

**LETTERS OF SARAH
WYMAN WHITMAN.
[CAMBRIDGE-1907]**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649737567

Letters of Sarah Wyman Whitman. [Cambridge-1907] by Sarah Whitman

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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LETTERS OF
SARAH (WYMAN) WHITMAN



UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

CAMBRIDGE
PRINTED AT THE RIVERSIDE PRESS

1907

EDITORIAL NOTE

THIS little collection is made for Mrs. Whitman's friends. If it awakens some echo of that courage and faith which her living presence inspired, the object of its publication will be fulfilled.

Through her letters we catch new realization of the high pressure at which she lived. Yet no one ever found her too occupied to listen to the call of friendship, for to her its master word was service.

The impression which her generous conception of life and friendship made on those who came into close relation with her is best given by a few extracts from letters from one and another of her friends:

"When she went out of this world, it seemed as if the high light had gone from everything."

[v]

“We cannot really lose a friend like her, thank Heaven! There never was such beautiful ready affectionateness, such self-forgetfulness or such eagerness to help her friends at every turn to make the most of their own conditions and surroundings and associates; and this without any petty love of power over other people’s lives, or jealousy, or wounded self-love, if her way and advice were not followed. She told you what she thought, but there she ended; and almost never thought wrong, it seems to me now, or held her beliefs and opinions more lightly or more strongly because others would not accept them. It was a heavenly sort of patience and self-control in a most ardent and impulsive nature; her advice never seemed, either, to spring from the least or first consideration of her own advantage.”

“There is much in these letters which would be illuminating to any who should read them, and fulfil our object of perpetuating that personality whose expression by act and look and spoken or written word has been the wine

and joy of life to us. If we could embody in a book the conviction which she conveyed of the glory of life, and its deep ultimate meaning which made all things worth while, it would be a great light shed on the path of many."

"'Give to him that asketh' seemed to be this true friend's rule of life, and as Sir Thomas Browne counselled: 'Give where men's necessities, not their tongues, loudly call for mercy.' Years ago when some one was complaining that S. W. neglected her work at the studio for other things, and that her gifts as an artist lacked a development to which the practice and discipline of entire devotion might have brought them; 'Ah!' said another friend quickly, 'but she has made the choice between living for Art's sake and living for Love's sake, and we must not quarrel with that.'"

Letters of so essentially intimate a character as Mrs. Whitman's can only be published at some sacrifice of reticence. Mrs. Whitman was at once the most impersonal

and the most personal of friends. She never stopped long in the outer courts of friendship. Therefore no letters which expressed her at all could be devoid of personality.

If the veil of privacy seems to be unduly lifted, let it be remembered how freely she gave her love, experience, and wisdom, so perhaps to those who cherish her memory her words may come as one more gift from generous hands.

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