GLIMPSES OF LIFE IN LIVERPOOL DURING THE REIGN OF GEORGE IV.

Contributed by the late Lawrence Hall.

The letters from which the following extracts are taken formed part of a collection left by my maternal grandmother, Mrs. Mary Holt, who died in 1875. The letters, about two hundred in number, were written between the years 1798 and 1847 by various members of her own and her late husband's families. The earliest record known to me of my Holt ancestors is in the Poll Book of a Liverpool election in 1761, when Thomas Holt, merchant, is marked as having voted for Sir William Meredith. In the first Liverpool Directory (1766) there is no Thomas Holt among the other Holts in the alphabetical list, but following that list there is an unnumbered sheet between pages 32 and 33 containing some additional names among which is "Thomas Holt, Merchant, Pitt Street." The 1773 edition gives his residence as Cleveland Square, and in March of that year Thomas Holt (II) was born. The Directory of 1774 gives Thomas Holt's address as Duke Street, where he died in 1799 aged 63. Thomas Holt (II) removed from the Duke Street house to Hope Street, near the corner of Maryland Street, about 1812, and died there in 1845 aged 72. His son William Holt (1807-1853) was my grandfather and the writer or the recipient of many of these letters during two long absences from Liverpool. While there are many descendants of Thomas Holt (I)

1 In a letter written by a great-grandson of Thomas Holt (I) in 1881 reference is made to an old paper that had been lost, which described the father of Thomas Holt (I) "as of some place in Leicestershire."
now living, I only know of two of the male sex who have the surname Holt, and they reside in Western Australia.

Quite apart from its increase in size, the Liverpool of the time of these letters was a very different place from the town we know. The Corporation from early times had itself filled up all vacancies arising from death or resignation, and it derived part of its income from the fines paid by persons desiring to become freemen, a body who were the only voters for the two members who represented Liverpool in Parliament. Sons of former freemen were admitted on payment of a small fine, but others had to pay a substantial sum. In some cases employers were not voters, while the men they employed were freemen and had votes. Travelling was done on horseback or by horse-drawn vehicles, and in some places by the passenger boats on canals. At a later period than this my mother used to come into town from Seaforth, part of the way by boat on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. Letters between Liverpool and London cost eleven pence for a single sheet of paper, and if a second sheet were enclosed there was an extra charge. There are frequent references in the letters to the sending of packages by friends who were travelling, and anyone going to London would either deliver them personally, leave them at some place previously arranged, or send them on by the London twopenny post for local letters. There were no public parks then; in fact there was no need for them, for any resident who was moderately active could get a country walk by walking out of the town. Wooden ships were still being built on the Liverpool side of the Mersey, and this partly accounts for the scarcity of really fine trees in the country round Liverpool to-day.

In 1822, shortly before his fifteenth birthday, William Holt became a lay student at Manchester College, York, one of the Nonconformist Academies established to
provide for dissenters the education which was denied to them at the English Universities by the prevailing theological tests. Later in the year James Martineau entered the college as a divinity student.

THOMAS HOLT to his son WILLIAM at YORK

"Liverpool, 19 October 1822."

"Last night we were at the theatre to see the new play of Kenilworth. Mrs. Bunn acquitted herself very well in the character of Queen Elizabeth, particularly in her representation of the violent gusts of passion and of vanity to which the Good Queen Bess was too prone. Vandenhoff did justice to Leicester, but the character is feebly drawn by the author of the play."

MARY ELLEN HOLT¹ to her brother WILLIAM at YORK.

"Liverpool, 3 November 1822."

"Papa took Mamma, Theodosia and myself to the play the other night to see Kenilworth. The scenery was beautiful and the play itself very pretty, though not so nice as the book, except the ending which is much better. They make the villain Varney drop through the trap door and Amy is after his death presented to the Queen by her husband the Earl of Leicester."

Scott's novel *Kenilworth* had been published the previous year. Mrs. Bunn is mentioned in Broadbent's *Annals of the Liverpool Stage* as being a member of the stock company at the Theatre Royal, Williamson Square, which now forms part of the premises of the Cold Storage Co. John M. Vandenhoff was of Dutch descent and born at Salisbury. He lived in Liverpool for a time, was also an opera singer and seems to have lectured on elocution. There is a portrait of him in *Annals of the Liverpool Stage*.

Mrs. THOMAS HOLT to her son WILLIAM at YORK.

"Liverpool, 12 December 1822."

"We had a most tremendous storm of wind on Thursday evening which lasted all night; it has been very fatal in many

¹ Born 1802.
instances, and in some cases there appears a particular inter­position of providence, for at Mr. Jackson’s at Wavertree and at Mr. Burns’ at the Park [Toxteth Park] near half of their houses were shaken to pieces with their chimneys falling through into their cellars, carrying all the floors in their way with them, and yet no one hurt at Mr. Burns’. Captain Duncan’s vessel with several more that were loading in the Princes Dock were damaged, but those in the river were in many instances run on shore or very much hurt. The night will never be forgot.”

This storm is not referred to in Gore’s *Annals* but it is mentioned in Thomas Fletcher’s *Autobiography*, page 129.

Thomas Holt, writing a few days later, tells William that “we are going to have a few whist playing friends to-night; Dr. Crompton, Mr. Blundell and others. Mr. Lace was to have been of the party but his daughters are giving a dance to the new married couple.” There is a reference to this wedding in an earlier letter to William Holt from one of his sisters: “Miss Clark was married last Tuesday week to Mr. Ambrose Lace. There were Mr. Lace’s, Mr. Hodson’s (who gave her away), Mr. Leyland’s and two other carriages at the wedding. After the marriage they breakfasted at Mrs. Clark’s and then set out for Cheltenham where they are to spend a month.” Mr. Joshua Lace, the father of the bride­groom, was a solicitor, and had been a partner of William Roscoe. William Holt was later articled to the firm of Lace & Co., whose office in 1823 was in Union Court, as now. Which Mr. Blundell was the whist player I cannot say, but there can be no doubt that the other guest was Dr. Peter Crompton of Eton House, Wavertree, who had come from Derby to Liverpool about 1798, was a friend of S. T. Coleridge and his family, and of whom Coleridge wrote, “Mrs. Crompton is an angel, and Dr. Crompton a truly honest and benevolent man, possessing good sense and a large portion of humour.”

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1 This marriage is referred to in *Liverpool Banks & Bankers*, by John Hughes.
Coleridge, writing to Southey in 1801, says, "Tell me when you set off and I will contrive to meet you at Liverpool, where if you are jaded with the journey, we can stay a day or two at Dr. Crompton's, and chat a bit with Roscoe and Curry, whom you will like as men far, far better than as writers." Picton says of Crompton that "his jolly rotund person was the incarnation of good humour," which seems to have survived repeated unsuccessful attempts to get into Parliament for Liverpool and other places. He does not appear to have practised much as a physician, except among those who could not afford to pay fees. His name is perpetuated by Crompton's Lane, near which he lived until his death in 1833.

According to Picton the first steam ferry boats on the Mersey were seen in 1817, and two years later the first steam-boat to cross the Atlantic reached Liverpool from New York; but steam travelling on land was not to come for some years. Early in 1824 a brother of Thomas Holt had died in Shrewsbury, and Mrs. Holt writes to her son William in York:

"Liverpool, 4 March 1824."

"Your Papa and Edward returned from Shrewsbury yesterday. The violent storm of hail and wind which they had to encounter from Chester on their return was so great that the coach was twice in great danger of being turned over owing to the leaders turning round, not being able to face the hail, which they say was as large as bullets. Then in crossing the river they experienced another escape, for after being on board the 'Vesuvius' steam boat for half an hour, they were obliged to be taken, with some difficulty, on board the 'Abbey' and were on board about an hour and a half before they got on shore, for they could not get to the steps at all, but flung a rope to shore which was caught by some sailors; and so the boat was drawn

1 The friendship between the Cromptons and the Coleridge family continued through many years, Mrs. Coleridge and her children visiting Eton House and the Cromptons going to Keswick and calling at "Dove Cottage," Grasmere, on the way. "Curry" may be Dr. James Currie (1756-1805), the biographer of Burns.
to the pier, where they were obliged to climb up the wall. They were both starved and very much fatigued when they arrived home."

The ‘Abbey’ must have taken about an hour longer than usual to cross the river, as an advertisement in Gore’s Directory for 1823 announces that the ‘Abbey’ and ‘Vesuvius’ are regularly plying in rotation every half hour from the Parade Slip. The first floating stage was not to appear until 1847.

Although Thomas Holt is described in the Directory as a merchant, he was also a shipowner, as were many merchants at that period, and there are references from time to time in his letters and those of his family to matters connected with his occupation. Soon after his son had gone to York he wrote, "It was my intention to have written by Mr. Wood but was very much engaged with the 'Endeavour'." Apart from his regular business he seems to have had an interest in some steam packets trading between Liverpool and North Wales, for one of his daughters writes to her brother in April, 1823, "Papa and his partner in the Steam Packets have built and launched another steam boat called the 'Druid'." Among the Packets and Traders employed in the coasting trade given in the list in Gore’s Directory the ‘Druid’ and the ‘Cambria’ are named as sailing to Hoylake and Bagillt, the North Wales Packet Office, 20, James Street, being the agents, who are also in the list as managers of a packet sailing thrice weekly to Beaumaris and Bangor. Amongst the items of news in this letter is the announcement quoted from a monthly magazine that "Sir Walter Scott is going to publish another novel before May."

One of William’s sisters writing in April, 1824, says, "The Third Dragoon Guards arrived here on Saturday last. It is reported that they are come to put a stop to the Carpenters’ and Sawyers’ combinations, and indeed I think it is full time. You have probably seen in the
Mercury an account of their daring proceedings. There can be no business carried on whilst the men are masters; they however have brought it on themselves by bribing the men at elections and shewing them their consequence."

In the winter of 1823–24 the shipwrights had been on strike against a reduction of wages, and there had been violence and reports of intimidation. Among the free-men of Liverpool the ship carpenters of the south end were the most numerous section, and moreover they were so well organised that the result of an election was largely in their hands. About the beginning of the century the Liverpool shipwrights, through the local representatives, made their views known in Parliament in the debates preceding the passing of the Combination Act; and they were again active when that Act was repealed in 1825.

The letters to William Holt in York cease in June 1824, and after his return to Liverpool he was articled to the well-known firm of solicitors, Lace, Miller and Lace, Union Court, and in consequence there is a gap of five years in the letters of the Holt family. In November 1829 William Holt went to London for further studies and to pass the necessary legal examination. Before he left Liverpool he had become engaged to the eldest daughter of George Lissant Cox (1782–1860), an iron merchant and nail manufacturer, and partner in the firm of Yates and Cox, the senior partner being Richard Vaughan Yates, who was later the founder of Princes Park. From November 1829 to March 1831 one hundred and five letters passed between the engaged couple, many of them written on double foolscap sheets of paper and often some of the pages have the writing crossed. The owners of these letters have kindly allowed me to make some extracts from them.

1 G. L. Cox was the grandfather of Geo. H. Cox (1848–1935) for many years the Chairman of the Salt Union, and uncle of Edward W. Cox (1826–1899) a member of the Historic Society.
WILLIAM HOLT to his father in LIVERPOOL.

"Hackney, 14 November 1829."

"I arrived here safe last night about six o'clock after a journey which was on the whole tolerably pleasant. You would hear from my brothers that everything was in time for the coach, and that they took up all my luggage without making any objection to its weight. The inside of the coach was full the whole of the way.

"We had rain during the whole of the journey to Knutsford, where it cleared up a little, and near that place we were rather alarmed by being stopped on the road by someone who informed us that a gentleman in his carriage had desired him to tell the driver of all the coaches, that he had just come from near Holmes Chapel, and that a bridge between that place and Lawton Gate was in a very dangerous condition and would probably be down before we could pass over. We had before observed everywhere on the road that the whole of the low part of the country was under water. The same story respecting the bridge was told us at three or four places, but an old woman assured us 'that it had been a bridge as long as she remembered and that was above sixty years, and what should it come down for now?' In a few minutes we were safely over it, and then all endeavoured to procure a sleep, in which I was less successful than I was at supper, which I enjoyed at Sandon about ten o'clock. The night was fine and we found it very close, travelling with one window down and the other half way down. I did not get above a few minutes sleep all night and was not sorry to see daylight, and in about a couple of hours sit down to breakfast at Northampton. As we approached London it grew dark, and as we passed through above a mile of streets lined with houses and shops I began to fear the coachman had forgotten to stop at Islington, but at length we stopped at the Inn there, where cousin Tom was waiting for me. We soon got all my luggage safely stowed in a coach, and it was well we did not go to the office in London, for the guard hinted to me as I was going to pay him, that if we had they would have charged three pence per pound for all above thirty pounds."

During William Holt's stay in London there were two families keeping him informed about affairs in Liverpool,

1 Holmes Chapel, about ten miles south of Knutsford.
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and as there was considerable variation in the ages of his correspondents, so is there a great variety in the nature of the items of news and also in their importance. At this time the Holts were living in Hope Street and the Cox family in Renshaw Street, but Mr. G. L. Cox was then building a house near Breck Road to which they moved later in the year. The following letter was written when the writer was within a few days of her thirteenth birthday.

ANNE COX to WILLIAM HOLT in LONDON.

"Liverpool, 8 January 1830."

"Edward and Nathaniel have been to Otterspool to skate. It is thawing now very fast and I am sorry for it; I wanted to go to see the gentlemen skate at Otterspool; it makes me think of last Christmas when you, Mary, Eliza and myself went there and what beautiful slides Eliza and I made. Do you remember it, and the pleasant but cold walk we had home? . . .

"There have been great alterations in Liverpool since you left. They have finished all the railings round St. Luke's Church, and taken the wooden railings away. They have finished Leece Street and it looks very well. The house at the Breck is nearly up to the second storey. They have pulled down two or three of those houses at the bottom of Renshaw Street and are making shops of them. They are making a house in Bold Street into a shop. They are going to stucco Castle Street and have begun at that end by Mr. Benson the grocer's shop."

The Stranger in Liverpool (1840) says of St. Luke's Church, "The first stone of this fine structure was laid so long ago as April 9, 1811, . . . but owing to a variety of unavoidable protractions the building was not consecrated for public worship until so late a period as January 12, 1831." The architect was John Foster, the town surveyor. According to an advertisement in Gore's Directory (1834), the shop of Richard Benson, Grocer, was 27, Castle Street, at the corner of Derby Square.
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MARY COX to WILLIAM HOLT.

“Liverpool, 3 February 1830.”

“Father has just told me (¾ past 2) that Mr. Ashton Yates is going to London this evening and that if I liked he would take a letter to you. . . . I am going to-morrow with Miss A. to Otterspool. I am afraid I shall have a cold and comfortless walk. . . . George is waiting very impatiently for this; I must reluctantly finish.”

“Liverpool, 6 February 1830.”

“Instead of having a dull, cold, comfortless walk on Thursday I had a most delightful one. It was a most beautiful day; the sun shone most delightfully; I really did enjoy myself and wished you could have been with me. George and Holbrook Gaskell went with us. We went to the other pool, the one before you get to Mr. Moss’s house. When the others were skating we thought we would go and explore, and notwithstanding the papers which were fastened on the trees to prevent people going unless they had permission from Mr. Moss, we went through that little gate and onwards until we came to the other pool. I was very much pleased with the way the walks were laid out; I had no idea it was such a beautiful place. I should like to see it in summer.”

John Moss (1782–1858) had purchased the Otterspool estate about 1811. Bennison’s map of Liverpool dated 1846 shows two pools in the estate, a small one quite near the shore, and a much larger one in the hollow, where the lily pond is now. The drive to the house then went through the plantation above the pool, and its course can still be partly traced where the footpath is now. The making of the Cheshire Lines Railway about 1862 led to the filling up of the large pool and diverting the drive so as to pass under the line. Holbrook Gaskell (1813–1909) who later lived for many years at Woolton Woods was at this time an apprentice with the firm of Yates and Cox.

The making of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway does not seem to have been looked upon as a matter of

1 John Moss was an active promoter of the early railway schemes.
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great importance by the writers of these letters, and although work at Chat Moss had commenced in June, 1826, it was not until 1829 that any reference to the projected railway is made.

MARY COX to WILLIAM HOLT in LONDON.

"Liverpool, 7 December 1829."

"Mr. Walker took us in his gig, we went round by Mr. Rawdon's into the West Derby Road and turned round towards Gregson's Well, then went along to Edge Hill, round Wavertree, and up by the pool past the top of the green lane, past the stile, and stopped at the rail road where Mr. W. and Jane got out of the gig to look at it."

THOMAS HOLT to WILLIAM HOLT.

"Liverpool, 13 January 1830."

"The public here have the Rail Road Mania, though there are symptoms of convalescence; the shares in the Liverpool having declined about £20 from the highest point, and more sanity exhibiting itself with regard to the proposed extensions. I understand the Marquis is likely to come to some understanding so as to convert the Grand Trunk into a Railway and connect it with the Liverpool. Very few Rail roads will pay the expense of their formation. None certainly except where there is a constant carriage to a great extent. Even the Liverpool and Manchester will never pay 5 per cent."

MARY COX to WILLIAM HOLT in LONDON.

"Liverpool, 8 June 1830."

"I went yesterday morning with father and aunt to see the rail road and Botanic Gardens. We went inside that place at the top of Crabtree Lane where they have the things for the rail road; we saw the different kind of carriages that are to go on the road. I had not any idea that they had been so handsome or so large and convenient. I suppose one or two of them are to be tried next Thursday."

The original Botanic Gardens were opened in 1802 on land near the top of Myrtle Street that had been part of the Moss Lake fields. William Roscoe had taken a
leading part in their foundation. On summer evenings a band played for the benefit of the proprietors and their friends. In 1836 the gardens were removed to Edge Lane and in 1841 were transferred to the Corporation. Crabtree Lane is now called Falkner Street.

There is an article on "Early Railways in South-West Lancashire" by W. H. Williams in volume 74 of these Transactions, which gives an account of the first Railway Offices, with illustrations. The article states that "The first entire trip, Liverpool to Manchester, prior to the official opening of the line, was made on 14 June, 1830, on the occasion of a board meeting held at the latter town. The train . . . arrived at Manchester in less than two hours; the return journey to Liverpool was accomplished in about one and a half hours."

THOMAS HOLT to WILLIAM HOLT in LONDON.

"Liverpool, 19 June 1830."

"The trial made at the Railway last Monday will have been reported in the London papers. I think the shareholders are anxious to raise the prices, but it is not probable that they will succeed. There are many other similar undertakings in this neighbourhood, one from St. Helens to Runcorn gap; another from Wigan to Newton. A third from Newton to Preston, and the Grand Junction from hence to Birmingham. I have taken no shares in any, not expecting they will succeed, and I find that the people of Manchester are generally of the same opinion."

Mrs. HOLT to WILLIAM HOLT in LONDON.

"Liverpool, 9 August 1830."

"Mr. and Mrs. S—— are returned from Canada and we took them to see the people return from an excursion on the rail road from Newton. There were about sixty got off the carriages in the yard by the Mill in Crabtree Lane; they seemed annoyed by the gravel and dust, but they came at about fifteen miles an hour."

The Railway was formally opened on 15 September, 1830.
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WILLIAM HOLT to MARY COX.

"London, 26 October 1830."

"I have not yet made up my mind whether I will come back direct or by Manchester and the railroad. I have been thinking of it. They will I believe take about the same time. The objection to the railroad is the uncertainty of getting a place, and I should not go by it if the weather were very frosty, as I shall not trust quite in the safety of some parts of the road till it has stood a hard winter."

MARY COX to WILLIAM HOLT in LONDON.

"Liverpool, 17 Feb. 1831."

"On Wednesday I went with Mrs. Walker to the railroad; we saw one set of carriages go out and one come in. I was quite astonished to see the alteration which there is about the Botanic Garden, it is high time they should be removed. The top of Mount Pleasant appeared quite a strange place to me; everything about seemed altered since I was last there with you. Churches almost rise as soon as houses; on my way home I was surprised to see one almost finished near Low Hill, and a very nice one too; they spring up like mushrooms."

In order to have all the references to the new Railway together, several letters written in the early part of 1830 have been deferred. The next letter to be quoted was written by a boy aged 10 years.

NATHANIEL COX to WILLIAM HOLT in LONDON.

"Liverpool, 9 March 1830."

"As this is the first time I ever wrote a letter I hope you will excuse mistakes. It is top time now. I have been to the house at the Breck and we are going to call it Spring Bank. Edward and I have had such beautiful skating at Otterspool three days, and Mr. Moss gave all the young gentlemen their dinners on the ice, and all the young ladies a cake."

I do not know what regulates the opening of the season

1 He did not however return to Liverpool until the spring of 1831.
2 Springbank Road, Postal District 4, is on the site of the house and garden.
for tops, but in 1938 I saw some in Roscoe Street as early as 3 February.

ROBERT GLADSTONE, Jr. to WILLIAM HOLT in LONDON.

"Liverpool, April 1830."

"I received your most interesting note this morning and sent your parcel to Brunswick Street\(^1\) post haste. We are all going on in the same jig jog manner, and Jos.\(^2\) is as great a nuisance as I could possibly wish for. He and I are occasionally good friends, and as often bad ones. The old boy goes to Cheltenham on Tuesday for three weeks or a month. He is very busy at present and Tuesday last I had the pleasure of being with him from eleven to six. Peel is of course making great progress in London; Miller proceeds amiably without him. . . . Jones and Son and Dod are stuccoing their shops in Castle Street, and the others talk of doing it. . . . Our church in the square will be finished by the time you return, as we have now got the portico up. It looks magnificent. . . . Are the oysters good in London? I ought to remind you that this is the last month you will have an opportunity of sending a barrel to your sincere friend,

"Robert Gladstone Jr."

This Robert Gladstone, Jr. was a nephew of Sir John Gladstone (1764–1851) and a great-uncle of the recently deceased Robert Gladstone who was a Vice-President of this Society. He did not remain in the legal profession, but went into business in Manchester, where he died in 1872. The church referred to will be St. Catherine's, Abercromby Square, of which the Stranger in Liverpool for 1840 says, "In point of architectural beauty it is, perhaps, not surpassed by any other ecclesiastical building in town." The church was consecrated in January, 1831, and is another example of the work of John Foster. I have found nothing in these letters to show that the concluding sentence in this last letter led to any sequel.

\(^1\) The office of Yates and Cox was in Brunswick Street.
\(^2\) Joshua Lace.
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JOHN HOLT ¹ to his brother WILLIAM HOLT in LONDON.

“Liverpool, 7 June 1830.”

“Papa has launched a Barque called the ‘Theodosia’ which took place on the 22 ultimo. She is a beautiful vessel and is now finished coppering and gone into the George’s Dock to-day. There was a cold collation on board at the launch, and at night a dinner at the Mersey.² There were peas from Bordeaux and many other dainties. She measures 300 tons. . . . Bolton, Ogden & Co. refused the Town Dues last Saturday but one, and have since refused them to the amount of £150, when the Mayor’s carriage with the Mayor, Mr. Currie, the Collector of Town Dues, and the Town Clerk, came to the office and demanded payment of them, and they told them they would not pay them, and told them their grounds for not doing so. It is likely to come to trial, I believe at Lancaster. The Corporation have engaged the principal counsellors on this district, hoping to get it, but I should think they would not succeed, as Mr. Freme did not pay them the last seven years he was in business. . . . Bolton & Co. have now in dock the ‘Splendid,’ 640 tons burthen; she is a beautiful vessel and the largest in port.”

In the dispute about the Town Dues, Bolton, Ogden and Co. were supported by a committee of merchants presided over by Joseph Hornby, who not only questioned the legality of the dues, but claimed that they pressed heavily on certain articles, and that the numerous exemptions from payment operated unfairly, as freemen paid no dues. The trial did not come on until February, 1833, when the case came before the Lord Chief Justice, and the verdict was given in favour of the Corporation. The case might have been carried further, but the merchants, believing that legislation would soon remove some of their grievances and place both freemen and non-freemen on an equal footing, agreed to accept the verdict, each side paying their own costs.³ In 1835 the Municipal Reform

¹ John Holt, born 1812.
² Among the principal inns mentioned in the Stranger in Liverpool is the Mersey Hotel, Old Churchyard.
³ Touzeau’s Rise and Progress of Liverpool, pages 851–56.
Act was passed, and the old self-elected Council and the privileges of the freemen came to an end. Thomas Bolton was Mayor of the reformed Council in 1840. The Holt family were naturally much interested in this case as both Thomas Holt and Thomas Bolton had married daughters of the Rev. Robert Lewin, the minister of Renshaw Street Chapel.

In November, 1830, there was an election in Liverpool to fill the vacancy in the House of Commons caused by the fatal accident to William Huskisson when the Liverpool and Manchester Railway was opened the previous September. Both candidates, Denison and Ewart, were Whigs, and both were in favour of some measure of electoral reform. The poll was open for seven days and at the end of the fifth day Denison led by 12 votes, but Ewart finally had a majority of 29 votes. Prof. Ramsay Muir in his History of Liverpool says it "was perhaps the most flagrantly corrupt, on both sides, that had ever been fought in English politics."

MARY COX to WILLIAM HOLT in LONDON.

"Spring Bank, 27 November 1830."

"George¹ came home last Monday, very much to the surprise of us all. He had understood that an Independent candidate was going to come forward, and had come from Manchester to vote for him, but as there was not he went away again next morning without voting for either of the others. He was very glad he came for he was so much pleased with his ride on the rail-road. . . . The town you may be sure is very busy at present. Agnes and I had hard work to get through Castle Street to the office [in Brunswick Street] yesterday at noon. It is of no use me telling you about the proceedings of the election; before this letter reaches you I daresay you will have read about it in the papers. They are going on in a most scandalous manner, which is quite a disgrace to the town. Both parties are giving 12 guineas a man. Mrs. Ewart has declared that she would rather go to

¹ George F. Cox (1809-1868) the eldest brother of Mary Cox. He did a good deal of travelling for Yates & Cox and was later a partner in the firm.
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the workhouse than see her son lose; that she will spend her last farthing if it will do any good. I don't think he is likely to get it; Mr. D. appears generally liked the best, and his friends have the most influence. Mr. D. still continues twelve ahead, and has been so at the close of each poll. Nathan and Henry have gone to town this morning (Saturday), one for Denison and the other for Ewart; they got up in fine glee but it was damped a good deal before they went out, because Papa would not let them exhibit their ribbons.

MARY COX to WILLIAM HOLT in LONDON.

"Spring Bank, 4 December 1830."

"I was in town on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. I went shopping with Mamma and Harriet and after we had done we went with Papa to Mr. Robinson's, Castle Street, to see the humours of the election. I saw John who was busy canvassing for Mr. Denison; he said Robert was busy on Mr. Ewart's side; he was in great spirits and quite confident Mr. D. would be returned. He was sorry that he did not know before that George had a vote, for he was sure he could have persuaded him to vote for Mr. Denison. I told him I did not know what means he would have tried, but I was sure he would not have voted on any account. It has indeed been a mad election. On Tuesday morning Mr. D.'s friends were giving £1000 a Tally, they did at least for two Tallies. Mr. Budicomb, the Druggist, St Luke's Place, told Papa that he had been offered £75 for his vote, but would not take it, and that he knew several shopkeepers who had been offered the same and had taken it. So much for the free and independent burghers of Liverpool, and their just and honourable representatives. On Wednesday we all went to see Mr. Ewart chaired. . . . The procession was well worth seeing; we afterwards went to Mr. Potter's, where we heard Mr. Ewart, Falvey, and Rathbone speak. You will I should think get to read the different speeches; you will find Mr. E. much superior to Mr. D. though Mr. D.'s address at the close of the poll, I like, it is indeed his best and worth all the others."

1 Nathan, aged 10, and Henry aged 8.
2 Mr. Robinson, Bookseller and Stationer.
3 William Robinson, Bookseller and Stationer.
4 A Tally was a group of ten voters. It was the custom to organise the voting in groups of ten.
5 Probably William Potter, Merchant, 10, Water Street.
6 Mark Joseph Falvey, Teacher at 45 Renshaw Street.
7 William Rathbone was an active supporter of Ewart.
A petition against Mr. Ewart’s return as a Member of Parliament had been presented to the House of Commons, and a committee of the House declared on 28 March, 1831 that he had not been duly elected.

The subsequent careers of these two candidates can be studied in the Dictionary of National Biography. Both of them were afterwards successful candidates at Liverpool Parliamentary elections and were useful members. John Evelyn Denison became Speaker of the House of Commons, and William Ewart was responsible for introducing the Act of Parliament which established free municipal libraries.

The next and final letter to be quoted concerns a well-known Liverpool character.

WILLIAM HOLT to MARY COX.

“London, 26 January 1831.”

“I was a good deal amused the other day by something I heard from a gentleman who was present. He went into the Court of Chancery at Westminster, where Brougham was sitting, and at his right hand on the bench, he observed a person whose face and squint he soon recognised. He heard divers enquiries and suggestions amongst the persons present as to who the individual was, and it was at last determined that it was some noble lord, the name could not be ascertained, who had come to take the
During the Reign of George IV.

oaths. Presently it was whispered that it was not a noble lord, but a high dignitary of the Church, the Rev. Dr. Shepherd, who had come to speak to the Chancellor on business. It was so settled by all, and the high dignitary of the Church was looked upon by all present with reverence and respect. But the change which took place from these feelings to others of a less flattering nature may be more easily fancied than described, when the truth at last came out, and it was fully established that the Lord High Chancellor of England, sitting on the seat of justice, the Keeper of the King's conscience and the dispenser of Church patronage, had seated by his side in the seat of honour, no other than the Rev. William Shepherd, the Unitarian parson and great Liverpool radical. One distinguished member of the body, a political opponent of the Chancellor, was heard to exclaim 'If one blackguard sits there, why may not another?'"

Lord Brougham (1778–1868) had only been appointed Lord Chancellor during the previous year, and as a supporter of legal and electoral reforms and of the abolition of slavery, had many political enemies. Among his political friends was the Rev. William Shepherd (1768–1847), the minister of Gateacre Chapel, son of a Liverpool freeman and himself a freeman, an active leader in local and national affairs, and the writer of numerous electioneering pamphlets. Brougham had been one of the Whig candidates at the hotly-contested election in 1812, when Canning and Gascoyne were the successful Tory candidates. Shepherd was given the LL.D. Degree in 1834 by the University of Edinburgh, in recognition of his literary works. The inscription on the tablet to his memory in Gateacre Chapel was composed by Lord Brougham.

William Holt returned to Liverpool in the spring of 1831, and soon afterwards started on his own account as a solicitor, with an office in Cable Street, and he was married the following year. He was twice in partnership, first with George Worthington, solicitor to the Dock Trust, and later with James Rowe; the firm being still
carried on as Gair, Roberts and Co. William Holt died in 1853 in his forty-sixth year.

I am much indebted to Mr. Harold A. Turner for help in my comments on Liverpool events to which reference is made in these letters.