page of the Anne Whitaker diary, the italicized comments are by her, not the editor, and do not appear inside square brackets.

Some of the copy-texts of the poetry from the manuscript sources have required silent emendations in order to create a text consistent with the author's published poems or standard poetic conventions for the first half of the nineteenth century. Some punctuation has been added silently, a few spellings modernized or made consistent with other spellings of the same word, some capitalizations standardized when glaringly inconsistent, missing apostrophes for possessives and contractions added, ampersands replaced by 'and', and superscripted letters regularized. Abbreviated words, such as *y<sup>e</sup>*, *y<sup>n</sup>*, and *y<sup>t</sup>*, etc, have been replaced by the actual word ('the', 'then' and 'that', etc), and the long 'f' replaced by 's'.

All manuscript locations provided in the notes have been taken from calendars created by the editor, copies of which are now available at the Angus Library and in the main reading room, Special Collections, Bodleian Library.

Biblical quotations are from the King James Version, the version used by all the women included in these volumes.

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The poems that appear in Volume 5 are from both published and unpublished sources. Some poems appeared in only one printed source; other poems appeared in multiple print sources. All known published versions of a poem have been cited in the bibliographic endnote for that poem. About half the poems in this volume are from manuscript sources only. In some cases, only one manuscript copy of a poem exists; in others, two or more copies exist. As a general rule, if a poem exists in both a printed and manuscript form, the printed version has been used as the copy-text. In all cases, whenever a poem has appeared in more than one version, whether printed or manuscript, all substantive variants from the copy-text have been duly noted. Unless otherwise noted, all poems are autographs. All references to the Reeves Collection are from the materials in the

Bodleian Library; references to the Saffery Papers, Saffery/Whitaker Papers and the Attwater Papers are from materials in the Angus Library. All locations of manuscripts provided in the notes have been taken from calendars created by the editor, copies of which are now available at the Angus Library and in the main reading room, Special Collections, Bodleian Library.

The following abbreviations appear in the textual notes for Volume 5:

- 1790 *Cheyt Sing* (London: J. Woodhouse, 1790)
- 1802 *Biblical Magazine*, 2 (1802)
- 1804 *Theological and Biblical Magazine*, 4 (1804)
- 1810 *Baptist Magazine*, 2 (1810)
- 1811 *Baptist Magazine*, 3 (1811)
- 1828 *A New Selection of Hymns* (London: the Proprietors; J. Haddon, 1828)
- 1834 Maria Grace Saffery, *Poems on Sacred Subjects* (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1834)
- 1842 John Leifchild, *Original Hymns: Adapted to General Use and Special Occasions* (London: Ward & Co., 1842)

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The letters that appear in Volume 6 have come from the Saffery/Whitaker Papers in the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford, and the Reeves Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

All the known letters composed by Maria Grace Andrews Saffery and Anne Andrews Whitaker are included in this volume, except for a few undated letters of Whitaker that can be found in the Reeves Collection, Box 14, Bodleian. The Saffery/Whitaker Papers, acc. 128, contains a set of letters by Jane Saffery Whitaker to her mother, Maria Grace Saffery, mostly from the 1830s and '40s; another set of sixteen letters by Whitaker to her mother, composed between 1835 and 1849, as well as a collection of letters to Saffery by her other children (and some of Anne Whitaker's children) can also be found in the Saffery/Whitaker Papers, acc. 142, II.B.11–17. In this same box is a set of letters to Saffery, many written by her son, P. J. Saffery, concerning the publication of her *Poems* in 1834 (acc. 142, II.D.3). Because of the length of the volume, these letters to Maria Grace Saffery were not included. The Saffery/Whitaker and Reeves Collections at the Angus Library and the Bodleian, however, provide rich resources for further exploration of the Victorian generation of both the Saffery and Whitaker families. The Saffery/Whitaker Papers, acc. 128, Angus Library, contain more than 1,000 letters, all from the correspondence of Jane Saffery Whitaker between 1820 and 1876; another 586 letters between the children of Maria Grace Saffery can be found in the Saffery/Whitaker Papers, acc. 126; and finally, another 300 letters between these same children, as well as their Whitaker

cousins, can be found in the Reeves Collection, Box1/2, and Boxes 9–11, Box 17/1–2, 7–9, Box 19/3/(d.–g.), Box 20/2, 22/5, and 23/10, Bodleian.

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*The Noble Enthusiast*, which begins Volume 7, first appeared as a three-volume novel bound in one volume in June 1792. Maria Grace Andrews left Isleworth in late December 1791 for Salisbury, leaving her sister Anne and her father in charge of seeing the novel through the press. The compositors at the Minerva Press were infamous for their sloppy work, and this novel shows numerous signs of inattention. Anne proofed the novel and added an errata page in late spring 1792. All errata noted by Anne have been added to the text in this edition and noted at the foot of the page. Unfortunately, Anne did not correct all the errors in the original proofs. Some were particularly glaring, such as the inconsistent spelling of ‘Beaufort’ and ‘Beauford’, ‘Asser’ and ‘Assar’, ‘Switzerland’ and ‘Switzer-land’, ‘sympthyzing’ and ‘sympathizing’, to name a few. All such discrepancies have been standardized and, along with other corrections and alterations to the text, noted at the foot of the page. In the original text, the poetic inscriptions at the beginning of each chapter were set in quotation marks. Those marks have been removed in this edition. Readers of the Minerva edition of the novel would have had considerable difficulty at times separating speakers within a dialogue due to the absence of quotation marks to set off spoken lines. This edition has corrected these omissions and clarified the dialogue throughout the novel. One reason for some of the confusion (beyond the carelessness of the compositors or the writer herself) was the decision (not completely uncommon at this time) to limit the use of quotation marks to the beginning and end of a dialogue and the use of parentheses to separate speakers from the dialogue. In the current edition, all dialogue has been converted to modern practice: the parentheses have been replaced by quotation marks and other punctuation, and all necessary quotation marks have been inserted in an effort to keep the speakers distinct and the conversation understandable. For example, this original dialogue,

“Surely, (she exclaimed, roused from a short stupefaction, by the loud bursting of the thunder) surely all the terrible of nature is at war.”

“Fear not, my love, (returned her brother) thou art innocent, and the Almighty is over us.”

now reads as follows:

“Surely,” she exclaimed, roused from a short stupefaction, by the loud bursting of the thunder, “surely all the terrible of nature is at war.”

“Fear not, my love,” returned her brother, “thou art innocent, and the Almighty is over us.”

In many instances, the opening or ending quotation mark in a dialogue or quotation has been inadvertently omitted, and in a few cases, both marks are missing. In other instances, the author has embedded one narrative within another, a common practice of the eighteenth-century novel, and used single quotation marks to denote the inside narrative. Unfortunately, in many of these instances, the separation of the two narratives is soon lost due to the inconsistent (and at time non-) use of the single and double quotation marks. This edition has clarified these narratives by maintaining a consistent and accurate use of the two quotation marks. In the novel one-sentence paragraphs abound; most have been retained, but where a paragraph has been interrupted solely for the purpose of inserting or, in some cases, completing a spoken sentence by a character, the break has been omitted. The other works published in this volume have required few editorial emendations.

The following abbreviations appear in the textual notes for Volume 7:

- 1792 *The Noble Enthusiast; A Modern Romance* (London: William Lane, 1792)  
 1797a *The Path to Happiness, Explored and Illustrated* (London: printed by Jacques & Thomas, 1797)  
 1797b *The Happiness of having God for a Friend in Time of Trial, or the History of Mrs. Wilkins. Addressed to Pregnant Women* (London: Jacques & Thomas, 1797)  
 1807a *Plain Truth for Plain People. In Three Dialogues, between Joseph Chisel and Thomas Wood*, 2nd edn (London: printed by C. & R. Baldwin, 1807)  
 1807b *The Warning. Recommended to the Serious Attention of all Christians, and Lovers of their Country* (Philadelphia, PA: Kimber, Conrad, & Co., 1807)  
 1810 *Instructive Hints, in Easy Lessons, for Children* (Utica, NY: printed by Seward & Williams, 1810)  
 1817 *Religion without Learning; or, The History of Susan Ward* (Chelsea: Tilling & Hughes, [c. 1817])

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Some of the selections published in Volume 8 are from printed sources, and have been cited accordingly in the notes. The remaining selections are from manuscript materials in the Reeves Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford; the Steele Collection, Attwater Papers, Saffery Papers and the Saffery/Whitaker Papers, Angus Library, Oxford; and the collections of the Bristol Baptist College Library, Bristol. These materials are autographs unless otherwise noted.

The diaries of Frances Ryland, Sophia Williams and Anne Whitaker are essentially fair copies, with entries written on Sundays (and other days when necessary) in a neat, readable hand into a large bound volume or thin, bound chapbooks (some without covers now). These diaries required few editorial emendations. The diaries of Anne Cator Steele, Elizabeth Saffery and Jane Attwater Blatch were recorded primarily on a daily basis, and are clearly spontaneous

writings, with the spellings, punctuation and overall handwriting reflecting such immediacy. The diaries of Steele and Blatch are very difficult to read at times, not only because the paper has deteriorated in many instances, but because each woman wrote in a small, cramped hand, with one line following the other with almost no visible white space between lines, nor any margins. In most cases, there are no headings whatsoever; new entries sometimes begin at the left-hand margin, but in most cases they simply begin where one entry ends, wherever that might be on the page or the line. In the diaries, the writers attached dates in a variety of ways to each entry. In some cases these dates are complete, but in most cases incomplete; missing days, dates and years have been added by the editor in square brackets. Throughout the selections in this volume, references to scripture texts and hymns abound. The editor has attempted to identify each reference, though some that appear frequently have not been cited in each instance.

The following abbreviations appear in the textual notes for Volume 8:

- 1764 *The Christian's Magazine*, 4 (1764)
- 1765 *The Christian's Magazine*, 6 (1765)

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Maria Grace Saffery (1772–1858) and Anne Whitaker (1774–1865)

The second set of four volumes in this series is dominated by the writings of two sisters, Maria Grace Andrews Saffery and Anne Andrews Whitaker. Volume 5 contains more than 230 poems, published and unpublished, of Saffery, along with a small collection of poems by Whitaker and Jane Saffery Whitaker (1805–84), Saffery's daughter and Whitaker's stepdaughter. Volume 6 is comprised of all the letters that passed between the two sisters, 1788–1846; a small collection of letters by Mary Egerton Scott to Maria, Anne, and their mother (1788–95); some forty letters addressed to Maria Saffery from Richard Ryland, his wife Harriet, his daughter Harriet and son Croft, 1805–14; as well as a large number of letters that passed between Maria and Anne and various members of their immediate family and close friends, including a surprising letter to Anne Whitaker by the poet Ann Taylor of Ongar in 1812.<sup>1</sup> Volume 7 contains the romance novel, *The Noble Enthusiast* (1792), composed by a nineteen-year-old Maria Grace Andrews and attributed to her for the first time in this series, and in Volume 8 can be found the surviving portions of Anne Andrews Whitaker's diary, 1795–99 and 1839–51.

Previously published biographical accounts of Maria Saffery and Anne Whitaker, like the accounts of all the other women writers who appear in this series, are inconsistent and often incorrect.<sup>2</sup> To his credit, John Julian, in his *Dictionary of Hymnology* (1892), attributed *Cheyt Sing* (1790) to Saffery and a romance novel (though he did not name the novel); nevertheless, he misidentified her as the daughter of Joseph Horsey of Portsmouth, confusing her, of course, with John Saffery's first wife, Elizabeth Horsey.<sup>3</sup> The *DNB* correctly placed her birth in Newbury, Berkshire, but identified her as the daughter of William Andrews of Stroud Green, Berkshire. Instead, Maria and Anne were the daughters of James (b. 1746) and Mary Andrews (c. 1748–91). William Andrews (b. 1743) was Maria's uncle, he and James being the sons of William and Sarah Andrews of

Shaw, near Newbury. Two of the younger William's children, William (1765–1830) and Harriet (1769?–1830), appear in several of the letters in Volume 6.<sup>4</sup> James and his brother were relations of Sir Joseph Andrews II (1727–1800) of nearby Shaw House. On Sir Joseph's death in December 1800, the Shaw estate and the title was inherited by his nephew Joseph, the son of his half-brother, the writer James Pettit Andrews (1737–97). Sir Joseph II and his wife were known to Marianna Attwater of Bodenham in the 1760s, as was the Harding family of Salisbury. Marianna's poem from 1768, 'To Lady Andrews with a Present of Netting,' is written from the persona of a Miss Harding, who is actually Mary Harding, daughter of Samuel Harding of Salisbury (d. 1798).<sup>5</sup> Mary Harding married James Andrews of Newbury in 1770, and they would have two daughters, Maria Grace (christened 30 November 1772) and Anne (born 23 June 1774, christened on 17 October 1774), both at Greenham, Berkshire.<sup>6</sup> Another heir of Shaw House, Joseph Andrews III (1768–1822), and his wife, Elizabeth Ann Hunt (1771–1822), were also known to Maria and Anne Andrews and appear in the correspondence in Volume 6.<sup>7</sup> The two sisters would continue to pay visits to their cousins at Shaw into the 1820s.

Little is known of the early years of the Andrews sisters. At some point during the mid-1780s, James Andrews moved his family from Newbury to Isleworth, where they lived in the old Manor House 'opposite the Mill', the location to which many of the early letters in Volume 6 are addressed. Mr Andrews operated the mill, employing several men, some of whom appear in the correspondence in Volume 6. In September 1794 the mill burned,<sup>8</sup> but it was insured and rebuilt, with Andrews continuing to operate it until c. 1804, when he retired to the West Country to live near his two daughters. Mary Andrews died sometime in 1791, and it does not appear that James Andrews ever remarried. Given the fact that she operated a boarding school for girls, it seems likely that Mrs Andrews, like so many of the women in these volumes, also attended a boarding school. Like Frances Ryland, Elizabeth Coltman, Maria Saffery, Anne Whitaker, and possibly Sophia Williams, Mary Andrews put to work whatever education she had acquired (which, given the precociousness of her two daughters, must have been fairly exceptional), opening a boarding school for girls in the Manor House sometime in the 1780s. Not only did she bequeath a love of education to her two daughters, but also a love of literature. Both girls were composing poetry in their teens, with Maria Grace completing *Cheyt Sing* by the age of fifteen and *The Noble Enthusiast* before her twentieth year.<sup>9</sup> The poem was published in London (and sold in Salisbury) in 1790, and dedicated to the liberal Whig MP, Charles James Fox.<sup>10</sup> Singh, Raja of Benares, refused to pay the tribute Warren Hastings and the East India Company required of him, and he was accordingly removed from power and placed under arrest in September 1781. Upon his release, Singh gathered his forces and waged a brief war against Hastings and

the Company's army, but was defeated; he escaped again and eventually settled in Gwalior, where he died in 1810. His treatment by Hastings was one of the reasons for the latter's impeachment by parliament in 1787, the same year Maria Grace Andrews composed her poem. She makes no effort to hide her sympathy with Singh or her dislike of Hastings, concluding her poem with a plea for more humane policies toward the people of India by the East India Company and the British army, basing her argument on Christian virtue and compassion as well as British ideals of liberty and equal justice.

At some point in the mid-1780s, Mary Andrews hired a young, well-educated assistant named Mary Egerton (c. 1765–1840).<sup>11</sup> Egerton was the sister of Thomas Egerton, a successful bookseller in Charing Cross who would later be the first publisher of the novels of Jane Austen. During her time at Isleworth, Egerton became a close confidant to Maria and Anne Andrews, serving as both teacher and friend. By summer 1788 she had left Isleworth and was living in Grovesnor Square, London, but she remained a surrogate 'sister' to the two Andrews sisters for many years thereafter. As Anglicans, none of the Andrewses appear to have imbibed any of the evangelical sentiments circulating in London in the late 1780s, largely generated by the preaching of such evangelical divines as William Romaine, John Newton and Thomas Scott. By 1789, both parents had been influenced by 'rational Christianity', with Mrs Andrews leaning toward Arianism and her husband espousing Deism. By 1789, however, Mary Egerton had become an outspoken evangelical, and her commitment is evident in her letters to Mrs Andrews in 1789 and 1790. While at Grosvenor Square, Mary Egerton attended the preaching of Newton at St Mary Woolnoth and, closer to home, Thomas Scott at the Lock Chapel. In 1790 Egerton moved into the Scott home in Chapel Street, near Grovesnor Square, serving as an assistant to Mrs Scott and, most likely, some form of governess/teacher to her four young children. Thomas Scott, besides his preaching at Lock Chapel and some other locations in London, was labouring under a severe deadline for the completion of his multi-volume *Commentary* on the Bible (published in 1792).

In September 1790, just a few months after Egerton had commenced her work in the Scott home, Mrs Scott died unexpectedly after a short illness. Mary Egerton returned to her previous residence in Grovesnor Square, leaving Thomas Scott not only in a state of grief but also in extreme desperation, enough so that he made a proposal of marriage to Egerton within a few weeks. It seems unlikely Egerton harbored the kind of heightened sentimentality and exaggerated notions of romantic love that her friend and former student would express in *The Noble Enthusiast*, for she accepted Scott's proposal, having known him only a short time and that in the position of pastor and employer, not lover. Her primary reason appears to have been the health of Thomas Scott. Egerton writes to Mary Andrews on Tuesday, 2 November, just two days prior to her wedding,

having 'agreed on Thursd. next to what I had before hoped to have deferred for a few Weeks more – Thinking the safety of a Person I so much esteem far beyond every other consideration'.<sup>12</sup> The marriage occurred less than two months after the death of the first Mrs Scott, at that time a serious breach of social decorum, though their close friends seemed to think the marriage the best solution to Rev. Scott's familial difficulties.<sup>13</sup> The next year brought about the similarly unexpected death of Mrs Andrews, leaving behind her two teenage daughters. Her death occurred as Maria was nearing the completion of *The Noble Enthusiast*, an event that may have left a mark upon the novel, for several young female characters have mothers who are deceased. When the novel was finished, Maria asked her sister and father to handle the final publication details with William Lane and the Minerva Press and departed for Salisbury for an extended stay with her grandparents, the Hardings. In the months that followed, Anne wrote the Preface, reviewed the proof sheets, corrected as much errata as she could, and sent her sister copies when the novel finally appeared in print in late June 1792.<sup>14</sup> Evidence from the letters suggests that Anne, possibly assisted by her father, continued her mother's school at Isleworth for the next two years, all prior to attaining her twentieth year, and that both sisters continued to correspond with Mary Egerton Scott, the latter becoming a significant spiritual influence in their lives after their mother's death.

Maria's interest in politics did not cease with her poem *Cheyt Sing* in 1790. Both sisters comment frequently on politics in their letters of the early 1790s. They supported the French Revolution and, in England, the efforts of the Whig reformers Charles James Fox and Charles Grey to bring about substantive parliamentary change. It is clear from their correspondence and Saffery's poems that they were also opponents of the slave trade and, in the 1820s, slavery itself. In May 1792 Anne commented on Charles Pigott's recently published satire, *The Jockey Club*, explaining to Maria that the author

openly supports Revolution principles, & in the most plausible manner reprobates our nobility and Government, by bringing forward the most abandon'd & worthless Characters of both parties, ministerial & antiministerial; from them inferring the venality and corruption of our Parliament, and the undue influence of the two superior Estates of the Kingdom – its apparent truth and impartiality, added to the enormous, y<sup>e</sup> almost diabolical crimes of the wretches it thus exposes to public view render it a very dangerous & inflammatory work.<sup>15</sup>

On 7 January 1793, Maria denounced the motives of the new Loyalist Associations being formed in London and nearly all the provinces, believing their primary aim to stifle the activities and writings of political reformers, though she is not entirely sure all who are writing under the banner of reform (and she probably means Thomas Paine) have the best of motives either. 'Vice is now put

into action, by opportunity', she writes. 'She actuates the Courtier, & the *Patriot associations loyal and illoyal* writings *legal and illegal* I am wearied with political artifice; and am ready to conclude that the whole *head*, is sick; and y<sup>e</sup> whole *heart* is faint.' Though an advocate of reform, Maria, having only recently been introduced into the community of religious dissent, feared that extremists on *both* sides of the political spectrum were capable of doing great harm:

The *rage* for loyal association *may* make us laugh: but 'tis well if rebellion doth not *make* us *weep* & I cannot but think, those busied in traducing state, & villifying power, would more wisely adopt the Psalmists language; and say, "Give the King, thy judgements, O God! and Thy righteousness, to the Kings Son."<sup>16</sup>

Anne's response on 11 February certified her agreement with her sister's political sentiments, suggesting such ideals might be of help to the 'Mushroom Sages of the present Day whether their ambitious vanity enlists them under the puissant Banner of Modern Patriotism or teaches them to emulate the sounding Titles of loyal Subjects Bulwarks of the State Pillars of the Throne'. She warns that any king who trusts in such 'loyal subjects', like the unfortunate King of France, might want to be wary of their 'deceitful strength'.<sup>17</sup> That December Olaudah Equiano (better known then as Gustavus Vassa) (c.1745–1797), a former slave in the Caribbean and the American South, came to Salisbury promoting his book, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789), one of the earliest accounts by a former slave of the horrors of the Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century. He visited Maria's grandfather, Samuel Harding, and dined in the Saffery home, another indication of the attitude toward abolition exhibited by the Baptist community in Salisbury at that time.

In May 1794, Elizabeth Saffery travelled to Portsmouth to visit her parents. Maria writes to her on 30 May, informing her of church news and adding some pertinent comments about the status of England's hostilities against France. Apparently Maria was still harboring suspicions that the war was not entirely legitimate, an opinion she must have shared with Saffery. 'There has been here, a great deal of noisy triumph about our reported success in the hostile Field', she writes. 'O my dear Friend, y<sup>e</sup> is an awful truth, "The Sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination" it is evidently so with y<sup>e</sup> thanksgiving of the multitude & alas!'<sup>18</sup> That autumn, the two sisters were still actively monitoring the political scene in England and France, dropping references in their letters to the Pop-Gun Plot against the life of King George III and the scenes of the Reign of Terror in France, invoking a statement from Anne that might have provoked the authorities if seen by the wrong person, given the fact that informants hired by the government were actively seeking those who might be guilty of 'compassing or imagining the death of the king'.<sup>19</sup> 'I do not see that y<sup>e</sup> assassination of y<sup>e</sup> King', Anne asserts, 'would be the least effectual to the subversion of the pre-

sent government or to the redress of any public grievances'. Her opinion of the state of affairs in Europe was even worse, displaying 'a scene of horror almost unparallel'd in the Page of History'.<sup>20</sup> Anne returned to Isleworth in the autumn of 1795 and continued to send political updates to her sister in Salisbury. In early December she provided commentary on the recent meetings held by the London Corresponding Society and others sympathetic to reform at Copenhagen Fields on 26 October and at Hackney on 21 November, the latter a protest against the Two Bills, or what would become known as the 'Gagging Acts', two pieces of legislation that severely restricted political speech and public meetings held for political purposes.<sup>21</sup> After 1795, political comments surface occasionally in the letters, but nothing like the period 1790–95.

Though politics and novel writing appear often in the early correspondence of the two sisters, their growing attraction to evangelical Christianity (introduced to them by Thomas and Mary Scott) and Baptist nonconformity (initiated by their friendships with the Safferys of Salisbury and the Shovellers of London) will eventually supersede all other concerns. Maria and Anne may have met the Safferys prior to Maria's arrival in Salisbury in late December 1791, but it is clear from their correspondence that by the spring of 1792, the two sisters had become friends and correspondents of the Salisbury couple. John (1763–1825) and Elizabeth (1762–1798) Saffery left Portsmouth for Salisbury in early 1790. John had just been called as the new minister to the Baptist congregation in Brown Street, replacing the recently deceased Henry Philips, the close friend of Jane Attwater. How Maria first met the Safferys is unclear. Elizabeth Saffery's sister, Susanna Shoveller, lived in London with her husband, John, and their young children. It is possible the Andrews sisters first met the Safferys in 1791 through the Shovellers, who arrived that year from Portsmouth and took up residence in Upper Newman Street, not far from Grovesnor Square. The Shovellers appear to have met Thomas and Mary Scott that same year, thus creating the possibility that during a visit by the Safferys to London in late 1791, Maria and Anne Andrews met them in the home of the Shovellers in the presence of the Scotts.

The Safferys and Scotts, like the Steeles, Attwaters, and Whitakers, espoused an evangelical Calvinism (led among the Baptists by Andrew Fuller and John Saffery's friend, John Ryland, Jr) that one writer for the *Analytical Review* in 1791 described as a 'midway' point 'between Arminianism and Antinomianism', seeking 'to establish the true point of orthodoxy', much like Fuller believed he was doing for Calvinism in his influential work, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785).<sup>22</sup> Though not a Baptist, Mary Egerton Scott was nevertheless staunchly Calvinistic in her view of the doctrine of Christ, divine grace and the sovereignty of God, the same doctrines embraced by the Safferys and the congregation at Brown Street, and her influence upon the two sisters in spiritual matters was significant at this time, though ultimately it will be supplanted by that of the