

**A MEMOIR OF MARIA
EDGEWORTH, WITH A
SELECTION FROM
HER LETTERS: VOL. I**

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A Memoir of Maria Edgeworth, with a Selection from Her Letters: Vol. I by Mrs. Edgeworth

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MRS. EDGEWORTH

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Mrs Le Merc - - Constabulary Dept
Phania
& Miss Crampson - - Glenbrook - Emis
from the Editor

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OF
MARIA EDGEWORTH.

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OF
MARIA EDGEWORTH,
WITH
A SELECTION FROM HER LETTERS

BY THE LATE
MRS. EDGEWORTH.

EDITED BY HER CHILDREN.

Not Published.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY JOSEPH MASTERS AND SON,
ALDERSGATE STREET AND NEW BOND STREET.

1867.

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PRINTED BY JOSEPH MASTERS AND SON,
ALDERSGATE STREET.

MARIA EDGEWORTH.

THE first time I ever saw Maria Edgeworth was in the year 1797, when I paid a visit at Foxhall with my father and mother to Mrs. Fox, Maria's aunt, little foreseeing then that we were to be so nearly connected, and that ours was to be the most intimate friendship for life—a friendship unbroken by a single cloud of difference or mistrust for fifty-one years. She had such a perfectly honest mind, such an open, candid disposition, that whatever was the subject of her conversation, or whatever were the transactions in which one might be engaged with her, one as if the mind was enlarged, and the value of truth the courage of decision increased in her presence.

Maria was the second child and eldest daughter of Richard Lovell Edgeworth and Anna Maria, daughter of Paul Elers, Esq., of Black Bourton, in Oxfordshire, where she was born, January 1, 1767, and where she spent her first years: here the vivacity of her early wit was encouraged, and the sallies of her temper were unrepressed by her soft-hearted mother and tender aunts. She scarcely recollected being at Lichfield, when her father and mother resided there, but she well remembered the death of her mother, and being taken into the room to receive her last kiss, at the house of her great aunt, Miss Blake, who lived with two sisters in

Great Russell Street. She remembered the fine figures of these stately old ladies, and being taken by them to play in the gardens at the back of the British Museum.

On Mr. Edgeworth's marriage with Honora Sneyd, Maria accompanied them to Ireland. Of this visit she recollected very little, except that she was a mischievous child, amusing herself once at her Aunt Fox's when the company were unmindful of her, cutting out the squares in a checked sofa cover, and one day trampling through a number of hot-bed frames that had just been glazed, laid on the grass before the door at Edgeworthstown; she recollected her delight at the crashing of the glass, but, immorally, did not remember either cutting her feet or how she was punished for this performance.

In the year 1775, in consequence of Mrs. Honora Edgeworth's failing health, Maria was placed at school at Derby with Mrs. Lataffiere. Of this excellent woman she always spoke with gratitude and affection. She said that, on the first day of her entrance into the school, she felt more admiration at a child less than herself repeating the nine parts of speech, than she ever felt afterwards for any effort of human genius.

From Mrs. Lataffiere's she dates the following letter, the first extant of her writing:—

“ Derby, March 30, 1776.

“ DEAR MAMMA,

“ It is with the greatest pleasure I write to you, as I flatter myself it will make you happy to hear from me. I hope you and my dear papa are well. School now seems agreeable to me. I have begun French and dancing, and intend to make” (“great” was written, but a line drawn over it) “improvement in everything

I learn. I know that it will give you great satisfaction to hear that I am a good girl. My cousin Clay sends her love to you; mine to my brothers and sisters, who I hope are well. Pray give my duty to papa, and accept the same from, dear mamma,

“Your dutiful Daughter.”

The writing-master at this school taught admirably, and from him Maria learned to write the beautiful hand, which never altered to the end of her life.

Among the teachers at Mrs. Lataffiere's was a lady who instructed them in embroidery; an art of which Maria was always fond. She well remembered the patience and kindness with which this poor lady, who was suffering from cancer, and who, as they all knew, was then going away to die, laid out the patterns and the silks for each of them in the exactest order. This domestic heroism made a deep impression, young as she then was, upon her mind.

The natural genius and sensibility of Maria's mind was indeed evident from her early appreciation of genius and sensibility in others: her father and Mrs. Honora Edgeworth were, even in her earliest years, perceived to be far, far above every one else whom she knew. She recollected all her life the minutest advice which Mrs. Honora Edgeworth gave to her. She felt great awe of her at the time, but she was long afterwards sensible of her justice, and of the habits of exactness and order in which she trained her. The surpassing beauty of her presence struck Maria, young as she was, at her first acquaintance with her: she remembered standing by her dressing-table and looking up at her with a sudden feeling of “How beautiful!”