

**REMINISCENCES OF A
GENTLEWOMAN OF THE
LAST CENTURY: LETTERS
OF CATHERINE HUTTON**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649096732

Reminiscences of a gentlewoman of the last century: letters of Catherine Hutton by Mrs. Catherine Hutton Beale

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

MRS. CATHERINE HUTTON BEALE

**REMINISCENCES OF A
GENTLEWOMAN OF THE
LAST CENTURY: LETTERS
OF CATHERINE HUTTON**

REMINISCENCES OF A GENTLEWOMAN
OF THE LAST CENTURY:

LETTERS OF
CATHERINE HUTTON,

(Daughter of William Hutton, F.A.S.S., Historian of Birmingham.)

EDITED BY HER COUSIN,
MRS. CATHERINE HUTTON BEALE,

*(Compiler of the "Memorials of the Old Meeting House
and Burial Ground, Birmingham.")*

Birmingham :

CORNISH BROTHERS, 37, NEW STREET.

1891.

LOAN STACK

PRINTED AT THE HERALD PRESS BIRMINGHAM,
BY WRIGHT, DAIN, PEYTON, AND CO.

940

H984

l

1891

INTRODUCTION.

THE following letters and extracts from letters have been selected from a mass of correspondence which Miss Hutton left behind her, and which, from the lapse of time, have now become historic. Her writings contain graphic accounts of places, modes of travelling, manners and customs, dress, and character. Two of the letters on the Priestley riots in 1791 I had printed a few years ago for private circulation, and afterwards allowed Mr. Dent to print them in his "Old and New Birmingham." With this exception they are all new to the public. Some readers may possibly accuse Miss Hutton of being egotistic, so I give the following quotation from a letter to one of her friends, to disarm criticism on this point:—"Much egotism in conversation is not to be tolerated, but egotism is the soul of a letter of friendship. What can be so interesting to me as my friend's account of herself?" All the persons whose names are mentioned in the following pages are now dead, the last to pass away having been her "young friend," the late Miss Ryland, of Barford.

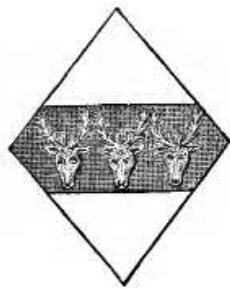
Permission has been asked for and kindly given by Miss Hogarth for the insertion of Charles Dickens' letters, and the Rt. Hon. the Earl Lytton has allowed me to publish his father's letters.

C. H. B.

"HIGHFIELD,"

Chester Road, near Birmingham,

July 14, 1891.



CATHERINE HUTTON :

THE LETTERS AND REMINISCENCES OF A
GENTLEWOMAN OF THE LAST CENTURY.

CATHERINE HUTTON was the elder of the two surviving children of William Hutton, historian of Birmingham. Her father, with characteristic attention to detail, says, in the "History of the Hutton Family," "She was born February 11th, 1756, on Wednesday, a quarter before five in the evening. She came into the world before her time, and perhaps was the smallest human being ever seen. . . . Though she afterwards grew to a proper size, yet she always carried a delicate frame."

Miss Hutton very early showed a taste for learning, and could never remember the time when she could not read fluently. At the age of seven she was, at her own request, sent to a day school; there she learned to dance, and wrote daily letters to her school-fellows, thus showing at an early period of her life a taste for letter-writing. Her mother said that Catherine had every sense but common sense; and her mother's family, who thought all merit was confined to the useful, declared that the girl would never be good for anything. She had, however, given some indications of usefulness, for her dolls, which were

nineteen in number, were all of them clothed, and some of them made, by her own hands.

Dr. Priestley once observed to William Hutton, "A child believes everything to be *real* which is said;" and Miss Hutton *really believed* in the children's books which she read at the early age of five years. In an interesting account of her early days, written by herself at the age of eighty-three, she says:—"At this period of my life I had only two objects of pursuit; these were books and play. I read all Mr. Newbery's gilt books, as they were called, from being covered with gilt embossed paper. These consisted of 'Christmas Box,' 'New Year's Gift,' 'Goody Two Shoes,' &c.; 'Mother Goose's Tales' stood at the head of the class. I trembled for Bluebeard's wife when she was so naughty as to open the forbidden closet; and when I came to her kneeling at her husband's feet, he with his uplifted scimitar ready to strike, and sister Anne looking out from the window, I could read no more. I burst into tears, laid down the book, and exclaimed, 'Mamma, I never will be married.' I firmly believed that every husband might cut off his wife's head with his scimitar whenever he chose to do so; and such was my horror, that it was many years before I dared venture to resume the tale, or knew that Bluebeard's wife was saved.

"Nothing delighted me so much as 'The Tales of the Fairies.' I no more doubted their truth than I did my own existence—nay, how did I know that I was not a fairy myself! It was at least worth the trial, and the trial was easily made! I understood the whole perfectly, except what the mighty instrument which made all the

transformations might be, and I asked my mother what a wand was. She, not being deeply versed in fairy lore, replied, 'It is a white stick.' Is that all, thought I, then I can soon get a wand! Accordingly I procured a green stick and peeled it, and, striking three times on the parlour grate, as customary with the fairies, I commanded the grate to become gold. Not a particle of the stubborn steel would change colour; I found I was not a fairy, and I was rather ashamed of the experiment."

Born in the reign of George II., Miss Hutton only received the very limited school education of that period, but she made up for all deficiencies in after life by her great love for reading. Speaking of the only school she ever went to, she says:—"The school, which till very recently had been the first in Birmingham, was kept by a Mrs. and Miss Sawyer. The mother taught spelling and reading in the Bible, the daughter needlework, useful and ornamental, for sixpence a week. The governess was a kind-hearted old woman, who was obliged, or thought herself obliged, to scold sometimes. None of the scholars liked her; though I fully believe it was for no other reason than that she was old.

"Miss Sawyer might be about thirty years of age; she was very handsome, very lady-like, and very good humoured. Mr. Sawyer, her brother, was a dancing master. The house they lived in was a good one, and a very large room,* which had been added to it, was the grand

* It will be within the recollection of some of the present generation that in this room, 11, Old Square, Mr. Cresshull held his dancing classes. The entrance to this room was very poor, and the Royal Duke might well think it a "mean" place.