

Lucy Elizabeth (Lizzie) Lucas, (H.E.'s mother).

(1878-1973)

A likeness of Lizzie Bates appears in the character of Richardson's mother in *Love For Lydia*. She may also be the reference for a character called Lizzie in the story *The Double Thumb*.

H.E. dedicated his first novel, *The Two Sisters* 'To my mother and father'.

Lizzie was born in Higham Ferrers to George and Priscilla Lucas; she was 8 years older than her sister, Florence. As was customary at the time she became a half timer at the age of 10, tying knots in a shoe factory in the morning and going to school in the afternoon. She married Albert when she was 24, and after the birth of H.E. she never again returned to paid work. Like her husband she embraced the Methodist faith and respectability and no one was ever allowed to mention, in her presence, that both her father and her husband had been born to unmarried mothers.

Despite H.E.'s antipathy towards the conformism of his parents he was very aware that life was more comfortable for him than for many of his school-friends and he felt a strong sense of gratitude to both his mother and his father. When he left school at the age 16 he lived at home until the day he was married, 10 years later, and whilst he longed for independence his mother welcomed his friends to the house, was a good cook and, to H.E. in particular, was a patient and indulgent mother. If her lack of emotion frustrated him, outwardly at least he preferred to regard her as a model Edwardian: '*She displayed very little emotion*', he wrote later, '*she can embalm herself for hours in an aura of peace*'.¹

¹ The Blossoming World