

# 1911 Encyclopædia Britannica, Volume 7 — Cork and Orrery, Mary, Countess of



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**CORK AND ORRERY, MARY,** COUNTESS OF (Mary Monckton) (1746–1840), was born on the 21st of May 1746, the daughter of the first Viscount Galway. From her early years she took a keen interest in literature, and through her influence her mother’s house in London became a favourite meeting-place of literary celebrities. Dr Johnson was a frequent guest. According to Boswell, Miss Monckton’s “vivacity enchanted the sage, and they used to talk together with all imaginable ease.” Sheridan, Reynolds, Burke and Horace Walpole were among her constant visitors, and Mrs Siddons was her closest friend. In 1786 she married the seventh earl of Cork and Orrery, who died in 1798. As Lady Cork, her love of social “lions” became more pronounced than ever. Among her regular guests were Canning and Castlereagh, Byron, Sir Walter Scott, Lord John Russell, Sir Robert Peel, Theodore Hook and Sydney Smith. She is supposed to have been the original of Lady Bellair in Disraeli’s *Henrietta Temple*, and Dickens is believed to have drawn on her for some of the peculiarities of Mrs Leo Hunter in [\*Pickwick\*](#). Lady Cork had a remarkable memory, and was a brilliant conversationalist. She died in London on the 30th of May 1840. She was then ninety-four, but within a few days of her death had been either dining out or entertaining every night. There is a fine portrait of her by Reynolds.



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