



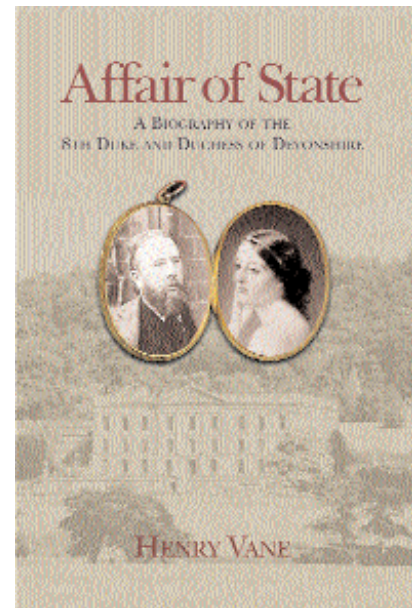
# Affair of State

A Biography of the 8th  
Duke and Duchess of Devonshire

HENRY VANE

NON-FICTION/BIOGRAPHY/POLITICS  
109,000 WORDS

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**'Is this wonderful book a lost masterpiece by P.G. Wodehouse? Lord Hartington is almost like a major literary character, full of quirks and crotchets. I long to see him played by Peter O'Toole.'** – Roger Lewis, *Daily Express*

The story of the affair between Louise Alten and Lord Hartington and their later marriage takes place at the heart of aristocratic and political life during one of the most exciting eras of British politics. It runs from the front benches of the House of Commons to the Prince and Princess of Wales's high-living circle, yet has never been the subject of a full biography.

Lord Hartington, Duke of Devonshire, was a political high flyer, heir to one of the great Whig families. A Liberal leader who turned down the opportunity to be Prime Minister three times, he served at the heart of government during a seminal political age.

Louise Alten, the 'Double Duchess' of Manchester and Devonshire, was first well known as one of the legendary beauties of Victorian high society. She became the mistress of Lord Hartington as he disentangled himself from a tumultuous affair with the famous society courtesan, 'Skittles', and their loyalty to each other remained constant for thirty years. The Duchess was widely reputed to be the most powerful person in England outside the government and one of the great society hostesses of the age.

She manipulated political events in favour of her husband through lavish house parties at the couple's Chatsworth estate – parties that were attended by the Prince and Princess of Wales (the King and Queen from 1901) and their fashionable set, of which the Duke and Duchess were at the centre.

*Acclaim for the author's previous books:*

**'His style is good and clear, a rare pleasure among contemporary biographers.'** – *Spectator*  
**'Well researched and comprehensive . . . His approach is intelligent and thoughtful.'**  
– *Catholic Herald*

*For further information please contact Simon Smith at Peter Owen*