

**EDITH SICHEL: LETTERS,  
VERSES, AND OTHER  
WRITINGS; DEDICATED TO  
HER FRIENDS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649180066

Edith Sichel: letters, verses, and other writings; dedicated to her friends by Emily Marion Ritchie

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Cover @ 2017

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**EMILY MARION RITCHIE**

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# EDITH SICHEL

*Letters, Verses, and Other Writings*

DEDICATED TO HER FRIENDS

BY

EMILY MARION RITCHIE

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

1918



SHE to whom all the world was but a stage,  
Who could not lack, whate'er this world could give  
Because she was the form that made it live . . . .  
She who was here so much essential joy . . . .  
    She to heaven is gone  
Who made this world in some proportion  
A heaven, and here became unto us all  
Joy—as our joys admit—essential,

JOHN DONNE.





## PREFACE

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THE extracts in this volume from Edith's letters, poems, and other writings have been put together in the confidence that her voice, speaking throughout them, will bring happiness to the friends in whose lives her absence has made so deep a void. They will see that the letters, as well as the verses, are more personal than those chosen for the published book, and will notice, perhaps with some surprise, that they come from only a few sources although Edith's ever-outgoing nature made her a lavish letter-writer. But it so happens that her deeply-loved family, to whom she wrote constantly when absent from them, and her other friends find the ones they have in their possession are of too passing a nature, or too intimately full of their own concerns, to be shared.

The passages, selected in their order of date, and the verses whatever their poetic merit, grave and gay, with which they are interspersed, tell the story of her life so fully that only a slight thread of outside facts need be given, supplementing those in Mr. Bradley's Introduction to "New and Old." It was a life created by her own nature—a nature so many-sided that even those who thought they knew her well could hardly realise the marvellous variety of its compass. She was the same from the beginning according to those who knew her in her

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early girlhood, and who describe her as the life-giving leader of all their fun as well as the centre of earnest interchange of ideas. One of the friends of those years, of which Edith herself gave the happy account in her Memoir of Mary Coleridge, regretted that in her books, the St. Teresa in her, the "creature of a fiery heart," had been necessarily subdued so that the glow and the pulse of the flame were comparatively little felt. "Edith's habit of life," she writes, filling in the picture, "was one long giving, a sacrifice not of money only, but of tastes, of wishes, of opportunities, if thus she could help or serve others and, enjoying as she did beauty in all ways, in Nature, in art, dress and surroundings, she with her passionate poetic nature would forego all for herself and be satisfied to delight in them through and for others. She had a wonderful humility, sometimes almost distressing and irritating to those who felt the promise and possibilities in her."

It was when she was two-and-twenty, a few months after her father's death in 1884, that she and I first came into each other's lives. I had undertaken some office work for the M.A.L.Y.S. in Whitechapel at Mrs. Barnett's appeal, and worked under Miss Pauline Townsend, the inspiring head of that Branch. My mother was then an invalid. I could not spare much of my time, and helpers were badly needed. It was a wonderful day when Edith, who had long wished for such work, but had not hitherto been free for anything of the kind, came to join me. She at once revealed extraordinary powers of grappling with