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We know much more about Isabella's husband. A son and grandson of the manse (both his father and grandfather had been ministers), John Mackay boasted an illustrious pedigree; in his own words, he was descended from "a distinguished race of warriors and defenders of the protestant faith." John Mackay was especially proud of his two younger brothers: one was a cavalry officer who had served with Wellington and died "under the muzzle of the enemy's gun" in 1803; while the other brother, William, was a mariner, described by John Mackay as "one of the most scientific and skilful navigators of his time in the Indian seas." The latter brother survived several hair-raising shipwrecks. It was John Mackay's immodest claim that William's powerful narrative of his disaster in the Red Sea in 1801 had been pilfered by Lord Byron for his poem "Don Juan." John Mackay was also a credit to his education, a graduate of the University proficiency in several languages. As

WHILE IN St, Peters STOP - STAY & ENJOY OUR WARM UNIQUE HOSPITALITY THROUGHOUT OUR COMMUNITY & COUNTY family. He was a cultivator of Edinburgh who boasted a young man, Mackay had served as a Clerk in the Indian Civil Service but premature blindness forced him to retire before he was thirty. The Mackays were people of modest affluence and gentility. They were also politically and socially well connected. During the winter months, they resided in Edinburgh. Here they mingled with Edinburgh's illuminati, such as the Scottish divine, Thomas McCrie, Scotland's premier philosopher, Dugald Stewart, and the Scottish historian, Malcolm Laing. In the early 19th century, Edinburgh was customarily home to Scotland's gentry and nobility during the winter season. But it was also the hub of Scotland's intellectual and cultural elite • consequently, this remarkable city was highly cosmopolitan and pulsated with intellectual debate. During the summer months the Mackays usually retreated to Easter Ross to their estate called Rockfield. This seasonal migration enabled them to keep in touch with their roots in northern Scotland. However, judging from one published source, the prestige of landownership carried a high price, as Mackay found that "His shepherds milked his cows, ate his sheep, rode his horses, and, in short, turned all the profits of the farm to their own account." There is no doubt that John and Isabella Mackay were a compatible and companionable pair. They were devout Presbyterians and enjoyed the comforts of secure wealth. This affluence gave Isabella a privileged vantage point on life. She endured none of the tedium, catastrophe and exhaustion which marked the lives of working class Scottish women. Nor was her life overshadowed by the burdens of childbearing. In other words, unlike many women of her generation she was not confined to hearth or nursery. Two forces shaped Isabella's life • her Scottish patriotism and evangelical piety. Her Christian conscience did not sanction self-indulgence • it demanded instead spiritual service. Consequently, she devoted her time, talents



and money to a variety of humanitarian causes. Her obituary claims that "her purse was ever emptying itself." In fact, according to the Edinburgh Witness, the Mackays were "well known in this city for their general philanthropy, and especially for the deep interest they took in the young and friendless." One sees in this remarkable woman a diminished preoccupation with self. In 1842, when the Rev. Murdoch Stewart visited the widowed Mrs. Mackay, he was struck by her modest lifestyle. "If Travel Richmond County \*s Route 4 J'[e?c]l, Morrison y'uneraC 9{ome PRE-ARRANGEMENT INFORMATION AVAILABLE Serving the community for over 35 years with sympathy and understanding. Providing a supportive environment ivith quiet efficiency. P O Box 10 • ST. PETER'S • 535-2119 Clay Plant Pots playful rustic, elegantly definitely unusual The Pottery Garden Drop by the studio and see pots taking shape 15 min. west of St. Peters, 20 min. east of Dundee Resort ROBERTA • RICHMOND COUNTY • CAPE BRETON • (902) 535-2898 A wonderful place to live, work, invest . 67