A small collection of letters from Maria Edgeworth to family friends, John Lewis Moilliet, a businessman and banker, based in Birmingham and his wife Amelia nee Keir. Maria’s letter was mostly written from the family home at Edgeworth's Town or from Black Castle in Ireland. The collection includes one letter to John Lewis Moilliet from Maria's brother Charles Sneyd Edgeworth. The Moilliets lived at Smethwick Grove from 1813 until 1826 when they moved to Hamstead Hall in Handsworth. Maria's letters are for the most part addressed to the Moilliets family homes although a few, which relate to business affairs, were sent to Moilliet's business premises in New Hall Street, Birmingham. The Moilliet family also owned the Chateau de L'Imperatrice in Pregny near Geneva. The letters generally appear to be prompted by Maria's business and financial interests in which respect Moilliet is obviously a close confidante but she also writes about her family matters, her social activities and their mutual friends. These letters offer an insight into the life of a wealthy, well connected, single woman in Ireland in the early nineteenth century particularly in terms of her business and financial interests. She writes candidly about her own and her family's financial affairs giving interesting details regarding the amount of money she has in investments, the performance of shares, income from her writing and even the wage paid to a man servant. In these letters Maria Edgeworth shows herself to be a strong minded independent woman determined always to be in control of her own affairs. Her references to Irish economic and political issues of the time make these letters a useful resource for historians of Anglo-Irish affairs.

**Administrative history:** Maria Edgeworth, 1767-1849, novelist, was the
Maria Edgeworth, third daughter of Richard Lovell Edgeworth (1744-1817), inventor, educator and writer. The family lived in Edgeworthstown in County Longford, Ireland where Richard Edgeworth owned an extensive estate and Maria, who was one of 22 children by her father's four wives, was heavily involved in the education of her brothers and sisters. In later years she also helped to manage the family estate in Ireland and the business affairs of her brothers Charles Sneyd (1790-1864) and Francis Edgeworth (1809-1846). In her own right, she was an important figure in the history of women's writing and also in the history of education, particularly in the promotion of education of women. Her first works were Letters for Literary Ladies (1795) in which she defended female education and two volumes on Practical Education (1798), written in conjunction with her father. Her first novel, Castle Rackrent, appeared in 1800 and she continued to produce works of fiction, including children's stories, up to 1834 when her last novel, Helen, was published. She is considered to have been a literary influence on a number of other writers including Sir Walter Scott, and Thackeray and Jane Austen is known to have been an admirer of her works.


Arrangement: The correspondence is arranged chronologically and bound in one volume.

Access: Open
Access conditions: Access to all registered researchers

Copies: This collection of Maria Edgeworth's letters was micropublished by Adam Matthew Publications in 2001 under the title 'Women, education and literature: the papers of Maria Edgeworth, 1767-1849'. This micropublication included Edgeworth Papers at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, the National Library of Ireland and at other libraries including the University of Birmingham. Microfilms of the two Birmingham collections are available in the Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections Department and facilities are available in this Library for researchers to make paper copies of individual items from these microfilms for their own private research purposes.

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Language: English

Related material: University of Birmingham Information Services, Special Collections Department also holds an artificial collection of Maria Edgeworth Letters Additional (MELAdd)

ME/1 Letter to J. L. Moilliet

Edgeworth's Town: Thanks Moilliet for the favour done for the family and for the invitation to stay with the Moilliets in Pregny; arrangements for her journey

23 March 1820
from Dublin to Paris via Birmingham and asks Moilliet to arrange for the hire of a suitable carriage for the weight of her luggage; her sister, Fanny is taking a sketch book to record the famous sites on the journey.

1 item
Access: Open

ME/2  Letter to J. L. Moilliet  2 November 1820
Hotel Vauban, Paris: The accommodation available at the Hotel Vauban would suit Moilliet perfectly; comments on a French tragedy recommended by M. de Broglie; she has sent her father’s memoirs to Paschoud [publisher] who will send them on to Geneva once they are bound.

1 item
Access: Open

ME/3  Letter to J. L. Moilliet  7 December 1820
Ship Inn, Dover: Sorry to have missed the Moilliets at Calais but sailed with Captain Sherlock on the ‘Eclipse’ and were well looked after and recommends the Ship Inn; they are to travel on to London and from there to Clifton near Bristol to stay with her sister, Emmeline.

1 item
Access: Open

ME/4  Letter to J. L. Moilliet  27 December 1821
Asks for a loan of five hundred pounds for twelve months so that she and her sister may spend six weeks in London: the loan is to be on the credit of her latest published work, the ‘sequel to Frank’; asks for the money to be lodged with Hoare's Bank and offers to repay the loan at five percent interest; has been on a tour of visits including to friends in Salisbury, Winchester and Dorking.
ME/5
Letter to J. L. Moilliet
29 March 1823
Edgeworth's Town: Asks Moilliet's advice regarding her holdings of French funds in view of the prospect of war and the possible devaluation of her French investments.

ME/6
Letter to J. L. Moilliet
20 October 1823
Edgeworth's Town: Asks Moilliet's advice regarding the suitability of Mr Hill's school near Birmingham [Hazelwood School founded by Thomas Wright Hill] for the son of a friend, Captain Beaufort; Lucy is out of danger but her health is still precarious; the rest of the family are well and Fanny is still sea bathing which she finds beneficial; thanks Moilliet for looking after Francis and Pakenham when they lost their portmanteaux on their way to Charterhouse; death of Lady Dartmouth.

ME/7
Letter to J. L. Moilliet
8 April 1824
Edgeworth's Town: Sophie's marriage to [Major] Barry Fox; financial matters; hopes to make an excursion to England via Scotland in the autumn with her sister, Fanny but as the publication of her next work will be delayed she asks Moilliet if he would be willing to lend her four hundred pounds for eighteen months; asks him to consider a loan of five or six thousand pounds at four percent interest on Irish landed security to allow the family to pay off Sneyd Edgeworth and some of the younger claimants to the family fortune without selling off land.
Letter to J. L. Moilliet

Edgeworth's Town: Concerning a loan to Rev Beaufort of Cork of two thousand pounds on security of land on borders of Louth and Meath, the interest on the loan to be paid annually; requests Moilliet to purchase £600 worth of shares for herself, Mrs Edgeworth, Honora and William in either the Birmingham and Liverpool or Birmingham and London Railroad; regrets Moilliet leaving for Switzerland; Fanny, Sophie and her husband are in Italy and will be in Florence for some weeks; additional note by Maria's brother, Lovell Edgeworth requesting the purchase of one hundred pounds worth of railroad shares.

Letter to J. L. Moilliet

Edgeworth's Town: Concerning the loan previously offered on security of some of their Irish land which her brother, Lovell now wishes to take up: Maria will pay the interest due from the rents received.

Letter to J. L. Moilliet

Edgeworth's Town: Thanks Moilliet for the present of a print of Mr Keir [James Keir] which has only just arrived; would like to see Mr Keir's lessons on chemistry but knows Moilliet is under orders not to publish; concern for the banking business while he is away; wishes him well on his journey to Switzerland.
Maria Edgeworth Letters

Access: Open

ME/11 Letter to J. L. Moilliet

Edgeworth's Town: Welcomes the Moilliets back to England; thanks them for bringing a watch and chain and a packet of books from Switzerland for her; alarmed at reports in the newspapers of banks in Birmingham failing but relieved when she learned Moilliet's bank was safe; requests Moilliet to direct his letters to her via the Earl of Rosse, Parson's Town who as Postmaster General can receive them for free.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/12 Letter to J. L. Moilliet

Edgeworth's Town: Concerning the loan to her brother on security of his Irish lands, the business has now been put in the hands of their solicitors.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/13 Letter to J. L. Moilliet

Edgeworth's Town: Would like to expedite the business of the loan.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/14 Letter to J. L. Moilliet

Black Castle, Navan: Seeks Moilliet's advice regarding her French stock holdings; her brother, Sneyd, residing in Versailles, tells her that the French government may be overturned and her stocks may be endangered; asks also his advice regarding her own money from the copyright of 'Harry and Lucy' which she has put into Columbian bonds but is now not sure they are safe; considers if it is
wise to invest in a gas company and if there is a future for gas lighting; news of the movements of family members.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/15 Letter to J. L. Moilliet
Black Castle, Navan: Concerning her South American investments.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/16 Letter to J. L. Moilliet
Edgeworth's Town: Asks Moilliet if his son, James, will purchase a penknife for her in Birmingham which she can give as a present to William Beaufort, a nephew of Mrs Edgeworth and a schoolboy at Shrewsbury; heavy snow has made it impossible for Mrs Edgeworth to return home from Black Castle where she has been for three weeks; William Edgeworth has been given his first position as superintendent of the new railway line from Bolton to Leigh in England at £200 per year by the engineer George Stephenson; news of Francis at Cambridge and Pakenham home from school.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/17 Letter to J. L. Moilliet
Edgeworth's Town: Gratified by Moilliet taking her into his confidence in his last letter to her regarding his anxiety over his son, John's behaviour to which she offers reassurance that it is just youthful folly and that at heart he is of sound character; high regard all the Edgeworth family feel for James; discusses the book 'The Tor Hill' as recommended by Moilliet but finds it somewhat melodramatic; Basil Hull to
go to America for two years; she is going to stay with her Aunt Buxton for about a month.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/18 Letter to J. L. Moilliet

Edgeworth's Town: Looking for a position for a young man servant brought up in their family and can testify for his good character although he is a Catholic and certain allowances will have to be made by his employer.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/19 Letter to J. L. Moilliet

Edgeworth's Town: Death of mutual friend, the political writer and preacher, Pierre Etienne Dumont.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/20 Letter to J. L. Moilliet

1 North Audley Street, London: Will be staying in England for a month longer than expected and hopes to see Moilliet and his family before she returns to Ireland; cannot guess how things will end in Ireland with regard to the case of Daniel O'Connell; believes the Government should have proclaimed martial law; danger of making him into a martyr if all the evidence against him is not made public; a mob threatened to attack the home of Harriet's father-in-law, Dr Butler, in Burnchurch, Kilkenny over the issue of tithes; wishes tithes could be abolished in Ireland.

1 item
Edgeworth’s Town: Encourages Moilliet to acquire an estate in Cambridge he has been to see if only as a way of him giving up what she sees as the precarious business of banking; Moilliet’s son [Theodore] is progressing in his education while staying with the Edgeworths, studying mathematics and literature, reading in Italian and French as well as English; at the moment he is reading 'Cyril Thornton' [by Thomas Hamilton] which Maria believes will be of value to him; gives details of the design of a card case she has requested James to have made for her to give to Fanny as a present; birth of William Waller Fox, her sister Sophie’s fourth child; additional note [by Lovell Edgeworth] confirming Maria’s account of Theodore’s educational progress and his agreeable company.

1 item

Access: Open

Edgeworth’s Town: Assures Moilliet that, in her opinion, his son is particularly well suited to his chosen career in the military and advises him to send him to Sandhurst as soon as possible. On the reverse is a list of what appear to be payments to 'butchers' and to 'lawyers'.

1 item

Access: Open

Edgeworth’s Town: Is pleased to hear Moilliet is satisfied with the progress Theodore has made during his stay with the Edgeworths particularly in mathematics and literature; surprised to
learn that Theodore no longer wants a military career but would prefer civil engineering or land surveying but supports his choice and is pleased that it is also agreeable to his parents; thanks for all the presents sent to them particularly the watch stand and inkstand; the family’s reaction to the marriage of her brother, Francis, to Rosa Florentina Eroles, the daughter of a Spanish patriot general.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/24  Letter to J. L. Moilliet 31 March 1832

Edgeworth's Town: James Moilliet's intended marriage to Lucy Harriot Galton, granddaughter of Erasmus Darwin; the couple are to live at Smethwick Grove; Edgeworth family news including Francis and his wife are living in Florence, her nephew Henry Beddoes has been promoted to the rank of naval lieutenant; Harriet and her husband are staying with the Edgeworths.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/25  Letter to J. L. Moilliet 16 July 1833

Edgeworth's Town: Enquires about the card case she has ordered for a present for a friend who will be shortly leaving for Switzerland; her brother Sneyd Edgeworth is anxiously waiting for news of Bedgebury before he leaves next week.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/26  Letter to J. L. Moilliet from Charles Sneyd Edgeworth 30 July 1833

Congratulations on Moilliet's daughter, Susan's, engagement; changes in
circumstances make it advisable for him to reside in Ireland and now wishes to raise a loan for fifteen thousand pounds at four percent in order to keep the estate in the family; his sister, Maria has acted as his agent and managed the estate in Ireland very efficiently and his wife has overseen regular payments due to their property in England.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/27  Letter to J. L. Moilliet  [1835]

Black Castle, Navan: Thanks Moilliet for his reception of Mr Strickland [Charles Strickland, agent and town planner in County Mayo for Lord Dillon] in Birmingham and for showing him all the 'mechanical and manufacturing wonders' there and for his meeting with Mr Dawson and his useful advice regarding mining operations; Mr Dawson would be welcome to visit them whenever he is next in Ireland.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/28  Letter to Mrs Moilliet  10 October 1835

Edgeworth's Town: Asks if Mrs Moilliet will make her a present of a new pair of sewing scissors and if so, to send the package to their neighbour, Rt. Hon. Thomas Lefroy, Carrickglass, Longford.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/29  Letter to Mrs Moilliet  27 December 1835

Edgeworth's Town: Thanks Mrs Moilliet for the donation of eighteen pounds for the education of the sons of distressed clergy in Ireland; there is to be a meeting of the school committee in February to examine the applications for the post of
Headmaster; thanks Mrs Moilliet for the new scissors and for the picture of her son and the brooch with a lock of his hair which she wears every evening; her brother, Francis is proposing to establish himself as tutor in classics and has bought a house in Eltham for the purpose of taking boarders.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/30 Letter to J. L. Moilliet 12 July 1836

Edgeworth's Town: Letter of introduction for Mr Hoppin of Boston who she hopes Moilliet will assist when he visits Birmingham where he is particularly eager to meet the son of the inventor, James Watt at Aston Hall.

1 item

Access: Open

ME/31 Letter to J. L. Moilliet 4 August 1837

Edgeworth's Town: Asks for Moilliet's help with regard to her brother, Francis who is looking for a buyer for two large paintings by Tintoretto, 'Washing the feet of the Apostles' and 'The feeding of the five thousand'; does Moilliet know anyone in Birmingham who would be interested? Maria suggests James Watt of Aston Hall and encloses a note to him on the subject; the pictures are at present at Captain Beaufort's London home.

1 item

Access: Open