

**SYDNEY SMITH**

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Sydney Smith by George W. E. Russell

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**GEORGE W. E. RUSSELL**

**SYDNEY SMITH**



*ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS*

*EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY*

*SYDNEY SMITH*

•The M Co. •

*ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS*

**SYDNEY SMITH**

BY

**GEORGE W. E. RUSSELL**

*New York*

**THE MACMILLAN COMPANY**

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## PREFACE

IN writing this Study of Sydney Smith, I have been working in a harvest-field where a succession of diligent gleaners had preceded me.

As soon as Sydney Smith died, his widow began to accumulate material for her husband's biography. She did not live to see the work accomplished, but she enjoined in her will that some record of his life should be written. The duty was undertaken by his daughter, Saba Lady Holland, who in 1855 published *A Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith*. To this memoir was subjoined a volume of extracts from his letters, compiled by his friend and admirer, Mrs. Austin.

For nearly thirty years Lady Holland's Memoir and Mrs. Austin's Selection of Letters together constituted the sole Biography of Sydney Smith, and they still remain of prime authority; but they are lamentably inaccurate in dates.

Lord Houghton's slight but vivid monograph was published in 1873. In 1884 Mr. Stuart Reid produced *A Sketch of the Life and Times of Sydney Smith*, in which he supplemented the earlier narrative with some traditions derived from friends then living, and "painted the figure of Sydney Smith against the background of his times." In 1898 the late Sir Leslie Stephen contributed an article on Sydney Smith to

the *Dictionary of National Biography*; but added little to what was already known.

On these various writings I have perforce relied, for their respective authors seemed to have exhausted all available resources. Lord Carlisle has some of Sydney Smith's letters at Castle Howard, and Lord Ilchester has some at Holland House; but both assure me that everything worth publishing has already been published.

I have, however, been more fortunate in my application to my cousin, Mr. Rollo Russell, and to four of Sydney Smith's descendants -- Mr. Sydney Holland, Mr. Holland-Hibbert of Munden, Miss Caroline Holland, and Mrs. Cropper of Ellergreen. To all these my thanks are due for interesting information, and access to valuable records. In common with all who use the Reading-Room of the British Museum, I am greatly indebted to the skill and courtesy of Mr. G. F. Barwick.

So much for the biographical part of my work. In the critical part I have relied less on authority, and more on my own devotion to Sydney Smith's writings. That devotion dates from my schooldays at Harrow, and is due to the kindness of my father. He had known "dear old Sydney" well, and gave me the *Collected Works*, exhorting me to study them as models of forcible and pointed English. From that day to this, I have had no more favourite reading.

G. W. E. R.

NOVEMBER 12, 1904.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I	
EDUCATION — SALISBURY PLAIN — EDINBURGH. . . .	1
CHAPTER II	
"THE EDINBURGH REVIEW" — LONDON — "MORAL PHILOSOPHY" . . . . .	24
CHAPTER III	
"PETER PLYMLEY" . . . . .	45
CHAPTER IV	
FOSTON — "PERSECUTING BISHOPS" — BENCH AND BAR. . .	77
CHAPTER V	
"CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION" — BRISTOL — COMBE FLOREY — REFORM — PROMOTION . . . . .	106
CHAPTER VI	
ST. PAUL'S — THE PARALLELOGRAM — "ARCHDEACON SINGLETON" — COLLECTED WORKS . . . . .	147
CHAPTER VII	
CHARACTERISTICS — HUMOUR — POLITICS — CULTURE — THEORIES OF LIFE — RELIGION. . . . .	193
APPENDICES . . . . .	227
INDEX . . . . .	235