

*Deposited in the  
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*Sept. 25. 1834*

YOUTH'S LETTER-WRITER;

*Vol. 9 - Page 414.*  
OR  
*Record in the Dept. of State*  
THE EPISTOLARY ART  
*Jan'y 12 1835.*

MADE PLAIN AND EASY TO BEGINNERS,  
THROUGH THE EXAMPLE OF  
HENRY MORETON.

---

By MRS. JOHN FARRAR,  
AUTHOR OF "CONGO IN SEARCH OF HIS MASTER,"  
"THE CHILDREN'S ROBINSON CRUSOE," &c.

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NEW YORK:  
R. BARTLETT AND S. RAYNOR.

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*What shall I do for a beginning*

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CAMBRIDGE:  
PRINTED BY CHARLES FOLSOM.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE difficulty which young persons feel in writing letters is so great and so general, that any book, which promises them aid in the performance of this task, is eagerly sought; and great hopes of assistance have been entertained by the youthful purchasers of the different works, published under the enticing name of Letter-Writers.

The numerous editions which the "Complete Letter-Writer" has passed through, and the various forms in which it has, again and again, been presented to the public, are sufficient proofs of the demand for such help

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as is there promised ; whilst the glaring absurdities and gross faults, with which the work abounds, would undoubtedly prevent its circulation, if there were anything better to supply its place.

That models calculated to mislead the rising generation, and pervert their taste, should be so widely diffused, may be considered a serious evil, and one to be particularly guarded against, by those who are entrusted with the education of youth. It is with a view of contributing something to the removal of this evil, that I have prepared this little work for my young friends. I am aware that it will not furnish *all* the aid which they would like to have, in their early attempts at inditing a letter ; but they are apt to ask for more, than the nature of the case admits of ; and it is in attempting to give them all they desire, that the writers of other works on the subject have failed. Young persons wish to be told exactly what

they ought to say when writing to their friends ; but this cannot be done, on account of the peculiar circumstances that must always belong to each individual case. General directions, simple criticism, and good examples, are all that can be safely offered them ; and these are all that this volume pretends to.

To relieve the subject from the dryness which belongs to a detail of mere rules and examples, the instruction, here offered, has been woven into a slight sketch of domestic life ; but the main purpose of the work has never been made secondary to the story.

I have so often sympathized with my young friends in the trouble and perplexity they feel, when called on to write letters ; and am, at the same time, so fully impressed with the importance of such communication with absent friends, as a social duty, that I have had the subject very much at heart, and have endeavoured to furnish as many

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hints and directions, as appeared to me expedient. I now commend the result of my labors to the test of their experience, and await their judgment of my success.

E. F.

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THE

YOUTH'S LETTER-WRITER.

CHAPTER I.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN HENRY MORETON AND HIS  
UNCLE ON THE DIFFICULTY OF LETTER-WRITING.  
— HENRY'S FIRST LETTER TO HIS PARENTS.

'How I do hate writing letters!' was the exclamation of a youth of fourteen years of age, as he sat down before a sheet of fine letter-paper, prepared to do what he considered the most difficult of all his duties. With an excellent pen, just made for him by his uncle, and good ink, and lines under his paper, and plenty of thoughts in his head, there he sat like one stupefied; and after scrawling over his blotting-paper, trying his pen again and again, and waiting so long between each trial that the ink dried in the nib, he threw it down in despair, muttering the foolish wish that the art of writing letters had never been invented.

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The name of this perplexed youth was Henry Moreton; he was now on a visit to his uncle, Mr. Charles Price, and having been absent from home ten days, and made a journey of several hundred miles, from his father's to his uncle's house, it was highly necessary and proper, that he should send his parents a full account of himself since he parted from them. The dreaded task had been deferred till his conscience smote him for the delay, and he had now sat down, resolved to write home, but had proceeded no farther than 'My dear parents,' when he gave up in despair, and expressed the inconsiderate wish above mentioned, loud enough for his uncle to hear. Mr. Price had been observing Henry's dilemma with mingled feelings of amusement and compassion. That a fine, bright boy, who did every thing else well for his age, and was full of conversation, and loved his family dearly, should be so puzzled to write a letter, seemed to him at first rather ludicrous; but as Mr. Price saw Henry's face become clouded, and observed how troubled the poor fellow really was, he sympathized very kindly with him, and resolved to help him over his difficulty.

'That is a strange wish of yours, Henry. Have you never reflected upon the great benefits derived from letter-writing? Imagine for a mo-

ment what a doleful change it would make in all our intercourse with our fellow beings, if we were deprived of this mode of communicating with them. We will not now stop to consider the stagnation in commerce, or the total derangement of public affairs, which would take place; we will only remark the effect of such a change upon families and friends. What would you, and your brothers and sisters, have known of your cousins here, or of me, without the intercourse of letters? We should have seemed like strangers to you, instead of near relations. I doubt whether you would have wished to pay us this visit, but for hearing the letters read that passed between the families; for we have seen each other but seldom for the last dozen years.'

'It was cousin Anna's letters to my sister Maria,' said Henry, 'which made me wish to come and see you; she described you all so naturally, and told us how pleasantly you passed your evenings, and what the boys did in winter, and of their making molasses candy in the study and oversetting the skillet. I fancied I could see it all, and longed to be one of the party; and when your invitation came, I was all ready to accept it.'

'This is a case in point certainly,' replied Mr. Price; 'you can judge of the happiness which our letters give your family; and I can tell you, that

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here the receipt of a letter from your parents or sister, makes every individual in the house happy; even Neptune wags his tail, and perceives that there is joy among the children. Now if letters, written under ordinary circumstances, give so much pleasure, think what it must be to a wife, to hear from her husband, when absent from her on some perilous enterprise; or to a father, to receive tidings from a beloved family. Young men who leave their pleasant homes, to earn a living in some remote region, or to go on long voyages, consider a letter from a brother or sister as one of the greatest blessings; whilst those they leave behind are equally indebted to this admirable art. Even when letters do not convey joyful tidings, when they tell us of the sorrows and trials of those we love, there is still a satisfaction in knowing all that has befallen them. Anything is better than ignorance and uncertainty respecting the fate of our friends. Your parents are, at this moment, suffering the pain of uncertainty as to your safety; they know you were to make a long journey, and that you were liable to many accidents by the way, and they must feel anxious to hear of your arrival here.

'I know that, uncle, and have felt very uncomfortable on that account; but I do not like to write only this, that I am here, safe and sound, and I do

not know how to make up a good letter, that will read well, and tell them all they wish to know.'

'If your father,' said Mr. Price, 'were to walk into the room this minute, should you be at any loss what to say to him?'

'Oh no!' exclaimed Henry; 'I should tell him every thing that had happened since we parted; he would ask me questions, and I should chatter on, not minding how I told it, but just saying what came uppermost. But in writing a letter, I have no questions to help me, and I must mind how I make my sentences, and say something proper for the *beginning* of a letter, and have a good *ending*; and that's what I know nothing about. I never could write a letter, and I fear I never shall learn.'

At this, his uncle could not help laughing; but he went on to assure Henry that the great difficulty he found in letter-writing arose from his notions about having a proper beginning and ending, forming set phrases and fine sentences, all which notions were erroneous.

'You cannot,' he continued, 'begin with anything better than a plain statement of the fact which your friends most wish to hear, or end with anything better than messages of love to your family, and an affectionate farewell to your parents. The best letters are the most like the best conversation;

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and if you will only fancy yourself talking to your father and mother, in a limited portion of time, and therefore consider what they must most wish to hear, you may venture to write exactly what you would say to them, and there would be an end of all your difficulties.'

Henry's countenance now began to brighten, and he felt encouraged by what his uncle said. He had always fancied there was something peculiar in the composition of a letter, and that it must be as different as possible from conversation; but if he might talk to his parents on paper, he thought he could do that, though he should feel the want of their questions to lead him on.

'You must proceed in this as you do in other things,' said Mr. Price; 'you must put yourself in the place of others, and think what would be most agreeable to them. You know that the predominant feeling of your parents about you now must be anxiety to hear whether you performed your long journey without any accident; so you can begin with telling them, that you arrived here safely. Then they will wish to know, how long you were on the road, what incidents occurred, and who were your stage companions; and if anything happened to you that would be particularly interesting or amusing to your family, tell them that by all means. When

satisfied as to your journey, their thoughts will naturally turn to those you are now with, and they will like to hear how you found us all, and how you have passed your time since you arrived. Now try what you can do at talking on paper.'

'Thank you, dear uncle; I feel now as if I knew what I was going about, and could fill a whole sheet with the greatest ease.'

Henry wrote a good running hand for a boy of his age; but it was rather large, and sure enough he was not long in filling up his paper. He had written upon one of the foldings, and had only the other one left, when he found to his surprise, that he had not told half what he had to say. He was so full of the idea that he might *talk on paper*, that he forgot that he could not put as much into a letter as he would say in conversation; he had therefore run out into minute details of his coach companions, which were not very interesting, and had no room for the most amusing of his adventures, for any account of his uncle's family, or of how he had spent his time since he arrived; so he concluded his letter very abruptly, saying he had not told the best part of his story, because he had not room, but he would put it in his next letter. On reading it over, he was very much dissatisfied with his performance, and complained to his uncle that in this way of talking

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on paper, he could say so little; he even doubted whether a well-written letter could be anything like conversation, because his own appeared so poor to him. His uncle encouraged him by saying that his letter would give his parents much greater pleasure than a more studied production, and that the reason it did not satisfy him was because he had not attended to one essential part of his directions, which was to fancy himself talking to his absent friends in a *limited portion of time*, and not run on with trifling particulars which would fill up his paper too fast. 'Remember,' continued his uncle, 'I said that the *best* letters were like the *best* conversation; there may be a fault in your manner of talking, which, when put upon paper, appears doubly conspicuous.'

Upon this hint at his way of talking, Henry smiled and said, 'I am often told at home, that I talk too much and too fast, and that I say the same things over too often; therefore, uncle, it will never do for me to write as I talk.'

'You must correct the faults of both,' said Mr. Price; 'a little practice in writing upon this plan will help you to improve your conversation and your letters too. This is a very good beginning; the next time you try, you will choose among your facts, and tell the most interesting only; but you have labored enough for the present in this new kind

of exercise; so you had better join your cousins, who are playing ball in the field next the barn, and leave your letter with me to fold and direct. It shall go by to-morrow's mail, and you may be sure it will be a welcome messenger to all the dear ones at home.' Henry ran out to play, much pleased at the thought of having done something that would add to the happiness of those he loved so well.

Mr. Charles Price was the father of seven children who had been left motherless, when the eldest was but ten years old; and, in performing as far as he could, the duties of both parents, he had learned to give his ready sympathy to the troubles and pleasures of childhood, to understand the workings of the youthful mind, and to minister to it in the happiest way. All children who knew Mr. Price, loved and revered him. His conversation was always instructive, and he did his young friends good as much by calling forth their powers, as by what he imparted of his own stores of wisdom and knowledge. He knew just how far to tax a child's powers without pressing him too hard; he smiled on every worthy effort, however unsuccessful; and, though very direct and sincere in his criticisms, he always chose a time for imparting them when they could best be borne. He felt that the moment when Henry Moreton had just finished his letter

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and was himself dissatisfied with it, when his mind was tired by the unusual effort he had made, was not the best time for pointing out its numerous defects; but he knew he could give him some instruction in letter-writing by criticising this faulty production, and therefore he took the pains of copying it, before he sent it off, that he might, at some future opportunity, give his nephew the benefit of his criticisms, and make him learn by his own mistakes. Henry's letter was as follows, except that we do not copy his verbal inaccuracies.

'Oakwood, May —, 183—.

'My dear Parents,

'I arrived here safe and well, on ~~Wednesday~~ *Tuesday* last. I was three days getting here, because I did not arrive here till ten o'clock at night; and as I left you at four o'clock on Wednesday morning, that may fairly be called three days; and as I was one night on board the steam-boat, I may say that my journey took up three days and one night. The last part of the road was very bad, up to the hubs of the wheels. I lost my hat, looking out of the window to see how deep the wheels sank. I got it again though, by that kind gentleman's stopping the stage, and getting the driver to pick it up. But I forget that I have not told you about that gentleman; he

was very kind to me all the way; I mean all the way that he was with us, for we did not take him in till the last day's journey. But I liked him very much, he was so kind to me, and told so many funny stories. There were two ladies in the stage who would not laugh at any of them, but were so silent and prim that every body disliked them, at least, I am sure I did, and so did Mr. Smith. They only went a little way. But, dear me! I am telling the last part of my story first; this all happened the last day of my journey. I ought to go back to the beginning, and tell it all in order. Well then, to begin with what happened when I first left you. Nothing particular happened, except that I did not like riding in the dark with so many strangers, and as we passed by a lamp, I tried to see what they looked like; but could only see that they were all men, and most of them were fast asleep. One great fellow kept lolling down upon me till he almost crushed me, and I pinched and poked him, but still he kept on, till at last I remembered the pincushion I had in my pocket, and I managed to get a pin out of it; and after a few pricks with that, he waked quite up, and then he fixed himself in a better way, up in the corner. and did not fall down on me any more. I was packed into the back seat with a whole row of backs before me, which is

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what I do hate; I wish there were no back seats in a stage, for they always make little fellows like me sit in them, and there I am half smothered, and I cannot see anything. But let me see, where was I before I told about not liking to ride in the back seat? O I was describing the first part of my journey. Well, there we were in the dark, as I said before; but by degrees it became lighter, and long before we stopped to breakfast, it was broad daylight. I ate my breakfast and paid for it like the other passengers. There was an old gentleman there who offered to pay for me; now I don't know whether he meant to give me the money for my breakfast, or whether he meant to pay the master of the inn and let me pay him; which do you think he meant, father? I thanked him, and told him I could as well pay for myself. I went to the bar and handed up half a dollar, which was what I saw others pay; and after doing that, I was turning away, but the man called out to me and said, "Here, my son, half of this is enough for your bread-and-milk breakfast." I don't know how he knew that I had eaten only bread and milk, but that is what he said, and he returned me half my money; and I think that was very fair and honorable of him, don't you? Then we all got into the stage again, and this time I got a forward seat, and could look out and see the

country. There was a farmer in the stage who knew all the farms by the road-side, and he told us who owned them and how they were cultivated, and he said the season was more backward than he had ever known it, that every thing was three weeks behind hand. He showed us one farm, that there had been a law-suit about, and told a very long story about it, and he was called upon as a witness, and there was an appeal, and he had to travel a great many miles about it; but I could not understand what the law-suit was about, and so I cannot tell you. But I have no more paper, and so I cannot tell you the best part of my journey. I will write that in my next letter. Love to all.

Your affectionate son,

'Henry Moreton.'

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## CHAPTER II.

CRITICISM OF HENRY'S FIRST LETTER. — THE DUTY OF WRITING TO ABSENT FRIENDS. — THE CHILD WHO CORRESPONDED WITH HER DOLLS. — HENRY'S SECOND LETTER MORE CONCISE. — MR. PRICE'S CRITICISM. — HENRY'S ACCOUNT OF BRINGING RUN AWAY WITH TOLD BY ANNA AND BY HIMSELF.

A few days after Henry's first letter was despatched, he began a second, which was to supply the deficiencies of the first; and, as he was really desirous of improving, he asked his uncle how he should avoid the faults he had before committed.

Mr. Price now produced his copy of Henry's letter, and asked him, if he could bear to have it thoroughly criticised, for the sake of learning what the faults were, and how to avoid them in future. Henry assured his uncle he could bear it perfectly well, and said he had been wishing he could see what he had written. He thought his uncle had taken a great deal of trouble, to copy out such stuff for the sake of doing him good. With this sense of obligation, his mind was in an excellent state to listen to criticism; so Mr. Price thus began.

'Your first statement is very good, but all that follows about the time your journey took, is superfluous. If you had merely added to your first sentence, "at ten o'clock at night," it would have told the whole, for your parents knew as well as you when you set off; so here we will strike out five lines. As your arriving so late was occasioned by the state of the roads, it is very well to speak of that next; but instead of saying, "the roads were up to the hubs," I should prefer saying, "the mud was up to the hubs." The loss of your hat comes in here very naturally, but if you had said, "a kind gentleman," instead of "that kind gentleman," you might have spared the next sentence altogether. That he travelled one day with you, was very kind to you, and told funny stories, is all proper enough. That every body disliked the silent ladies, is too general an assertion; the next line seems to be intended to qualify it, and comes nearer the truth, I dare say. What follows is very well, just like an exclamation in conversation; but after saying, "I ought to go back to the beginning and tell it all in order," there is no need of the next sentence. To say, "Well then, I will begin with what happened when I first left you," and then to say, "nothing particular happened, &c." is rather flat; I would omit all between the word "order" and "I did not like riding in the

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dark, &c." The account of the sleeping scene, is very good; and since you were barbarous enough to spoil the man's nap, you have told it very well. Your dislike of back seats is properly expressed, though not very interesting to any one but yourself. The next few lines are quite superfluous, and would be so in conversation; so we will strike them out. The account of your paying for your breakfast will do well enough, though it might have been given in fewer words; for instance, you might leave out "after doing that, I," and say merely, "and was turning away." Your setting off again, and getting a forward seat, is all very well; but that tedious old farmer and his law-suit deserve to be stricken out altogether. He must have been tiresome enough in reality, and I am sure I would not put him into a letter.'

'I wish,' said Henry, 'that I had left him out entirely, and then I should have had room for the runaway horses, which were a much better subject. I wish you had not sent off my letter, uncle, before you criticised it, and then I would have written it over again, and put a great deal more into it, and made it much better.'

'To have done that,' replied Mr. Price, 'you must have kept your parents twenty-four hours longer in suspense as to your safe arrival. It was

much more kind and considerate, to send a very faulty production at once, than to delay for the purpose of attempting something better. Persons who are not good letter-writers often treat their friends very unkindly; and because they cannot do themselves credit by writing well, they cause a great deal of pain and anxiety, by not writing at all; this is mere selfishness, and is more to their discredit than the poorest letter would be, written from a kind motive. There are many cases in which it is a real sin to omit writing a letter; and if a person is conscious that he could not write one, without being mortified at the badness of the performance, he should make a business of learning to do it well.'

'That is just what I mean to do,' said Henry; 'and now that I am away from home, and among such capital letter-writers as you and my cousins, I hope I shall improve. How did cousin Anna learn to write such excellent letters?'

'By beginning very young, and practising a great deal. Her first correspondents were her dolls.'

'Her dolls! How funny!' exclaimed Henry. 'What could she write to her dolls? they could not answer her.'

'She imagined herself their mother, and addressed them as grown up daughters, and wrote the answers from them herself. I recollect that when

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she was only six years old, she carried on a long correspondence in this way, on the subject of an imprudent match that one of her dolls was inclined to make. I used to find scraps of it lying about, and I have often wished since, that I had preserved them; for it was an extraordinary performance for such a mere baby.'

'O I wish you had, uncle. I should be delighted to see what she wrote then. Cannot you remember any of it? Do try.'

'Yes, there was one sentence which amused me so much I shall never forget it. 'T is the conclusion of one of the mother's letters, in which she says, "I warn you, my dear child, that if you persevere in this unhappy affair, you will bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."'

'O what a funny little thing, to be talking of grey hairs! But don't you think she got that out of some book? I am sure I have read it somewhere.'

'Certainly, it is not original. She had either read it or heard it, for it is a hacknied phrase; but at six years of age, it is something to understand and apply correctly the phrases of others.'

'To be sure it is,' said Henry, 'and I wish I had done the same, or something like it, if that would make me as good a letter-writer as cousin Anna;

but I suppose she made some mistakes, before she arrived at her present perfection.'

'She made a great many; and I sometimes criticised her compositions as severely as I have yours now; but her early and constant practice made her write better at your age than you do. Nothing but practice will give facility in composition; and if young persons are so situated that they have no real correspondence, they had better attempt an imaginary one.'

'O I could do that easily enough; I could imagine five hundred things. I would fancy myself an old gentleman with a prodigal son, and would write him fine letters of advice; or else I would be a sailor, writing home to my friends from foreign countries, and there I should find plenty of things to tell.'

Mr. Price had no time to listen to any more of Henry's imaginings; so he stopped him by saying,

'It is easy enough to imagine persons and circumstances, but not to say what would be natural and proper for them. If you were to try either of the subjects you have named, I should soon find you hanging over your paper in the same state of despair that you so lately manifested. You cannot have a better or an easier subject, than the journey you have just made; the facts are all fresh in your

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memory ; you have only to choose, among them, those which are best worth telling, to arrange them in their natural order, and to avoid the faults I have just pointed out to you.'

Saying this, Mr. Price left Henry to write his second letter. He was now so afraid of being diffuse, and saying too much upon one subject, that he fell into the opposite fault. His sentences were short, stiff, and disjointed. He stopped so long to choose among his facts, that he lost all natural connexion between them ; and, though he put a great deal more into this second letter than he did into the first, it was not, on the whole, so pleasing a production. He was, however, better satisfied with it himself, and he showed it to his uncle, as the family were all sitting round the table in the evening, with some self-complacency. Watching the countenance of his friendly critic, as he read the letter, Henry perceived that it did not bear examination so well as he expected, and he almost held his breath with anxiety to know what judgment awaited him.

After a pause, which seemed to Henry intolerably long, his uncle looked up very smilingly and said, 'I give you credit for the effort you have made to control your mind ; you have evidently exerted yourself very much to follow my directions, and if you have overshot the mark, 't is partly my fault.'

This figurative expression of *overshooting the mark* was peculiarly appropriate, as all the young folks had been shooting at a target with bows and arrows that afternoon ; so Henry carried on the figure in his answer, and said, 'I am sure I thought I hit the *bull's eye* as completely in that letter, as I did in the target to-day ; where have I failed, uncle ?'

'Only by being a little too concise, and taking too much pains to say nothing superfluous. Now, as redundancy is a less fault in a young writer than barrenness, it had been better perhaps if I had suffered you to go on in your exuberant style, instead of criticising you so much. I wished to make you perfect at once, and I have done you harm instead of good.'

Here Mr. Price's eldest daughter, Anna, joined in the conversation. She knew her father to be so candid, and so apt to take blame on himself when he did not deserve it, that she could not help defending him against himself.

'I cannot believe,' said she, 'that you have done Henry the least harm ; on the contrary you have made him aware of his own powers ; he knows now that he can talk at length on paper, or write a concise statement of facts ; he has tried the two extremes, and has now only to hit the happy medium.'

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'True enough, that's all I have to do,' said Henry; 'but how to do that, is the thing. You know well enough, Anna, and I wish you would teach me.'

'That's well thought of, Henry; Anna can teach you much better than I, how to write a letter.' So saying, Mr. Price would have returned to the perusal of his book; but his daughter assured him that, although she could write a tolerable letter herself, she never could tell another person how to do it. 'I have no notion of any general rules such as you have in your mind,' she continued; 'and though I have often been guided by your instructions, I can never recollect them sufficiently to repeat them to another. So pray give Henry the benefit of your remarks upon his second letter, and I have no doubt the third will be vastly better than either.'

Henry joined in begging his uncle to criticise his letter; though he was not so well prepared, as in the first instance, to see his faults, because he had a better opinion of this letter than of the former. This was very natural; for people are always disposed to think, that what has cost them the most pains is the best.

Mr. Price observed to Anna, that, to criticise such a letter as this, it would be necessary to rewrite it; 't was not so easy a matter as to point out

redundancies; then turning to Henry he said, 'When you are sure that a thing is worth telling, I would advise you to fancy yourself in the situation you are about to describe, and enter into all the particulars that naturally occur to you. Now you knew that the adventure of the runaway horses was worth telling, and, when you described it to us on first arriving, you made a very spirited narrative; so, when you came to write of it, you might have let your mind run away with your pen, just as the horses did with the coach.'

'I remember,' said Anna, 'how well Henry described that incident; and, if he has forgotten it, I think I could call it to mind, just as he then told it. I am sure it would be well worth putting into his letter, because it would divert his brothers and sisters as it did us.'

Henry had no recollection how he had told the story; so Anna very good naturedly left her needlework, and wrote the following paragraph for him.

'We had one grand adventure just before we stopped to dine the last day. The stage had been creeping along very slowly for some time, and the passengers had been grumbling about it, saying how hungry they were, and that they ought to be at the dining-place now, when all of a sudden we started on at a good rate. It was down hill, and

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we thought the man meant to make up now for going so slowly before; but we went faster and faster, and the stage rolled from side to side; and splash-dash we went through the mud; the fences and trees seemed to be flying by us, and I was enjoying it greatly, when some one said the horses must be running away with us, and directly every body was so frightened. Some called out to the driver to know what was the matter, some punched him in the back through the front windows, and one tried to open the door of the stage and talked of jumping out; one lady screamed, and another fainted; heads were out on every side; the mud flew in their faces, and stopped the mouths of some. I was so amused, and so pleased at going so fast, that I clapped my hands and laughed, which made somebody give me a good shaking and scolding; another told me to prepare to be drowned, for we were coming to a bridge, and we should certainly be tipped over into the river. I was just beginning to be frightened, like the rest, when the horses turned into a farm-yard that was by the side of the road, and carried the stage safe into a great barn, in the midst of chickens, geese, and pigs; and, what was best of all, there we were close to the house where we dined. The horses were in a hurry for their dinners as well as we.'

When Anna had finished writing this, she read it aloud, and all the young folks agreed that it was almost word for word as Henry told it to them, the morning after he arrived. Henry was mightily pleased with this account of his adventure, and very much struck with the contrast between it and the stiff narrative he had given in his letter, which was as follows.

'We were run away with the last day. I enjoyed going so fast, but the rest of the passengers were very much frightened; at last I was frightened too. There was a bridge before us; if the stage had got upon that, we might have been upset into the river; some thought there was great danger of our being drowned. We stopped before we came to the bridge, the horses turned into a farm-yard by the side of the road, and we arrived safe at our dining-place.'

Henry now consulted his cousin Anna, as to whether he had better re-write his whole letter; he said that if he did, he should copy her paragraph, and put inverted commas, to show that it was not his own composition, and should say that she wrote it.

'O but it is your own description,' said William Price, a boy a little older than Henry; 'Anna has only remembered how you told it, and put it on paper for you.'

Henry, who had very clear notions of what was

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right in such a case as this, replied, 'Well, but as I never could have put it upon paper as Anna has done it, I ought not to have the credit of it.'

'Neither should I have the credit of it,' said Anna, 'for the story is all your own, Henry. I will tell you how we will manage the matter. You do not like the trouble of re-writing your letter, I know, and yet you wish that this lively account of your adventure should go to your friends at home; so I will take the sheet of paper, on which I have written it, and fill it up as a letter to your sister Maria, to whom I was going to write this evening, and I will explain to her what share you and I had in the narrative.'

Henry looked his cordial assent to this kind proposition, and a very sonorous kiss on his cousin's cheek announced his satisfaction to the family party as well as to her. When his happiness found words as well as gestures, he declared his cousin Anna to be the best girl that ever lived; that she always knew what he liked and what he disliked, and that there was nothing he dreaded so much as having to re-write that letter. Having commissioned Anna to tell the folks at home that he knew all the faults of his second attempt, and meant to do better next time, he took a book and joined the quiet circle of readers, whom he had disturbed so long by his epistolary troubles and difficulties.

## CHAPTER III.

HENRY'S THIRD LETTER. — PUNCTUATION; PARAGRAPHS; PLACE OF BEGINNING; MARGINS; FOLDINGS.

Having discharged the duty of one who leaves home, by faithfully narrating to his family the events of his journey and arrival, Henry now waited, with an easy conscience, till he should receive a reply. It was not long before he had the pleasure of opening a folio sheet, containing letters from his father, mother, and sister Maria, in which, though reproached a little for not writing sooner, he was thanked and praised for doing so well when he did make the attempt.

His first letter only had been received when this folio sheet was despatched, and it had evidently given his parents great pleasure, and encouraged them to believe that Henry would make a pretty good correspondent during his absence.

The consciousness of having gratified those he best loved, and the novel pleasure of exchanging thoughts and feelings with his absent family, made Henry feel the importance of letter-writing more than he had ever done before; and, when he folded

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up this precious folio, he resolved to write home every week, and to profit as much as possible by the instruction of those around him, in the blessed art of letter-writing. After thoroughly enjoying his letters himself, he shared them with his uncle and cousins. The former advised him to reply to them whilst he was still animated by their contents.

'You may remember,' said Mr. Price, 'that you thought you should be more at a loss than ever, how to begin your next letter, because you would have no journey to tell of; but there cannot be a better beginning to a letter than the acknowledgment of one just received, and of the pleasure it has given. If you write now, what you say will be warm from your heart. I advise you to put down just what comes uppermost, and above all don't think of me or my criticisms; this time you may trust to your feelings.'

Henry took this advice, and wrote as follows:

'Oakwood, May —, 183—.

'My dear Parents,

'I have just received your two letters and Maria's. I am so glad to hear from you that I cannot describe to you how I feel. As I never was away from home before, long enough to have a letter, I did not know what a great pleasure it is. I thank

you a thousand times for writing me so much; whilst I was reading it, I fancied myself at home, talking with you; and when I had done and found I was here, so far from you, it gave me a choking, aching feeling about the throat, and I was almost ready to cry. But I began and read it all over again, and this time I remembered it was only a letter; and when I had done, I felt very happy, and thought what blessed things letters are, and I determined to write to you every week, and I hope you will do the same.

'Please to tell Maria that I am very much obliged to her for telling me all about her strawberry party, and the walk in the woods; and I am sorry my puppy tore Jane's parasol, and I think she did right to punish him for it. We have here a very handsome Newfoundland dog, who does a great many tricks, and is very good-natured; he is so large that, if he were not good-tempered, he would be a very dangerous playfellow. He was given to uncle Charles by the captain of a vessel whose life he saved. This was the way it happened. They were all cast ashore on a little beach, and the cliffs were so high all round them, they could not get up them; so there they were pent in, and they would have died there, had it not been for this good dog, who swam away to another part of the shore, and got upon the

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top of the cliff, and went to a farm-house a mile off; there he whined and barked till he made the people notice him, and the farmer perceived the dog was in trouble and determined to follow him. The dog ran towards the coast where the sailors were, and wagged his tail, and looked pleased when the man followed him; but in a little while the farmer wished to turn back, and then the dog jumped up and put his fore-paws on the man's shoulders, and growled in his face, so that the farmer was frightened, and thought he had better follow the dog, and see where he would lead him. So then he went on till he came to the edge of a cliff, and there he heard the voices of men underneath. The farmer called to the sailors, and they answered, and he told them he would bring some men and ropes and take them up. Now that he had spoken with the sailors, the dog was willing to let him go back to his farm, which seems exactly as if he knew what they had been saying. The captain and his men were all helped up the cliffs, and their lives saved by this good dog. His name is Neptune; and the captain, being under great obligations to my uncle, gave him this dog as the greatest present he could make him. I love Neptune very much. I don't know which I love most, Neptune or Jenny; but perhaps you don't remember who Jenny is. She is the black pony

that William used to write so much about. She is the smallest horse I ever saw, and all black, with a long mane and tail. She canters beautifully; and when we are riding in company, whoever is mounted on Jenny, is sure to be first, for she is so ambitious she will not let any one go before her. William has taught her a great many tricks, and he can ride standing on her back, like the riders at the circus. William has used her for six years, and when he was a little boy he used to call her his *black angel*. She knows us all perfectly, and treats us differently; she has thrown me several times, because I am a stranger, and she does not like me so well as her old friends.

'I have just remembered uncle Charles's rule about letters, that we should try to write of what is most interesting to our friends, and I am afraid I have said too much about Neptune and Jenny to please my dear parents; but Jane, and Fanny, and Willy will like to hear about them, and now I will try and tell something that you will like to hear. I get my lessons regularly with my cousins, and recite to my uncle, who devotes two hours to us every day. Cousin Anna sits with us in the school-room, and keeps order while we are studying, and she attends to our writing and geography. The children here draw the outlines of countries on a

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black board from memory, and I make sad work of it. I first tried Massachusetts, because there are so many straight lines in that, and Cape Cod is so remarkable, they all thought I must remember exactly how it went; but I did not do it at all right. Then I thought I could do South America, because it is shaped so like a leg of mutton; but I made it all slope the wrong way, and we had a good laugh over my poor Cape Horn. But every time I try, I do a little better. William can draw almost any country very exactly indeed; and uncle says, that the best way of learning geography is to get pictures of the countries fixed in your mind. I do like uncle Charles's way of teaching every thing, and he says he should like to have me stay here all summer, and study with his boys; but I should not like to stay away from home so long as that. I like being here very much indeed, but still I love my own dear home better, and sometimes when I go to bed, I wish I could have a kiss of my dear mother. I pity my cousins for not having a mother. Anna often says she wishes she had a mother; the younger ones think their sister as good as a mother, but they don't know how good it is to have both. Now I have filled my paper, I will bid you good night. Give my love to all.

Your affectionate son,  
Henry Moreton.

It must not be supposed that this letter was as free from faults in Henry's manuscript, as it is in this book. There were a great many defects and blunders which we have here corrected. The composition we have copied exactly; and that was so good, that it gained him great praise from his uncle, who said, that as he had now conquered the great difficulty of putting his thoughts on paper, in the easy natural way he would speak them, it was time for him to learn to be more accurate in the use of capitals, in punctuation, in making paragraphs, &c. Henry had learned to spell correctly, so that he rarely made a mistake in orthography, and he always wrote proper names with capitals; but sometimes he forgot to put them at the beginning of a sentence. Though he knew that after a full stop, he should always use a capital, his uncle marked half a dozen places, at least, where he had begun a sentence with a small letter, which looked very badly. He also used capitals where they were not needed, as in the words 'strawberry party,' 'farm,' 'cliff,' 'cousin,' 'uncle.' Where the last two words occurred alone, he was told to write them with small letters only, but wherever they were united with the name, as in 'Uncle Charles,' his capitals were allowed to stand. Henry had a fondness for underscoring emphatic words, which his uncle did not approve.

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'If you borrow a word from another language, it is proper to mark it by a line drawn underneath; this may be done too, when you use a word in a new sense, or with a particular allusion to something not expressed; but, as a general rule, the less underscoring the better.'

Henry had learned by rote the rules of punctuation, but he complained of his utter inability to apply them.

'Reason about it; that is better than learning rules by heart. Take the first paragraph of your letter, and read it so as to make it intelligible to a hearer; and you will find that you naturally make pauses between sentences, and parts of sentences, and that those between sentences are longer than the others; where you make a long pause, put a full stop, and where a short one, put a comma.'

'Well, uncle, you have the greatest knack of making things seem easy, which I have always thought very difficult. I shall be able now to manage periods and commas; but then there are the semicolons, I never know where to put them.'

'After you have put commas at all the short pauses, you will sometimes find that you have a great many in one long sentence; then read it over again and you will perceive that there are places where the sense requires a longer pause than at others, and

yet not long enough for a full stop; there you must put a semicolon. You will often find that a sentence is naturally divided into two principal portions by some such word as, "but," or "although," and then it will be well to put a semicolon before such a word. Now read over this first paragraph of your letter emphatically, as you would if you wished to make a person understand it, and I will put the commas and periods, where you make short and long pauses.'

Henry did so, and as he was a good reader, the punctuation came right, as far as commas and periods went. Then his uncle told him to try to find out where he should put a semicolon, instead of a comma, and he very readily said, 'Before "whilst" and "and when."'

When his uncle pronounced it all properly punctuated, Henry clapped his hands, with delight and exclaimed, 'There! I have climbed a mountain which I thought I should never get up; and all thanks to your scaling-ladders, your good explanations, uncle.'

'I am much obliged to you, Henry, for that compliment; but if you had not learned to read well, you could not profit so readily by my directions. By attending to the stops in printed books, learning to read correctly, and to drop your voice at the end

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of each sentence, you can learn to punctuate your own compositions. Stops are intended to assist us in understanding what we read; to show what parts of a paragraph belong closely to each other, and what are distinct propositions. Now when you are yourself the writer, you know what is meant; and if you read it well, your own pauses will suggest to you the places for stops. What is the matter, Henry? you look puzzled again, and as if you were slipping down the mountain, instead of standing firmly on its top.

'I am puzzled about sentences and paragraphs, I do not understand exactly what you mean by them.'

'I call what is included between full stops, a sentence; a paragraph contains several sentences, and may be of various lengths. Some persons write a whole letter without making any paragraphs; but that is a very confused way, and if you wish to refer to a particular subject, it is very difficult to find where it is, and where it begins. Whenever you enter upon a new subject, you should make a paragraph. You have made one very properly after, "I hope you will do the same." There should be another where you begin the account of Neptune. Though his history was very naturally suggested by the account of your own puppy, and comes in very

well there, still it is a new topic, and should begin a new paragraph. Jenny and Neptune are so closely interwoven, it seems, in your affections and description, that they cannot well be made the subjects of separate paragraphs. Where you leave them, and speak of my rule, you have very properly made a new paragraph; and what follows is so intimately connected, one thought being suggested by another, that there is no need of any further division than into sentences, by full stops.'

Mr. Price looked over Henry whilst he read aloud and punctuated the rest of his letter; and though some doubtful cases arose, which could only be settled by Mr. Price's experience, Henry's rhetorical powers made it clear to himself, where most of the commas and periods should be put; when he had done, he had the satisfaction of feeling that he really understood what he had been about, and knew something more of stops and paragraphs than he had ever done before.

Henry also learnt that the proper place to date a letter is the right-hand corner, at the top of the sheet of paper, as it lies before one, with the folded edge to the left hand. His uncle said there had been a fashion of dating letters at the end, but he thought it a bad practice; for by that means people often forgot to date them at all; whereas, if a per-

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son makes it a regular practice to begin with the date, it will never be forgotten.

Henry, who was quite in the spirit of learning all about letter-writing, asked how low down on the page a person should begin.

'That depends a little,' said Mr. Price, 'on how much you are going to say, and whether it is a ceremonious or a familiar letter. I dislike to see a great blank space at the top of the first page, when the third page and the ends are crowded; and it would look still worse, to see a letter of a dozen lines only, begun at the top of the page. A short letter therefore of business, or ceremony, should be begun about a third of the way down the page, or a little higher, if that will bring the signature exactly at the bottom of the page. If a short letter overruns one page, it should do so by several lines, besides the signature; it is very awkward to turn over a leaf, merely to write the signature, or that and the line preceding.'

'Well then, to begin right, one must know beforehand exactly how much one is going to say, and how much room it will take up. That is pretty difficult, I think; can you always tell that, uncle?'

'A person, accustomed to write a great deal, can judge pretty nearly; in letters of business, or ceremony, I know beforehand what I am going to say,

and can therefore tell how much room it will occupy. In letters of friendship, we cannot be so exact, and it is not necessary, for they generally overrun the first page, and it matters not how much. If you learn by experience, that when writing home, or to a dear friend, you always fill up the ends, and never find room for all you have to say, you should begin near the top of your first page. Write the date on the first line and at your right hand; the address of "My dear parents," or whatever it may be, two lines below the date, at the left hand a little way from the folded edge of the paper; then skip one line and begin your letter a little further from the edge than the address. So much for the beginning; then, for every paragraph, you must begin the line about an inch further from the edge of the paper than the lines generally are. In printing, it is a rule to begin a paragraph with a space of two letters only; but that is not enough in manuscript, where the space between words is often more than that.'

'Some people begin every line an inch from the edge of the paper; would you, in that case, begin a paragraph two inches from the edge?'

'Certainly; whatever is the width of your margin, the beginning of a paragraph must be still further off from the edge of the paper than the lines generally are, in order to mark it as such.'

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'How wide should a margin be?'

'That is a matter of taste or fashion. In business letters it is generally about an inch wide, but in familiar letters, so much room cannot well be spared. Of late, young ladies think it most genteel to have almost no margin, but to begin as near the edge as they conveniently can. Young letter-writers, like you, are assisted in beginning their lines at equal distances from the edge, by having a ruled margin, and therefore I recommend to you not to follow Anna's example, but to leave a margin half an inch wide.'

On hearing her name mentioned, the gentle Anna looked up from her book, and smilingly said to Henry, 'You are having quite a lecture on letter-writing, and you are such an attentive pupil, I have no doubt you will soon become an accomplished letter-writer.'

'That is just what I want to be; and as I did not take it naturally, as you did, cousin Anna, I must work at it, and ask questions, and be lectured into it by degrees. I am afraid you think me a very stupid fellow.'

'Far from it, I assure you,' said Anna; 'for one who never wrote letters before, I think you do wonders, and papa's teaching is to make you, at once, what we have become by long practice. I have

committed all the faults and blunders that papa has been cautioning you against. I tried the fashion of dating letters at the end, instead of the beginning, and was reproached by my correspondents for not dating them at all. I have begun low down and then crowded the ends, so that the contrast, on opening the sheet, between the first and last page was so great, I was almost ashamed to send it. And what is more, I used always to fold down the ends, in order to see how much space I had, and then to write on them when folded, so that, upon being opened, it was all topsy-turvy; and this I did without perceiving it, till I was plagued by your sister Maria doing the same, and then I thought how much better it would be, to open the letter again, after having folded down the ends, and write on the fourth page, just as I did on the others, only skipping over the part between the folds. Maria has taken the hint and does the same; so now I read her letters in comfort.'

Henry sighed to think how many things must be considered, in order to write a letter properly. Mr. Price perceived what was passing in his mind, and said,

'People who love to reason about things as well as you do, Henry, generally like to find out the best way of doing every thing, for there is always a reason why one way is better than another; there is a

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pleasure in doing things in the *best* way, which those miss who think *any* way will do; and when these little niceties are once learnt, they are easily practised all the rest of one's life. When once you know where to begin your letter, and where to date it, 't is just as easy to do it properly as otherwise; 't is no more trouble to have margins and paragraphs, and to write upon the foldings, so that they can be read like the rest of the letter, than to write lines of uneven length, and go on without any paragraphs, and make the foldings read topsy-turvy. There is too a satisfaction in doing a thing well, which would amply repay us, if it were more trouble. A letter, in which these things are attended to, looks so much better, that if there were no other reason for doing it properly, that alone ought to be sufficient.'

Henry agreed to all this, and only begged to know if he had now been made acquainted with all the particularities, that he should attend to.

'All,' said his uncle, 'that are necessary for you at present; at least, all that relates to the inside of your letters; folding, sealing, and directing, are the next things you have to learn, and I dare say Anna will give you a lesson in that this evening. She always does such things very nicely.'

Anna cheerfully promised to attend to it, when they should gather round the table after tea.

## CHAPTER IV.

## FOLDING, SEALING, AND DIRECTING LETTERS.

Anna had been told by her father, that in teaching Henry to fold, seal, and direct his letter, she must not only do the thing before his eyes, but she must talk it over as she did it, calling his attention to every part, by describing, as well as doing. So when the lamps were lighted, and Henry appeared with his letter in his hand, Anna began thus:

'Now, Henry, you must fold the paper so that the top and bottom of the sheet shall meet exactly in the middle. That is a good rule for common-sized letter-paper; if it is larger, or if it is folio paper, the edges must lap over.'

'I thought,' said Henry, 'you should fold one half of the sheet lengthwise first.'

'Many people do so; but letters so folded are generally of a bad shape, and they open with difficulty; therefore I adopt a different method, unless my paper is thin, and I find the writing shows through it, so as to be read on the outside; in that case I fold the first page twice. If the third page is written over, there is no fear of its being read on the outside; and if the paper is thick, this way, that

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I am showing you, is much the best. See that the two ends are folded very evenly, before you crease it down sharply with a paper-cutter, or your thumb-nail, thus. Now you see, I take the side where the double edge of the sheet is, and fold it down nearly of the width, that I wish my letter to have when finished. In doing this, you must take great care that the inner part does not slip; keep it in its place with one hand, while you fold over with the other, and get it all square and even before you crease it down hard. Then comes the last fold which requires the most attention; you must hold the edges from slipping as you turn them over, and fold this part down as close as you well can over the other, so that your letter may be a pretty oblong square when finished. You must hold the edges tight till you have creased down this last fold, and when you are sure they will not press out at the end, rub down every side with your paper-knife. Now you have made your folds; well, the third fold must be tucked under one edge of the fourth. Persons, unaccustomed to letter-folding, frequently make a great mistake here, by tucking the fourth, or last fold, under the double edge of the third fold; this makes the seal come too near the edge of the letter, and causes a large breach in the paper when the letter is opened. One single edge of paper should be brought over,

to receive the seal, and that should come rather below the middle of the letter. There now, is not that a pretty-shaped letter, Harry?'

'Indeed it is, and it looks just like you. I always know your letters, when they come to our house by their pretty shape, when I am too far off to see your hand-writing; and I am sure Maria will know this to be your folding as soon as she sees it.'

'My way of folding was of great use to me once,' said Anna; 'for I very carelessly put a letter into the post-office, in our village, without any direction; and when the post-master saw it, he knew it was mine, and was obliging enough to send one of his boys to the house with it, that if I recognised it to be mine, I might direct it, and so save it from being sent to the dead-letter office. As it was a letter to my brother Robert, who was on the point of sailing on a long cruise, I was very glad that it was not detained.'

'That was lucky indeed,' said Henry; 'I should think you would not like to have any body imitate your way of folding, for then your letters would not be known. Now if I learn to fold as well as you, you will lose all the advantage of having your letters known.'

'As I do not intend to make a practice of sending letters to the post-office without being directed,

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I do not court that advantage, and shall be very glad to see you fold a letter as well, or better than I do. Now suppose you take this sheet of paper, and practise folding, whilst my directions are fresh in your memory.'

Henry folded and unfolded, measured and creased, till he at last succeeded in imitating the size and shape of the pattern letter; but the paper was so tumbled and had so many wrong creases in it, that he groaned over the work of his 'clumsy fingers,' as he called them. Anna, however, said many encouraging things, and told him he wanted nothing but practice.

'Now for the direction,' said Henry; 'if you will direct the real letter, I will direct this sham one.'

'No, no,' said Anna, 'never direct a letter till you have sealed it, for if you do, 't is ten chances to one, you blot it; now see me seal this, and then do the same to the paper you have folded. Hold the wax in your right hand, and the letter in your left; with your left thumb, lift up the edge that is to be sealed; hold both the letter and the sealing-wax near the lamp or taper; put the wax to the side of the flame; never hold it at the top, for that smokes it; melt it enough to put a little dab'

\* Some persons put a wafer under a wax seal; but this

of wax under the edge you are holding up with your left thumb; then press the edge down upon the wax. Now set fire to the wax, and when ready to drop, hold it over the place where the seal is to be; let it drop and blaze, till you have nearly enough wax, then stir it round a little, and blow out the flame; go on moving the stick of wax round, without spreading what is on the letter, till all the black streaks are worked out; then lift it up from the middle of the melted wax, so as to leave the most there; lay down your letter on the table, and put your seal on very deliberately, taking care that it is straight and with the right side up, and that the wax presses out evenly all round it.'

'You are deliberate indeed!' exclaimed Henry; 'do you believe that will be a good impression? I always thought I must be in a violent hurry, or it would not take the impression.'

'That is a common mistake; but if the wax is put on blazing, it will keep warm long enough for you to make the seal, without being in any hurry. The best impressions are made with the wax somewhat cooled.'

This was new doctrine to Henry; and though he tried to believe it and practise upon it, still he fell

is altogether unnecessary, besides being double trouble, making the seal too large, and increasing the difficulty of spreading the wax evenly.

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into the old way of hurrying, when he saw the wax blaze, and he made his seal upside down, and all uneven round the edges, and left the wax full of black streaks, because he did not stir it enough. He would have gone on, however, making seals all over the 'sham letter,' as he called it, had not Anna turned his attention to the finishing of his real letter. That was now to be directed, and his cousin told him, that the good appearance of a letter depended as much on the direction being well placed, as on the folding and sealing.

'I suppose it does,' replied Henry, 'for I have seen some letters look very queer with the direction all crowded together in one corner, and some with the words sprawled out all over them. My father gets letters from his captains, that are written so.'

'If a direction does not occupy more than three or four lines, I, who write a small running hand, begin half way down from the top and pretty near the left hand; having written the title and name very legibly, —'

'Title!' exclaimed Henry, 'I never expect to write to a titled person.'

'By title, I mean the words *Mr. or Mrs., Miss or Master, Honorable or Reverend*. If your father were a member of the Senate, I should write, "Honorable Henry Moreton," but as he is not, I write plain "Mr. Moreton."'

'I thought it would be "Honorable Mr. Moreton," I think I have seen the word *Honorable* put before *Mr.*'

'So have I,' said Anna; 'but papa says it is incorrect; "Honorable" being a higher title than "Mr.," it renders that word superfluous, in the same way as when we use "Esquire" for a title, we do not put "Mr." also, but only the name.'

'Well, why do you not write, "Henry Moreton Esquire," my father's letters are generally directed so.'

'I do not do it, because my father does not, and he has his reasons, which he will give you if you ask him at a proper time.'

'Then, write "Mr. Henry Moreton"; that looks better than plain "Mr. Moreton."'

'I will do as you please about that.'

'You see I have written the name near the left hand, and equally distant from the top and the bottom. On the next line below, but much farther from the left hand, write the name of the street, with the word "Street" after it, beginning each word with a capital; below that write the name of the town or city, and below that the state. Begin each line of the address further and further from the left hand, so that the last word shall reach quite to the lower right-hand corner, thus:'

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*Mr. Henry Moreton*  
*Tremont Street*  
*Boston*  
*Mass.*

'What is the use of stringing the words down so, like a flight of steps seen sideways.'

'It is that the lines may be near together, and yet the words be very distinct; and being accustomed to see well-written directions so placed, we prefer it to any other form. Directions should be very clear and legible, or the letters may be mis-sent; and for one who writes a large hand, it would be better to begin higher up than half way; with my handwriting, this gives plenty of room for four distinct lines, and leaves ample space for all the post-marks on the upper half.'

'If you had to put five lines, you would begin higher up, I suppose.'

'Certainly, one line higher; and when an inexperienced writer directs a letter, he should rule the paper with a lead pencil for the number of lines required, that he may be sure to make them at proper distances; if the direction is not a familiar one he would do well to write it in pencil first, to ascertain how much room each word will take up, that he may *string* it out properly as you express it.'

'O I could never take so much pains as all that comes to! Girls may be so particular, but that will never do for boys; so pray excuse me from that, my dear cousin.'

'Then you must make up for your want of patience by superior judgment, and see that your direction comes right at once, by apportioning in your mind the space each word will take up.'

Whilst Anna was speaking, Henry scrawled his father's address on the 'sham letter,' and having made the words come very near their proper places, he showed it in triumph to his cousin, saying, 'There it is, all in its place without any penciling.'

'Nobody need pencil an address which they have frequently seen written, or have written themselves, for then they know how it will come out; but if I were going to write a new address, I should try it first on another piece of paper, or else pencil it.'

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'Would you indeed! Then you are a most painstaking person, I must say.'

'She is *painstaking* indeed,' said William Price; 'for she has been a full half hour over that letter with you, teaching you to fold, seal, and direct it; and I hope it is done at last, for I want her now to help me in making a fly, to fish with to-morrow.'

CHAPTER V.

AN ORIGINAL LETTER. — REMARKS UPON DATING LETTERS. — MODES OF BEGINNING LETTERS. — FRANKLIN. — CICERO. — COWPER.

'Whose letter is that you are smiling over?' said Mr. Price to his daughter Anna, who was reading a letter which her father had just brought in.

'Tis from my dear little friend, Elizabeth Morris, who certainly writes uncommonly well for a child of twelve years old. I should like to read it to you, papa; can you listen to it now?'

'Not very well,' said Mr. Price; 'I have some business to attend to before dinner; but if you would like to read it to the children as well as to me, we can all hear it when we are eating our fruit after dinner; and Henry is so interested in the subject of letter-writing, that he ought certainly to benefit by so good a specimen.'

Anna agreed very readily to this proposal, and when dinner was despatched and she had helped the children to cherries and strawberries, she began as follows.

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• 'My dear Anna,

'This is Saturday afternoon, and I am sitting down to write to you all alone in the third-story room. Mr. K—— and papa are down stairs in the library smoking their cigars and talking, over a bottle of old Sherry. I can hear Mr. K—— clap his hands very plainly now and then; he talks a great deal about you, Anna.

'We lament very much, as you do, the death of Mr. L——, such an awful stroke to his family; I pity them very much, particularly Jane, who living in the house with him must miss him very much, as he was so domestic in his habits.

'I have been to see Mrs. F—— once or twice with mamma. I like her very much, she is so sweet and childlike, and does not seem like a grown up person. She speaks very affectionately of you and your father, and seems to value your friendship very much. The Doctor has gone to Charleston, finding New York uninteresting to him now that you have left it, but probably the other reason was that he feared our damp spring. From what I hear the dream you had about him and Miss B—— will not come true; I am sure he is too constant to you, though Miss B—— has become serious, and has joined the church, which

\* This is an exact copy of an original letter, written by a child twelve years of age.

will probably influence his heart; as you know he is very religious. We have had a long letter from the Miss Johnsons, or rather Miss H—— received it and sent it to us to read. They are at Havre, and had a very long and tedious passage of sixty-one days. They say that the voyage was unpleasant, the Captain was a disagreeable man, and not one of the crew could speak English. They were both very unwell. "Mademoiselle plenty sick," the cabin boy would say. They both began to learn French, but cousin Jenny soon left it off as too difficult, and tried to make her English sound like French, which her sister describes as very amusing; for when she wanted *water*, she would ask for *watidre*, and when she found she was not understood, she would elevate her voice and repeat her request, and appear quite astonished that they did not understand her. When they arrived at Havre, they presented their letters of introduction to the E——s, by whom they were very kindly received so that I think they will be able to accomplish their tour without a gentleman.

'We had a grand time here on Washington's birthday. The procession was very paltry, but the illumination in the evening was beautiful. The City Hall, the Theatre, and all the buildings around the Park were lighted up, and it looked like a fairy scene; and then the Park was covered with tar-balls which

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threw a red light around, and the boys, seen by the glare, looked like so many little imps or fairies, as we looked at them through the windows at uncle John's. In front of the City Hall there was a revolving cylinder with the name of General Washington, composed of little lamps, on it. If you answer my letter will you make it a crossed one? I assure you I felt very proud when I received your last. We still sit up in the library, though we do not drink tea there. Papa has given up the idea of being grand and lonely. But good bye; I have a head-ache to day, or I should have tried to make my letter a little more interesting. We all love you very much and think and talk a great deal about you.

' Your affectionate  
' Elizabeth.'

Anna was frequently interrupted, during the perusal of this letter, by marks of approbation from her young audience, and when she had finished it, the words 'capital,' 'excellent,' 'very amusing,' were heard on every side; but no one's praises were quite so vehement and extravagant as Henry Moreton's. His late difficulties made him consider this as a most wonderful performance; and when he was told that the writer was two years younger than himself, he was only saved from despair by the assurance of his

cousin William, that girls always had a knack at writing. Henry declared it was a knack he envied them, and begged Anna to let him read Miss Elizabeth Morris's letter over again. He now remarked the beauty of the hand-writing, the proper distance from the top at which it was begun, and that it was divided into paragraphs. Observing that there was no margin to this letter, he decided that letters looked much better without one. Every thing about it seemed to him perfection, and he only wished that he could do as well. Anna asked him if he could see no deficiency. No, he could see none, and could hardly bear that any should be hinted at. William Price was fond of criticism; so he pounced upon the letter eager to find what his sister alluded to, and soon exclaimed, 'I know what you mean; there is no date here at the top of the letter.' Henry thought, as she belonged to a fashionable family, that she had dated her letter at the end, according to the new fashion; but on turning over the sheet, there was no date to be found.

Henry felt somewhat provoked with William for finding a defect in what he considered so perfect; and he tried to prove that dating letters was always superfluous, as it was the postmaster's duty to do that, on the outside of every letter.

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Both boys were growing warm, when Mr. Price interfered, saying to Henry, 'Do not let your generous admiration of that letter betray you into an encounter worthy of Don Quixote. I like the feeling which leads you to praise it so heartily, and not to relish its being criticised; but since the writer has made an essential omission, and that critical Willy has pointed it out, do not be so unreasonable as to defend it. It is not a defect which detracts from the ability of the little lady; it is a mere accidental omission, and only to be remarked as a proof how important it is to adopt the practice of dating a letter at the top of the first page. This custom should recommend itself to those who find some difficulty in beginning a letter, because that is a part of the task which is easily entered upon. To find out the day of the month, by asking every body near you, consulting the newspaper to be sure you are right, and then putting down the date, is easily done and seems very business-like; it is a good way of trying the pen, and flatters the young writer with the belief that he has actually begun the work.'

'Ah, but the awful pause comes after that is done, and the words, "My dear somebody," are written; that is the sticking place, uncle.'

Mr. Price hoped he would never stick there again. Henry expressed a wish that his uncle would give him a rule for beginning.

'There are so many different ways,' replied Mr. Price, 'that I cannot do that; but you may, when engaged in a regular correspondence, always begin with acknowledging the receipt of a letter, or with regret at not having had one. A letter received gives rise to many things to be said in reply. If its contents have given you pleasure, it is highly proper to tell your correspondent so; for unless you do, it is impossible for him to know that his selection of topics suited you. When we converse with our friends face to face, we can easily see whether they are interested in what we are saying; but when absent from them, it is necessary to tell them that we are so. If the letter to be answered conveys bad tidings, or describes your friends as troubled about any thing, you can begin with a full expression of your sympathy. Nothing can be more proper or kind than to comment upon what your friends write you, and nothing can make a better beginning to a letter. To do this well, you should read over their letters just before you answer them, and picture to yourself the situations described. Never let timidity or reserve prevent your expressing fully and warmly what you feel towards your absent friends. Letters are at best but poor substitutes for conversation; and as they cannot convey looks of love, or the pressure of a friendly hand, they ought to contain a more ex-

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plicit declaration of our affection and interest than we usually make in conversation. Having begun with a cordial expression of your feelings on receiving the letter you are answering, and of your sympathy in the events described, you should next consider what your correspondent would best like to hear about. If there are any questions in the letter received, they will be excellent guides for you, and you can answer them at once. When you have proceeded as far as that, the difficulty of a beginning is over.'

During this conversation, William Price had been looking over Elizabeth Morris's letter, and pointing out to his sister two places where paragraphs were wanting; but as this was done in a low voice, it did not trouble Henry; and when Mr. Price had done speaking, Anna asked William if he remembered how he used to begin all his letters to his brother Robert, some years ago.

'O yes,' said William, 'and a very good beginning I thought it was, till you laughed me out of it.'

Henry eagerly inquired what it was.

'Why I used to say, "Having nothing else to do this rainy afternoon, I sit down to write to my dear brother."'

'Well, but it was not always raining when you wrote, so that could not always answer,' observed Henry.'

'It was always hot, or cold, or rainy, or stormy, or something of the kind whenever I wrote, and I used to change that word accordingly; but as I did not then like writing very well, I never did sit down to it, when I had any thing else that I could do, and therefore it was a true statement of the case.'

'Rather more true than civil,' said his father.

'Who expects civility between brothers,' exclaimed William.

'I do, my son,' said Mr. Price very emphatically. 'I consider civility, to be a due attention to the feelings of others, manifested in all we do or say; and that which you ought to pay to all, you would not surely refuse to a brother.'

'Certainly not,' said William; 'but I should then call it kindness, not civility.'

'Kindness includes civility, for it means more than that. Every body is entitled to civility, and our friends to that and love too, which is expressed by the word kindness. Now it certainly was not either civil or kind, to tell your absent brother that you wrote to him because you had nothing else to do. You had another and a better reason than that; you wrote to your brother because you loved him; that was apparent in the course of your letter, and therefore his feelings were not hurt by your awkward way of beginning. Many people, older and wiser than

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you, begin a letter by some set phrase which does not do justice to their feelings.'

'It was a great while ago,' said Anna, 'that Willy made use of that queer way of beginning. He has long been such a good letter-writer as not to need any set phrase for a beginning.'

'I still like to have a regular beginning though,' said William.

'Do good writers never begin with a set phrase?' inquired Henry.

'Look over this volume of Franklin's Familiar Letters,\* Henry,' said Mr. Price, 'and see if you can find any formal beginnings or endings. All here is easy, flowing, and familiar. Now that your mind is occupied with the subject of letter-writing, you cannot do better than read these letters; they are fine models for you, and you may learn a great deal by observing Franklin's happy manner of telling things. Some of his expressions will strike you as old-fashioned; but his style is admirable, and so simple that a child may take it as a model.'

Henry had never been fond of reading printed letters; but he took the book from his uncle, and when

\* 'A Collection of the Familiar Letters and Miscellaneous Papers of Benjamin Franklin now for the first time published.'

the evening came, and the family were gathered round the centre-table, with their books and work, he began to read it; and though the matter was not very interesting, the manner was amusing enough. Henry had been accustomed to think of Franklin as a great statesman and philosopher, and could hardly believe that the same man wrote these familiar and funny letters. In vain did he look over the pages for a formal beginning or ending; and when he came to a letter that commenced thus, 'Begone, business, for an hour at least, and let me chat a little with my Katy,' Henry laughed outright, and called the attention of all his cousins to it, by reading it, in a very loud whisper, to Anna who sat next to him.

'O you are reading those Familiar Letters of Franklin's,' said William Price; 'I don't like them, I think they are too familiar, too undignified for a great man to write.'

Anna maintained that there was no want of dignity in being easy and familiar with one's intimate friends, and then she called upon her father to say whether Franklin's letters of business, and those addressed to great men, were not dignified and elevated enough in their style, for a statesman and a patriot to write. Mr. Price assured her they were; and then he went on to convince William that the greatest men of all ages had had their familiar friends

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with whom they were completely at ease, and to whom they had written as freely as they would speak. 'There is Cicero for example,' continued Mr. Price, 'the first of orators and statesmen; no one ever wrote more simple and familiar letters than he did.'

'Very true,' said Anna, 'I was lately reading some of them in "Elegant Epistles," and admiring their ease and grace, even in a translation; in the original I dare say they are much more beautiful.'

William had only become acquainted with Cicero as a public man, and he was surprised to hear of his writing familiar letters. Anna brought the volume of 'Elegant Epistles' and pointed out to her brother several examples of that kind of composition. As Henry was as much interested as William in knowing how Cicero wrote a familiar letter, Anna offered to read aloud to both. Among other selections she read the following passage.

'But tell me what sort of figure my letters make; are they not written, think you, in the true familiar? They do not constantly, however, preserve one uniform manner, as this species of composition bears no resemblance to that of the oratorical kind; though indeed in judicial matters, we vary our style according to the nature of the causes in which we are engaged. But whatever may be the subject of my letters, they still speak the language of conversation. Farewell.'

'There,' said Anna, 'that shows you Cicero's opinion how letters should be written. Now I will read you a letter of his, which he began without having any thing to say.'

William and Henry knew so well what that predicament was, that they expressed a lively desire to know what Cicero made of it; and Anna read the following extract from a letter to Varro.

'Though I have nothing to write, yet I could not suffer Caninius to pay you a visit without taking the opportunity of conveying a letter by his hands; and now I know not what to say, but that I propose being with you very soon, an information, however, which I am persuaded you will be glad to receive.'

Here Anna paused to explain to her hearers that Varro had invited Cicero to join him at Baiae, a fashionable watering-place, on the Bay of Naples, during a time of great public commotion in Rome.

'But will it be altogether decent to appear in so gay a scene at a time when Rome is in such a general flame? And shall we not furnish occasion of censure to those who do not know that we observe the same sober, philosophical life, in all seasons, and in every place?'

'Then,' said Anna, 'he goes on to philosophize about their occupations, and makes out a letter of ordinary length.'

She continued to turn over the leaves of the book without finding much that would interest her young auditors ; but, recollecting the delight with which, at their age, she had read the letters of Cowper, in Hayley's *Life of the poet*, she brought a volume of them from the library, and read aloud from it till the boys' bed-time.

## CHAPTER VI.

## JANE MORETON'S LETTERS. — HENRY'S CRITICISMS.

Henry's absence from home was prolonged by various circumstances ; and, as he made a point of writing to his family once a week, he was well exercised in his new accomplishment. Continued practice and judicious criticism will make any one, of common abilities, a tolerable letter-writer ; and the amount of happiness conferred by such letters as Henry's, was well worth all the pains they cost him. As his judgment and taste improved, he was less satisfied with his own performances, and used to consider longer what he should say next. His greatest difficulty was now in finding subjects ; when every thing around him was new to him and his correspondents, he could easily find sufficient matter to fill a letter ; but, now that Jenny and Neptune were old acquaintances, and the scenes of his amusement had been all described, he was often at a loss what to say. In these emergencies, his amiable cousin Anna often helped him, and by her suggestions proved that there was no want of materials for a letter, only he did not know how to work them up.

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By writing a letter to his younger sister, Jane, Henry had induced her to make her first attempt in that way. She began with adding a few lines to her sister Maria's letters, then she wrote half a page, and at last a whole sheet full. Though Jane's communications were ill spelt, ill put together, and so incoherent as to be sometimes scarcely intelligible, they appeared to have been written with ease, and were welcome messengers to Henry from his merry little sister.

Jane was of the same age with her cousin Louisa, but so different in character, that Henry could hardly believe that his sober little cousin was not older than his laughter-loving sister. Jane was very simple and childlike for her years, full of spirits, and very good-natured. Could she have put some of her sunny smiles and hearty laughter on paper, her letters would have been more like herself; but as that could not be done, she often complained, that, let her be ever so merry when she sat down to write, she always became as grave as the old cat, before she had written half a page.

Being a new exercise of her mind, the effort which it cost her, sobered her; but occasionally she would put some of her funny thoughts on paper, and make Henry laugh aloud while reading them. Her blunders too in spelling, and in the arrangement of

her matter, were often very amusing. Knowing how very good-humored Jane was, Henry ventured to give her some of the rules which he had himself received, and recommended to her to write her letter first on her slate, and get her mother or Maria to correct the spelling. The only notice she took of his hints, was to address him as, her "dear preceptor," in one letter, and her "dear critic" in another, and to say in a postscript, "no time for slates." After this Henry gave her up as incorrigible, but her letters were always a great treat to him.

Henry described to Jane a mock trial which he and his cousins had got up in the school-room, to amuse themselves with one rainy afternoon, in which he acted the part of judge, and gave a very wise decision. In Jane's reply, she called him "My dear second Daniel," which so puzzled Henry, he could make nothing of it till he read on, and found that she had been to the theatre, and had seen Master Burke in Shylock, and thought that Portia, disguised as the Doctor of Laws, looked like her brother Henry. This fancied resemblance, with the account of Henry playing the part of judge, made her apply to him the words of Shylock, "a second Daniel come to judgment!"

William Price never could see any thing to laugh at in Jane's letters; to him they appeared utter non-

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sense ; but Mr. Price and Anna were highly entertained by them, and told Henry that Jane would make a letter-writer yet. Her faults were those of a very active mind, and a merry spirit, not brought under the control of judgment. Anna said that Jane's matter was often good, but, for want of arrangement, it appeared poorer than it really was ; and she advised Henry, as a useful exercise to himself, and by way of doing justice to Jane, to re-write one of her *scatter-witted* letters, and see how it would read, when put into some form and order. Henry made the attempt, and we will give, as a sample of the whole, one page of the original letter and his corrections.

*Extract from Jane Moreton's Letter.*

' We went to see grandmamma and had such a funny time, last week, scampering in and out. Pray, Harry, get some of that moss for me, it will look so pretty under my shells. I don't like shells for bordering half so well as box ; there it was all round the flower-beds, so stiff and ugly. Grandmamma thinks it beautiful. I have named my new black kitten Jenny, after William's pony. I forgot to tell you that grandmamma gave me a black kitten. She had presents for every body, mine was the only live one, and yet no, the plants were all alive, — so that

was a mistake. We went in an open wagon, a torn parasol was of little use in keeping off the sun, it was convenient for bringing home things. Grandmamma had some fine geraniums and myrtles, all ready for us, in clean, red pots ; as soon as we arrived, she made us carry them from the garden to the front door, to be ready to go home with us five hours after. Down went one of the pots, out of my slippery fingers, and broke in the entry. Plenty of noise and dirt then. Old Sarah and I scratched it up. The firing at *independence* broke several panes of glass. Did you have any independence. You might bring me some of that other kind of moss too. How deep do you plant mignonette seeds ? None of mine has come up.

' There it goes, crack, crack ! So now 't is all spoiled, that is, a mould I made for General Washington. I want you to come home and help me ; I miss you very much, and so does grandmother. She sent her love to you, and has a myrtle for you when you come ; but she says you must go and fetch it yourself. Beware of slippery fingers.'

The whole letter was as ill put together as this specimen ; it was besides very badly spelt, without any stops, and had some small letters where capitals should be. Yet Jane had been a regular attendant

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at school ever since she was four years old, and had she been tried in a spelling-book, she would have spelt column after column, without missing a letter. It was want of practice in writing, which occasioned her being so incorrect; not being accustomed to see how words *look* when properly written, she did not perceive by her eye, when she wrote wrong; no *coming* of a spelling-book will supply this deficiency.

Henry found it more difficult than he expected it would be, to put Jane's thoughts into proper order; but after several attempts upon the passage we have quoted, he produced the following paraphrase of it.

'We went to see grandmamma last week; she was delighted to see us, and as soon as we arrived, she took us into her garden to see the alterations. She had had all her pretty box borders taken up, and rows of shells put in their place, which she thinks beautiful; but I think they look very stiff and ugly. Grandmamma had some fine geraniums and myrtles all ready for us, in clean, red pots; and she made us carry them from the garden to the front door, to be ready to take home with us, five hours afterwards. Down went one of the pots out of my slippery fingers, and broke in the entry; there was plenty of noise and dirt there then. Good old Sarah helped me gather up the fragments and the earth.'

'Grandmamma had presents for all of us. To me, she gave a black kitten, which I have named Jenny, after William's black pony. Mine was the only live present, unless plants may be called alive. There is a myrtle at grandmamma's for you, which she says you must go and get when you come home. She sends her love to you, and wants to see you very much, and so do I. I want your help in making casts. I made a plaster mould for the medal of General Washington, but it cracked so, it was spoiled. How deep do you plant mignonette seeds? None of mine have come up. I wish you would bring me some of each kind of moss that you find about Oakwood. It will look very pretty under my shells.'

'Did you have any celebration of Independence where you are? We had the usual grand doings, and the firing broke some of our window-glass.'

Henry finished the above, without perceiving that he had left out all about the open wagon, and the torn parasol, and now he could not possibly tell where to put it in. He had connected the other parts so closely together that he could not find an opening for this. But as the parasol had been torn by his dog, and he had long ago expressed his sorrow for it, he thought that it might as well be omitted, and that Jane's letter would be better without

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that and the wagon. On showing this exercise of his ingenuity to his friend and oracle, Anna Price, she perceived the omission immediately, because she had been so much amused by Jane's way of mentioning the parasol, that 'it was very convenient for bringing home things;' Jane meant to say that of the wagon, but *it* referred to the parasol. Anna told Henry that this was a common fault of young writers, and advised him always to observe whether his pronouns stood for the nouns he intended them to represent. 'The rule is, for a pronoun to refer to the person or thing last mentioned; so you must be sure that that is what you mean, or you may say something as absurd, as that a torn parasol is very convenient to carry home green-house plants in.'

Henry laughed, and confessed that he had not perceived that error of Jane's. He knew so well what she meant, that he overlooked the manner of her saying it.

## CHAPTER VII.

SCHOOLBOYS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING LETTERS. —  
 LIST OF TOPICS. — PROPER ATTITUDE IN WRITING.  
 — MANNER OF HOLDING THE PEN. — DIRECTIONS  
 FOR SHARPENING A PENKNIFE, AND FOR MAKING  
 A PEN.

There was a boarding-school for boys in the neighbourhood of Oakwood; and as some of the pupils came from the city of New York and were the children of persons known to Mr. Price, they were occasionally invited to eat a Sunday dinner at his house, or to pass Saturday afternoon with his sons.

During one of these visits, the subject of writing letters was mentioned, and the young visitors freely expressed their extreme repugnance to the task. On inquiry, it was found that the great difficulty consisted in the want of topics. Henry and William agreed with their guests that, at school, it must be very difficult to find anything to say; whilst Mr. Price and Anna maintained, that even the monotony of a school-boy's life was no excuse for not writing to his friends.

'What can we find to say, sir,' asked one little boy, 'when we do the same things every day?'

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'The same things in the main, but not in all the details,' replied Mr. Price; 'you sometimes say your lessons well, and sometimes ill; you sometimes have difficulties with your teachers, when you conceive yourself to be aggrieved, at others you have done wrong; now parents like to know all such particulars.'

'O but I should not like to tell such things as that!' exclaimed the same little boy.

'Well then, there are your amusements which vary with the different seasons, and the little accidents and incidents which occur on the play-ground; these might furnish matter for a letter.'

'But they do not want to hear about such trifles,' said another school-boy.

'There is your great mistake, my dear boy; nothing that concerns an absent child is a trifle to a parent. Your lessons and your plays are the great business of your lives, and your characters and dispositions are as much shown on the play-ground, as those of men are in the Senate or on the Exchange. The games that are in season, anecdotes of what occurs to yourself or others, with the behaviour of your companions, would be very good subjects for a letter at any time. If you form any intimacies, you should describe your friend and the particular qualities for which you like him; if you have any quarrel

with any of your companions, you should tell the particulars, and state the whole affair, and how you feel about it. If you meet with an accident, such as spraining your ankle, or cutting yourself badly, or if you have a bad fall, you should always mention it; tell how it occurred, how much you suffered, and how you feel at the time of writing. If any interesting event happens in the family of your teacher, you should tell it to your friends; any unusual indulgence, any visits that you pay, should be communicated to them. If you read anything that interests you, write about it, and tell what is your opinion of it. A long walk in the country may always furnish a page or two, if you have eyes to see and hearts to feel the beauty of nature. Now have I not suggested a good number of topics, on each of which you would feel quite at home, and could say a good deal?'

The boys all acknowledged that Mr. Price had named more things to write about than they thought existed; and one said, he wished he had noted them down as Mr. Price spoke, for he should not be able to remember them all.

Here Anna offered her services, and said that if the young gentlemen really wished for a list of topics to assist their memories, she would make out one for them at once. The proposal was gladly accepted and she wrote the following memorandum.

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*List of Topics for a School-boy writing to his Friends at home.*

'General progress in studies, with any new one lately begun.

'Interest in any particular exercise or preference of one to another.

'Difficulties with teachers, or with yourself.

'Amusements, what games are in season.

'Anecdotes of the play-ground. Feats performed by yourself or others.

'Characters of your school-fellows, in and out of school.

'Description of your most intimate friend at school, with the reasons of your preference.

'Accidents that befall yourself, such as sprains, bad cuts, falls, &c.

'Any remarkable state of the weather, or of the country.

'Accidents by floods, or thunder and lightning, or unusual cold or heat.

'Events in the family of the gentleman who keeps the school.

'Books that you have read out of school hours.

'A long walk, or any extraordinary indulgence.

'A visit to any of your friends; when made, how long you stayed, who was there, and what they said worthy of note.

'Observations on birds, insects, and plants. If you have a taste for any branch of natural history, it will furnish you constant amusement, and interesting matter for letters.'

Whilst this obliging girl, Anna Price, was making out the important list, all the boys were crowding around her, and reading aloud every line as she wrote it, and many discussions were held by them over the different heads as they were noted down; but all the school-boys agreed that it would afford them some help, and that they were much obliged to Miss Anna; and she, never tired of doing kind things, actually made a copy of the list for each of her young guests.

Whilst this copying was going on, Mr. Price conversed with his young visitors upon the subject of penmanship, and enforced upon them the importance of early forming a good legible hand. One of the boys now declared that he always found enough to say to his friends at home, but the trouble of writing was so great that he never put down a quarter of what he had in his mind; he said that it tired him all over to write half a page. On hearing this, Mr. Price observed, that bad habits in holding the pen, and sitting at the desk, often produced this difficulty; and he requested his young guest to show him how he sat when writing, and how he held the

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pen. A desk being brought, and pen, ink, and paper presented, the good-natured, curly-headed Frank Vanderspruck prepared to show how he performed the difficult task, of which he had complained. He grasped his pen as if it were something alive, that he feared would run away from him, and held it as near as possible to the nib; he drew up his shoulder, twisted his body and neck as if he were cramped all over, leaned very hard against the table, and, spreading out his elbows on each side, placed his paper sideways, and began to scratch away, in lines of small, cramped writing, that were actually perpendicular to the back of the chair on which he was sitting.

Mr. Price saw, at a glance, why writing was so hard a task to this youth, and took great pains to convince him, that there was no need to exert a tenth part of the muscular force he was then using; and that it was this unnecessary exertion, together with his constrained position and bad way of holding the pen, which made it so laborious. Frank was sure that he could not write at all in any other position.

'So my son William once thought,' said Mr. Price. 'During a long absence from home, he fell into the same bad habits that you have, and thought he could not alter them; but I reasoned with him till I convinced him of his mistake; he made the effort to correct himself, and succeeded. Here, William; can

you show us how you used to sit and hold your pen, when you came home from Mr. N.'s school? Frank will understand me better, if he sees another person sit as he does.' William had nearly forgotten how it was, but with a little help from his father he put himself in the position; not, however, before his attempt had called forth a good laugh from all the boys. William found the attitude so constrained and unpleasant that he wondered how he could ever have adopted it. Mr. Price now showed them how such a position hindered the free motion of the hand, and rendered the effort to write laborious; he pointed out the disadvantages of holding the pen very near the nib, as it obliges the fingers to move much more than when held farther off; and that is a consideration of some importance to short fingers. William was next told to seat himself at the table as he now did when writing. He accordingly placed his chair a little slanting, so that when sitting square upon it, his left side would be nearer the table than his right, but not so as to lean against it. His weight was evenly balanced upon the chair and on his feet, which were flat on the floor before him. His left arm, from the elbow down, rested lightly on the table, three inches from the edge. His paper was opposite his right shoulder, and held by his left hand. His right arm rested on the table from a little above the

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wrist, with the elbow near his side, and hanging freely from the shoulder. In this position William wrote his fine, legible hand.

Frank was next persuaded to imitate William's attitude, and to sit without leaning against the table; but he was sure he could never make a letter in that position.

'Well,' said Mr. Price, 'never mind making any letters, but take this pencil and hold, it as William does his pen, between your thumb and two first fingers, whilst the third and fourth are doubled under and slide upon the nails along the paper; hold it an inch from the point. Now move your hand along, making marks that mean nothing, and see how easily, in that position of the body, the hand can move over the paper. Don't lean at all against the table; let your body balance its weight on the chair; let your right arm hang easily without any muscular motion at all about the shoulder. You are not near-sighted, then hold your head upright; for when it is balanced upon the neck, no muscles ache with holding it. Sitting thus perfectly at ease, you see how easily your hand moves.'

'Easily enough,' said Frank, 'when I am not trying to form letters and words.'

'I do assure you,' said Mr. Price, 'that having your body well placed, and all your muscles at ease,

is the best preparation for the act of writing. You must be aware that it requires no strength, but merely a correct guidance of the pen, according as the eye directs; and the more lightly you hold your pen, the more readily you can guide it. On first trying a new position, you will of course find it difficult, and will write worse than ever; but, if you will persevere only a few days, or a week, you will begin to perceive the advantages to be derived from it. How long did you practise the proper way of sitting, William, before it became easy to you?'

'I promised to try for a week, father, to please you, and fully expected to give it up at the end of that time, as hopeless; but before the week was out, it became so easy, that I found I could write better than ever; and so I went on till it became natural to me, and now I wonder how I could ever have written at all in that awkward posture.'

The evidence of one only a little older than himself, was very convincing to Frank Vanderspruck, and he voluntarily engaged to try the attitude, so recommended, for a week. The other school-boys present sat down at the desk in turns, to show what their habit was of sitting and holding their pens; and Mr. Price kindly pointed out their several faults. The one common to all, was leaning their weight upon their arms; and a good deal was said, to convince them how

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unfavorable it was to the free and easy motion of the hand. Whilst this subject was under discussion, Anna stopped writing to mend her pen, and one of the boys expressed his surprise at her being able to do it; he never before saw a lady make or mend a pen; he wished he could learn, but he thought it must be very difficult.

Anna assured him it was a very easy and simple thing; she said her father taught her to do it in five minutes, when she was only twelve years old, and it had made her so independent, that, ever after, she was fond of writing. Before that, she was often so vexed and tormented by bad pens, that it would make her write her French exercise incorrectly; she was thinking so much of her pen, she could not attend to all the rules; but after she could make her own pens, she had no more trouble about writing. All the boys were now eager to learn of Miss Anna to make a pen; but she called on her father to give the necessary instruction.

Mr. Price asked if they all had penknives; and found that only two or three had them, and these were so dull, that they were wholly unfit to make a pen. 'Here is the beginning of the difficulty,' said Mr. Price; 'few boys or girls have sharp knives, and without such an instrument, it is impossible to make a pen. I have taught all my children, as soon

as they were old enough to use a knife, how to sharpen one. Bring me my oil-stone and strop, William, and I will show all our young friends how to set their penknives.'

Whilst William was gone on his father's errand, a query went round among the boys, as to whether Miss Anna could sharpen her own knife, and great was their surprise, when they found that she was in the habit of doing it.

Mr. Price said it was a delicate little job, requiring only dexterity of hand and a nice eye, and there could be no objection to any lady's learning how to do it. He always recommended it to all the young ladies he knew, and had himself taught many, and been very much thanked, after they had found out what a valuable acquisition it was. William now appeared with a nice Turkey-stone, set in a box and properly oiled, and his father's razor-strop. Mr. Price took one of the boy's dull knives, and having a circle made round him, of bright eyes and eager faces, he showed them how to hold the knife flat on the stone, and rub it round with a circular movement, bearing down gently and equally upon it. He pointed out the two evils to be avoided, that of a *round edge* and a *feather edge*; the first made by not holding the knife flat enough, the other by grinding till the edge was too fine; he said the right medium could only

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be obtained by practice. He explained to them the necessity of grinding both sides exactly alike, for if the *bevel* were too much on the side of the knife next the quill, in cutting, it would not take hold of it well, and that was called *cutting out*; if on the other side, it would *cut in*, as it is termed; and instead of paring the nib of a pen, it would cut it off. Whilst giving these directions, Mr. Price rubbed away very patiently on both sides of the knife, holding it up in the light and looking at it frequently, as he went on. At last he announced that the edge was even and fine enough. A pen was handed to him that he might try it, but he said it must be stropped first, for if used before, the edge would be apt to turn; besides the stone left it rough though sharp, and the strop was necessary to smooth it, and to take off the very finest part of the edge. 'Now, knowing what is to be done, you must be very careful not to overdo it, and so lose all your labor; a knife may be made blunt again, after it is well honed, by being improperly stropped.' You must hold the knife very flat, and not press too hard, particularly if your strop is a soft one, for in that case the edge would rub too much against the leather. You must take pains and do it slowly until you are master of the art; then a quick motion does the business better.' Mr. Price moved the knife along the strop, first on

one side and then the other, with a drawing motion from the handle to the point, and, after about a dozen strokes, he was ready to try it. It cut well, and the elder boys desired to try their skill in whetting the other dull knives in the company. With their kind instructor standing over them, and reiterating his directions whenever they were forgetting them, they performed very well; and all resolved to have hones and strops of their own, and to practise sharpening their knives.

Mr. Price told them it was as necessary to know how to *keep* their knives sharp, as to *make* them so, or else they would fail them at their utmost need. 'You see that it requires time to sharpen a knife, and you cannot do it at the moment you want it to make a pen; therefore my rule is never to use a pen-knife for anything else but to cut a pen. Never cut paper with it, for nothing turns a fine edge sooner; never cut your nails with it, for if they are hard and brittle, they will turn it. If you cut a pencil, use the part of the blade next the handle. Do the same, when you begin to cut a quill; for the first two cuts into a hard quill often turn the edge of a knife, and make it useless.'

Mr. Price now desired William to give each of their guests a quill and a penknife, and he would teach them, in a few minutes, how to make a pen. Henry Moreton begged that he might take a lesson

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too ; for he had never been taught this important art properly, though he had contrived to make pens after a fashion of his own. No sooner were the boys furnished with knives and quills, than some began to cut at random.

'Stop, stop,' cried Mr. Price ; 'there is a right and a wrong way of trimming a quill ; so wait till I show you how to do it. Instead of beginning by cutting off the top, leave that to hold it by, whilst you strip off the feather on the broad side. That done, take off about an inch of the lower part of the narrow feather, as it is apt to be rumped ; then change your hold to the other end, and cut off the top in a slanting direction corresponding to the narrow feather edge, so as to make a handsome point. Now hold the quill between the forefinger and thumb of the left hand, with the palm upward, and the second finger bent under it to support it ; give a small cut slanting downwards, very near the end of the quill, on the upper side ; then turn the quill round and cut a long gash in the under side, beginning an inch and a half from the end, and meeting the small cut, so as to separate the round end and draw out the little shrivelled membrane found inside of a quill. These are the two cuts that so often turn the edge of a knife, and they should be made carefully without using the part of the blade near the point.

'Now turn the quill so that the feather edge may be next to you, and hold the other end on the inside of your forefinger and scrape the part where the slit is to be.' Several of the boys asked the use of that scraping. 'It is to get rid of a fine net-work, with which the quill is covered, on purpose to secure it against being accidentally split, in the living bird ; I never scrape a quill without admiring the contrivance, and thinking of the wisdom and goodness of the Being who contrived it.'

This explanation interested the young pen-makers very much ; and having scraped their quills as directed with the back of their knives, they examined the fine scrapings, hoping to see their texture ; but Mr. Price told them it required a microscope to see their fibrous nature.

Having scraped more than enough, as the inexperienced are apt to do, they came to making the split, which requires to be done very carefully, or much of the quill may be wasted. They were now told to hold the pen in the first position, and make a little cut into the quill lengthwise ; then, fixing the thumb-nail of the left hand on the place where they wished the slit to end, to give the quill a smart fillip with the thumb of the right hand. Mr. Price did it first, and then they all followed with various success ; some slits were too long, some too short ; one was

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not in the middle, because the beginning made by the knife had not been made straight. The first fault was remedied by beginning to shape the pen proportionably higher up, the second by another fillip of the thumb, the third by cutting off the quill and making a new slit.

'Now,' said Mr. Price, 'hold your quill as at first, only farther from the point, that the thumb of your right hand may support it, whilst you cut the shoulders. These should be about the length of the slit.' He cut one side for a pattern, and it was handed round the circle to be copied; then, laying his blade across the quill, as a guide to begin the shoulders at an equal height, he cut the other side, and that was also shown round. They saw how nicely and evenly the shoulders tapered off to a point, with the slit exactly in the middle, and did their best to imitate it. Mr. Price and William helped these novices by their criticisms, and the shoulders were pared again and again, till they would do. Last came the finishing stroke, and that was of great importance, as the best pen might be spoiled in the nibbing.

'Take the pen now between your first and second finger, with the point resting on your left thumb-nail; place your fingers so as to hold the quill steadily by pressing hard with the fore-finger on the quill.' This was tried in vain by some; their hands were

not strong enough to hold the quill steadily, or their fingers were too clumsy; so these were advised to slip another pen under the new one, and cut down upon that, instead of upon the thumb-nail. When all had their pens placed ready for nibbing, Mr. Price told them to consider how much of the tapering point should be cut off to make a proper-sized nib. If they were going to write a large, round hand, it must be broader than for a small, running hand. At any rate, it was safest not to cut off too much at once, as they could nib it a second time, if the first nib did not prove good. He then made a slanting cut, that the nib might be finer than the thickness of the quill would make it if not sloped off like a wedge, and after that a perpendicular one.

These two finishing cuts were given, and all who had never made a pen before, were eager to try these of their own forming. One spattered, and showed that the two parts of the nib were of unequal length; another scratched, and needed to be nibbed again, and so made blunter. Frank declared that his wrote large hand admirably, but would not do for small; and he was told that his nib was too broad, and that it must be pared down narrower and nibbed again; it being necessary to nib after paring, in order to have a smooth point to write with. After some alteration, the pens all wrote pretty well; and

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the young pen-makers were much obliged to Mr. Price, and sufficiently encouraged to resolve to practise, believing they should soon learn.

Those who had no penknives, determined to supply themselves at once, out of their pocket-money. Mr. Price advised them to buy their pen-blades in handles by themselves, not connected with other blades, and to keep them in their desks; then they would be less tempted to use them upon improper things, and would always have them at hand when writing. When you grow up, and have occasion to write away from your desk, it will be proper to carry your penknife always in your pocket; but now, when you never write but at your desk, it is better to keep it safely deposited there.

By the time the lesson on pen-making was ended, Anna had finished copying the lists of subjects; and the young visitors departed, with feelings of gratitude to their kind friends at Oakwood, and disposed to profit by all they had heard and seen during their pleasant visit.

## CHAPTER VIII.

SACREDNESS OF A SEAL. — LETTER FROM A MIDSHIPMAN TO HIS BENEFACTOR. — CRITICISMS UPON IT. — CHOICE OF A SEAL. — USE OF THE WORD "ESQUIRE."

Mr. Price's country-seat was situated in one of the rich and picturesque valleys, which abound in the state of New York; and as he was possessed of a considerable fortune, acquired in commerce by his father, he could afford to indulge in the expensive pleasures of a gentleman farmer. He usually spent a great part of the morning on horseback, superintending his various farming operations, and generally included in his rounds the village post-office, which was a few miles from his mansion.

Living at a distance from all their relations, and having a brother in the Navy, gave Mr. Price's family a great interest in the contents of the mail-bag; and they often ran down the avenue, to meet their father on his return from his morning ride, and inquire what letters he had found at the post-office. On such occasions, he would generally dismount, and, giving his horse to one of the boys to lead to the stable, distribute the letters to the expectant

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group, and read his own as he walked slowly up the shaded gravel road that led to the house. When he alone had letters, the young folks were not wholly disappointed, for they usually shared in whatever tidings he received. A letter from the absent midshipman was the greatest prize they could obtain, and, to whomsoever addressed, was considered the property of all.

No great man, surrounded by his guard of honor, ever looked so happy in his escort as Mr. Price did, when walking his horse up his avenue, surrounded by the blooming and laughing faces of his children. Returning home thus attended, he one day announced a large double letter from their brother Robert, addressed to Anna. Anna was gone to spend the day in the neighbourhood, and would not be home till evening; the children begged their father to open the letter and tell them the news; for they could not wait till Anna returned, to know how Robert was. To their great surprise, Mr. Price refused to gratify them; he thought it right that Anna should have the privilege of breaking the seal of her own packet. William considered this mere ceremony, and observed that, as Anna always showed Robert's letters to every one of them, she could have no objection to their reading this one first, when she happened to be out of the way.

Mr. Price said that he considered a sealed letter as a sacred thing; and though, as a parent, he had a right to open and read the letters of his children, while under age, it was a thing he should never do, unless he had reason to believe that his interference was necessary to save them from harm. 'Among brothers and sisters, or between husband and wife,' continued Mr. Price, 'I consider it very improper for one to break a seal belonging to another, or to read a letter without leave to do so, after the seal is broken. It is a trespass on the rights of others, which no intimacy can justify, and which may cause a great deal of suffering.'

William agreed with his father, that between friends it was very dishonorable to break the seal of another person's letter; but in a family that had no secrets, and where the letter was from an absent brother, and they were sure to read it all when Anna had opened it, he thought there could be no harm in looking into it now.

Mr. Price shook his head, and declared he should feel that he had done very wrong, if he broke the seal; he then went on to remind William; that a letter might contain a private communication, the secret of another; and however sure he was, that Anna had no secrets of her own, she might be intrusted with one at any moment, and would have no right to

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communicate it even to a brother. 'I have known,' continued Mr. Price, 'great trouble and heart-burnings to arise in families from this cause; and I should wish my children to regard a sealed paper as a sacred thing. I would have you shrink from the idea of breaking open another's letter, as you would from listening at a door or window to hear conversation that is not meant for your ear.'

The party had now reached the house, and Anna's letter was put in a conspicuous place on the mantel-piece; but not till it had passed from hand to hand, and its size and thickness had been variously commented upon. The younger children were sure that brother Robert had written to each one of them, and thought it very hard that papa could not just open the letter and take out the enclosures for them, even if he did not read a word of Robert's letter to Anna, for they should all be in bed before she came home.

As the hour of Anna's return approached, William Price watched impatiently for the sound of the carriage in the avenue; and when she arrived, he put the letter from her brother into her hands as she entered the door. He, gained nothing, however, by his haste; for she ran up stairs to take off her bonnet and shawl, carrying the letter with her, which she opened in the retirement of her own room. It was well that she happened to do so; for the enclosures

were of a private nature; and Anna, for the first time in her life, had a secret to keep from William. The packet contained a letter to a gentleman of high station, to whom Robert Price was under great obligations, and a memorial for the Navy Board which the young midshipman wished his father to present, and to keep its contents private; it also contained a love-letter to Anna from a fellow officer, who had seen her in New York, and now made his sentiments known through her brother, who was his intimate friend. Neither the memorial or the love-letter could be mentioned to the children; and as there were allusions to both in Robert's letter, that could not be shown to them.

Anna felt much embarrassed by these novel circumstances, and wished to be able to communicate with her father before she saw William; so she went down stairs very softly, in hopes of finding her father in the study, and was not disappointed. This confiding child and affectionate parent consulted together on the contents of the packet. It was soon resolved that Mr. Price should go to Washington with the memorial; that Anna should write a very polite but decided refusal of the officer's addresses; and that William should be told that the packet contained secrets which belonged to others, and must be honorably kept, even from him.

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William could hardly believe that he heard aright, when informed that he could not see the whole contents of his brother's packet. Passages were read to him, and the letter to the man in power, being left open for his father's approval, was shown to William. This soon fixed his attention, and he pondered long over it. He was struck by the grave and manly tone of its composition. Being accustomed to his brother's family letters only, which were full of lively sallies and cant phrases, and written with the utmost freedom of confiding affection, he could hardly believe that the same mind dictated this serious and respectful epistle. At length William asked his father how he liked that piece of formality, pointing to the following letter.

' U. S. Ship ———, May —, 18 —.

' Honored and dear Sir,

' I was much flattered by the wish you so kindly expressed, to hear from me on my arrival on this station; and I take the first opportunity of a homeward bound vessel, to tell you that we arrived at Gibraltar on the 25th ultimo, after a fine run of only twenty days.

' The ship is in very good order and excellent sailing trim, as you will judge by the shortness of our passage. We have a fine, healthy crew, and as agreeable a company of officers as ever trod a quarter-

deck. The Chaplain is a very good fellow, and keeps a school for the younger mids., and I mean to pursue my studies, so as to do myself credit at the next examination.

' Your letter of introduction to the Commodore was very useful to me, and I thank you heartily for it, as were also your letters to the folks in New York. They saved me a great deal of trouble, and enabled my inexperienced head to profit by the wisdom of others. I shall ever remember with gratitude the good advice you gave me, when I had the honor and the pleasure to be a guest at your mansion, and I trust my whole life will prove that it was not thrown away.

' If your amiable family condescend to inquire after me, I beg to be most respectfully remembered to them; and if there is anything I can obtain for them in this part of the world, I shall feel honored by their commands.

' I am, Sir,

' with the highest respect and consideration,  
' your obedient humble servant,

' Robert Price.

' Honorable W — C —.'

' Is it not altogether too stiff and respectful?'  
asked William.

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'Far from it, my son; it is hardly respectful enough. Let Henry Moreton read it, and then I will tell you what I think of it.'

Henry's politeness had kept him from casting any glances at his cousin's letter, as it lay open upon the table; but his curiosity had been excited by the comments upon it, and he readily availed himself of his uncle's permission.

When he had read it, he said it was a letter fit for a commodore to write, just like a printed letter in a book, and he wondered how Robert could have written so well.

'Robert,' said Mr. Price, 'was always deficient in respectful behaviour and language towards his superiors; and an improvement in that point was one of the benefits which I hoped for, from the strict discipline of the Navy. I dare say Robert did his best to be respectful, in this letter to his benefactor; but the old deficiency may be perceived in several places.'

'Can it?' said William; 'I am sure I thought it was over respectful.'

Both boys now looked over the letter, whilst Mr. Price thus criticised it.

'The address is very proper. In a ceremonious letter like this, it is better to put the name of the person addressed, at the end, rather than at the be-

ginning, because it interferes less with the address; but in letters of business, it is customary to place the name first, and then put under it "Sir." When you address a firm, write *Messrs. such and such persons*, and *Gentlemen* underneath. A letter looks better without this; I like to see *Sir*, or *Madam*, or *Gentlemen*, stand by itself near the top of the page, and therefore I generally put the name at the end, even in a letter of business. The first paragraph will do pretty well; and so will the second, until we come to this expression concerning the chaplain; to call a man of such a profession, "a very good fellow," shows a want of proper respect for the office, as well as for the man who fills it, and for the person addressed. Then, to write the familiar contraction, *mids.* for *midshipmen*, is taking a great liberty with a man like Mr. C——; if you wish to write respectfully, you should never use any contractions, or any cant phrases. In speaking of Mr. C——'s letter of introduction, Robert should not say "the Commodore," but put the name out at length; neither should he say "the folks in New York;" that is the most familiar way of expressing himself, and very much out of place here. What follows, is well enough to the end of the paragraph.'

'Do you like, father, that Robert should say "the honor and the pleasure to be a guest at your mansion"?'

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'Certainly I do,' replied Mr. Price; 'it was an honor and a pleasure to be the guest of such a man, and I like that he should call it so. Where there is a just foundation for the feeling of veneration, I like a free expression of it. But I do not like what comes next. It is a freedom to bestow the epithet "amiable," on Mr. C——'s family. Between equals in age and station, it would be all very proper; but from a youth, like Robert, it is too great a liberty to pronounce an opinion on the family by calling them "amiable."'

'Well, the word "condescend" sounds humble enough for anything.'

'Yes, that is a little too much; he should have said, "If any of your family do me the favor to inquire after me;" but I suppose he felt that the word "amiable" was not just right, so he put in "condescend" to turn the balance the other way. But true respect is equally removed from too great freedom and too great homage.'

"Honored by their commands," read William, and added, 'is not that too much?'

'No,' said Mr. Price; 'that is a common phrase of civility, and is not taken literally, any more than a person's subscribing himself "your obedient humble servant"; these are words of course, at the conclusion of a ceremonious letter, and it is very con-

venient to have a form that is in general use, and which every body understands to be a mere form of civility. "Your obedient humble servant" really means so little, that Robert was quite right to put something more before it, and he has chosen his terms very well.'

When Mr. Price had done speaking, he continued to look at his son's letter with an expression of dissatisfaction, which made William ask him if he intended to forward it to Mr. C——.

'Certainly,' replied his father; 'imperfect as it is, it is much better than no letter at all. However ill-written a letter may be, it only reflects upon the head of the writer; whereas, not to write at all, in such a case as this, would reflect upon his heart; the letter must go by the next mail, so I will seal and direct it now.'

William brought his father a box of wafers and the wafer-cutter. 'Wafers,' said Mr. Price, 'do well enough for mere letters of business; but a letter like this, from a gentleman of the navy to a man high in office, should be sealed with wax.' Anna brought some sealing-wax and a box full of seals, with mottoes and devices, for her father to choose from. To each one that she proposed, he made some objection, and begged her if she had a seal with only a head on it, to give him that. 'It always

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seems to me,' continued Mr. Price, 'a great freedom to use a fancy seal when writing to a person older than one's self, or in a higher station.'

The young folks all wondered that such a meaning could be given to the use of a seal, and Mr. Price added ;

'It is much the same thing as if you should propose a riddle or repeat a proverb to a grave statesman, on being introduced to him. Your letter presents itself with some quaint device, or enigmatical motto, to be solved, if attended to at all. Now real modesty would lead a young writer to use such a seal as would attract the least attention, and not call upon the wits of a great man to explain its meaning. The initials of the writer are a proper seal for all occasions ; now, as we have no seal with Robert's initials, we had better put on the head of some hero or philosopher. That head of Bacon will do very well, and you can make the seal Anna, as you are expert in all such things.'

Anna took the letter, and prepared to make her seal according to the rules she had given Henry ; she succeeded to the admiration of both the boys, and then handed the letter to her father to be directed. He had meanwhile been trying his pen on a piece of waste-paper, and had written the whole address which he was going to put on the letter.

'See,' said Anna to Henry, 'what papa has been doing. You thought it too much trouble to write a direction twice over, and said none but girls would take so much pains to get it right ; but you see now that it is not beneath a man to take this precaution.'

Henry playfully tapped with his fingers on the under side of the table, and said, 'I knock under, fair cousin, and will promise that whenever I correspond with so great a man as Mr. C —, I will practise writing the direction as my uncle has done.'

The directing of this letter reminded Henry of what had passed between Anna and him, concerning the use of the word *Esquire*, and he asked his uncle why he never put it on his father's letters.

'Because your father is not entitled to it. He is neither a magistrate, nor one of the profession of the law ; and in our country, those are the only classes of citizens, to whom the title legally belongs. Plain *Mr.* is good enough for any one ; it is applicable to men of all trades and professions, and suits my republican feelings better than any more distinguishing title.'

'But, father, said William, 'you have just put "Honorable," before Mr. C —'s name.'

'Yes, he has a legal right to it ; and since our ancestors chose to distinguish certain stations in that way, I follow the custom. — But it is time for all

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young eyes to be closed, and I wish you good night young gentlemen.'

The boys went off to bed so full of Robert's letter to Mr. C——, that they forgot to be very inquisitive about the rest of the contents of the packet which Anna had received.

## CHAPTER IX.

MR. PRICE LEAVES HOME. — ACCOUNT OF ANNA'S FIRST LETTER TO HER FATHER. — THE BEST WAY OF OPENING A LETTER. — OBJECTIONS TO MODELS. — ACCOUNT OF WILLIAM PRICE'S LETTER TO HIS FATHER. — HENRY'S DIFFICULTY IN FINDING SUBJECTS. — ANNA'S HINTS. — HENRY PRACTISES THE RULES HE HAS LEARNED.

Mr. Price determined to be himself the bearer of the memorial to the Navy Board, which Robert had forwarded; and as he had business to transact in New York and Philadelphia, he made arrangements for an absence of several weeks. He had so rarely left his little flock of motherless children, that his present undertaking was a remarkable event in the family, and to the younger ones it seemed a perfect mystery how the common business of life was to go on without papa.

Among various other directions, given on the occasion, was one very seriously urged upon all his children; and that was, to write to him very often and to tell him what they did, and thought, and felt. He invited Henry to do the same, assuring him he might write about anything that came into his head; nothing could come amiss to a father, when away

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from such a dear home. To William's question, when they should begin to write, his father answered, 'To-morrow.' 'So soon as that?' the children exclaimed.

'Yes,' said Mr. Price; 'if you write to-morrow, it will be many days before I receive it; and when I do, I shall like very much to know something about you the very day after I left you. When persons are absent for a short time, as I shall be, those left behind should write very soon, and not wait to hear from the traveller; for, by so doing, their first letters may not reach him at all till his absence is half over. I wish Anna to write to-morrow, and send her letter off the next morning; after that, let each one write in turn, and send off a letter every third day. When the little ones cannot fill a sheet, I hope Anna's ready pen will supply the deficiency. If any one is at a loss what to tell papa, let him write a journal; give the history of one day, from the time you rise till you go to bed; that will be easily done, and I shall like to hear it all, even that you ate, drank, and slept well in my absence. From you, William, I shall expect a full account of the farming operations, from Anna a report of how your studies go on, and from Henry domestic scenes.'

'O uncle! you have given the hardest task to the poorest writer,' exclaimed Henry.

'That shows what hope I have of you,' replied Mr. Price, as he cheerfully took leave of his children, and stepped into the dearborn that was waiting to convey him and his trunk to a neighbouring village, where he was to meet the stage for Albany.

The young folks at Oakwood hardly realized the departure of Mr. Price, till they assembled round the dinner-table, and then the loss of that presiding friend threw a gloom over the whole party. In the evening too, he was greatly missed; and William and Henry rejoiced that Anna was to write the first letter, because there would be nothing to say but to tell how stupid they all were. The next day however their elastic young spirits rallied; their studies and sports were pursued as usual; and in the evening Anna wrote a letter of three pages to her father. Those around her wondered what she could find to say, and, at the request of all, she read the letter aloud to them. William and Henry listened in silent admiration, and then agreed that there was a great advantage in writing the first letter, as in that so much might be said about their regret at his father's absence and the dull evening they had spent without him. Louisa Price now reminded her brother that he was of a different opinion the night before, and thought their dull evening would be a dull subject for a letter.

'I know it,' replied William; 'but I believe Anna could make a good letter out of anything.'

Henry begged to read his cousin's letter over by himself, and pondered over it a great while, deriving real instruction from every sentence. He was surprised to find what an agreeable letter could be written upon the ordinary occurrences of two days, and the feelings of the young party, of which he formed one. There was no formal beginning, no set phrases; all was simple and easy. Anna began with stating the effect of her father's absence upon the spirits of them all, when they met at dinner, and also when they assembled in the evening; she told what they did, and what they left undone, in consequence of his not being there. She described the uneasiness of Neptune at his master's absence, and that after searching for him in vain, the dog laid himself down before Mr. Price's lolling-chair and remained there all the evening. Then followed a more lively account of the occupations of the next day, in which her brothers, sisters, and cousin were affectionately mentioned; and something so characteristic told of each, as called forth a smile from Henry, even on a second perusal. Anna finished by expressing her interest in her father's journey, wishing him much pleasure in the sight of old friends, and hoping soon to hear from him.

The more Henry examined Anna's letter, the easier it seemed to him to write such a one; but still, as it was agreed that they should write in the order of their ages, he hoped some novel incident would occur before his turn came.

William at length asked Henry what he was poring over that letter for; 'Are you trying it by all the rules that have been laid down for you?'

'No,' said Henry; 'I am attending only to the composition.'

'Well then, hand it to me; I will criticise it by Anna's own rules.'

'I dare say it will be found wanting,' said the modest writer; 'for I do not always do as well as I know.'

'Well, I will see,' rejoined her brother. 'Here is the date in the right place, to begin with; then, on the left side of the paper, is put, "My dear father," with a small *f*, according to the most approved modern fashion. You did not expect to fill your sheet, so you have written these words three inches from the top. Then comes a pretty, lady-like, little flourish of the pen which I do not understand, and then the letter begins with a capital letter of course. Now, Harry, you must help me about the punctuation, for that is a thing I know very little of.'

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Anna was amused by these good-natured criticisms upon her unstudied performance; and when appealed to by her brother, to say whether she had put commas enough, she acknowledged her omissions and added several. She called Henry's attention to the mark she had made on the outer edge of the third page for the seal, and said he had better do so in future; for unless he did, his letter could not be opened without interfering with the writing.

'Does the hole made by the seal come there?' said Henry; 'I thought the seal came somewhere nearer the middle of the page. I always tear my letters sadly, and further in than that.'

'That is because you do not open them in the best way,' replied Anna. 'If you leave a place for the seal, as I have done, on this outer edge of the third page, and the letter is properly opened, there will not be a word lost, or any hole but in that little place that is marked off.'

'Well, Anna,' exclaimed Henry, 'you do seem to have a peculiar way of doing every thing. Who would ever have thought of there being a right way to open a letter?'

Anna took out of her bag a letter she had lately received, and showed Henry how she had cut the paper close to the seal, and so disengaged the edge

that was held down by the seal; and that by leaving the seal fast to the other part of the letter, there was no break made in the writing. 'Many persons,' continued Anna, 'try to break the seal in halves, and separate it from the paper, by which means they generally tear the paper in two places. I always cut round the seal with a pair of scissors, or tear it with a pin; but a knife is better than either, Harry; so you need not look as though the thing would be impracticable to you, because you carry neither scissors nor pins. The first letter I receive, I will borrow your knife, and show you the best way of opening it; but now I must seal mine, and have it ready for the post to-morrow morning.'

Letters, like conversation, must vary according to the different characters of the writers; and a written form, for a boy of fourteen years of age to use, when writing to an absent parent, would be as unnatural as a set form of speech, with which to address him on his return.

Besides all the different circumstances which attend each young person, when writing a letter, there are differences of character which should appear in each performance; and what would be very proper and natural in one, would be affected, or out of place, in another. We can, therefore, only assist our young friends, by pointing out faults to

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be avoided, and by directing them a little in the choice of subjects, and the manner of treating them; all the particular expressions to be used, must be left to their own discretion. The rule of most universal application is this; Write as you would speak, if you were limited for time, and must say at once, and in a given period, all you wish most to convey to an absent friend. If you are habitually considerate of the feelings and wishes of others, you will, when writing a letter, be guided more by what your friends would like to know, than by your own propensity to tell this or that thing; but if you are selfish or conceited, those traits of character will necessarily influence your choice of subjects, and it is in vain to think of preventing it by any written rules of composition.

The characters of William Price and Henry Moreton were so different, that, had they written on the same subjects, and to the same person, their letters would have been very unlike. William was a lad of fine abilities; he had an acute and independent mind; but the good opinion which he entertained of himself, made him too positive in his opinions, and his independent spirit produced a bluntness of manner and speech, which was often offensive. Henry had bright parts, and a more lively imagination than his cousin, but he had less independence; diffident

of himself, he cared more for the approbation of others, and his manners were, in consequence, more obliging and conciliating. Both these boys had very warm affections; but it was much easier for Henry than for William, to use expressions of love and confidence. All these differences of character, affected their mode of writing letters, and both would have been injured by attempting to follow any prescribed forms, such as are found in "The Complete Letter-writer," of ancient date, and octavo size, now out of print, or in a little duodecimo volume with the same title, which is still in use, though its pages are filled with absurdities, vulgarisms, and the flattest nonsense that was ever offered to the public, as a guide to letter-writing.

Believing that all such guides are mischievous, and have a tendency to mislead the rising generation on the important subject of letter-writing, we confine ourselves, in the present undertaking, to a few examples and illustrations, which are meant to show our young friends, that the most natural and simple effusions are the best, and to encourage them to express their thoughts on paper, as freely as they would in conversation.

William Price was a methodical boy, and therefore he always began a story at the beginning, and always observed the order of time in the events he

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related. Though it was several years since he gave up the use of the same set phrase for the commencement of all his letters to his brother Robert, he still had a fancy for what he called a regular beginning to a letter; when, therefore, he wrote to his father, he began thus; "According to the desire you expressed that I should keep you informed of the work done on the farm, I now take up my pen to tell you what has happened since you left us."

Then he went on to give a detailed account of the farming operations of each day; he also offered his opinion upon some matters, that had already been decided upon differently by the head man on the farm, and asked some questions as to future arrangements. This was a characteristic performance, thrown off with great ease to the writer. Henry, who was watching the progress of this letter from the opposite side of the table, could not perceive that William was once at a loss what to say next. One thing followed another in the order of their occurrence, and William had filled his paper with his own business-like communications, before he was aware that he should disappoint those around him of sending various messages of love and inquiries, that they had been silently preparing. William gave the love of all in one short sentence, and finished his letter in the most summary manner.

Henry sighed to think that he had no such definite subject to write upon as that given to William, and puzzled himself continually as to what his uncle meant by 'domestic scenes,' for he could not fix upon anything worthy of the name. When the evening came, on which he was to write, he talked the matter over with Anna, and found, to his surprise, that even their quiet mode of life would afford her many topics for a letter. She advised him to tell his uncle about the little girl whom Neptune frightened, of their long walk in the woods, and of the call they had received from those strangers.

'To be sure,' said Henry, 'those may be called domestic scenes, and I will gladly put them all in my letter; but they will not take up one page.'

'Not one page!' exclaimed Anna; 'you must be very laconic indeed, if they do not almost fill your sheet; I should find those three topics enough for a long letter.'

'Why just consider, Anna, how little room it will take to tell, that as a little girl was going away from the house, Neptune ran after her, and frightened her till she cried; and that whilst you comforted her, the dog ran off with the good things she had in her basket, and you gave her more. That's the whole of the story, and I am sure that it cannot occupy more than five or six lines.'

'Told in that way, it would not, I suppose, fill up much of your letter; but if I were going to tell it, I should describe the pretty little girl as she came to the house, with her smiling face, and nice clean frock, and her happiness in having her basket filled with good things for her sick mother. Then I should tell how Neptune's approach frightened her, and made her hold her basket up over her head, which he mistook for play, and which made him jump up and frighten her still more. Then she scrambled up the stile, leading into the long meadow; but the dog was on the other side of the fence sooner than she was, and barked and jumped so, that she was afraid to move either way, and began to scream at the top of her voice. On hearing this, Hannah ran out of the back-door, and instead of calling off Neptune, she remonstrated with the child on the unreasonableness of her fears; the poor little girl was too much frightened to listen to Hannah's assurances that the dog would not hurt her; there was the great animal, barking and jumping up at her heels, which she expected every moment would be bitten. The noise made by all three at length reached the school-room, and we all ran out to see what was the matter. Then you can tell how I comforted the child, and that Neptune galloped off with the cold fowl out of her basket, and the boys all ran after him till he dropped it in a mud-puddle, — and as much more as you please.'

Henry was very much surprised to find how much could be made of this domestic scene; and Anna told him that, in describing such an incident, he should tell enough of the particulars, to place the scene as it were before the eyes of the reader; the bare fact being far less entertaining than the accompaniments. Henry was now satisfied that the story of the frightened child would fill up nicely; but he still despaired of making much of the walk in the woods, till Anna reminded him of numerous little details that gave it interest.

'If you merely say that we took a long walk and found several beautiful flowers, it would not interest papa much; but if you tell him how we lost our way, and of the presence of mind which William showed in finding the right path, and of the interview we had with that set of travelling Indians, and that the poor woman offered to give me her pappoose, he will be extremely interested.'

'I forgot about our losing our way, and I did not know that the woman offered you her child; but these are really quite romantic incidents, and will fill up capitally.'

Anna now begged Henry to suggest some other points worth mentioning in that walk; but he could not, he firmly believed that the subject was exhausted; he could only add that they all came home very much tired.

'Why, Henry! how can you forget that Louisa lost her shoe in crossing the marsh, and that Neptune found it and brought it to her. The last incident too of catching Jenny in the meadow, and making her carry the tired little ones up the last hill, home, is well worth telling; because her being frisky when you or Willy lead her, and submitting so quietly to me, shows her sense in a remarkable manner.'

Henry was quite enchanted by Anna's knack at making every thing interesting, and wished he could remember the very words in which she had described the walk, that he might write it just so in his letter. Anna assured him that this was not desirable; she only wished to bring to his mind the incidents which belonged to the subject; but he must clothe them in his own language, or it would not be his own performance. 'Each person,' she added, 'has a way of writing which is his own; and your letter would not be half so acceptable to papa, if he could not see Henry Moreton in every line of it.'

'Well then, I will do my best,' said Henry; 'I have now two good topics, but what was the third you mentioned? Oh, I remember; it was the call those folks made here, by mistake. What more can I say about them, than that they were all shown in, supposing it to be Mr. B——'s house, and that they

all looked very foolish when they found out their mistake; but having sent away their carriage, we were obliged to lend them the dearborn.'

'You could describe the ladies and gentlemen being in full dress, and entering the room as if they were paying a ceremonious dinner visit, and their amazement at finding children playing battledore, and one girl practising on the piano, whilst another was hopping round the room on one foot; that was a scene, I am sure, worthy of Hogarth. You can tell how they stood stock-still as if petrified, till I went forward to meet them, and offer some explanation.'

'Yes, dear Anna, and I can tell how kindly and politely you relieved them from their embarrassment, and made it all easy to them, and sent us to order the dearborn; Oh yes, I can tell a good deal about you in this domestic scene, that I am sure my uncle will like to hear.'

Saying this, he ran off to get his writing-materials, and apply himself at once to the task, while his mind was full of the matter.

Henry made a great point of observing, in this letter, all the directions which his uncle had given him, as to the mechanical execution of it. He put the date up at the right-hand corner, and began with the words 'My dear uncle,' full three inches from

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the top of the page, because he had fears that his subjects would not hold out to fill the ends. He consulted Anna, from time to time, about making paragraphs, and he ruled a margin, that his letter might look as neat as possible. Anna reminded him of the place for the seal, and he made an ample semicircle at the right-hand edge of the third page, which was half filled before he had finished the second topic. Henry now feared that he should not have room for all he wished to say about the mistake, but Anna assured him he would have space enough for that and for messages of love too; he however dilated so much upon her merits, in treating the third subject, that he could not get all into the ends; and he asked if there was not a place under the seal where he could add a little more. He was just about to write upon the last fold, which comes outside, and would have spoiled his letter, when Anna showed him that it was that part with the double edge that went in under the other, on which people sometimes write; and that he must be careful not to put too much there, or it would show when the letter was sealed.

By Anna's advice, he sealed and directed his letter himself, and even condescended to write the address over several times, on a piece of waste-paper, before he put it on the letter, that he might be sure to place it well.

## CHAPTER X.

LETTER FROM LOUISA PRICE TO HER FATHER. — ANNA'S OBSERVATIONS UPON IT. — MODE OF ANNOUNCING BAD NEWS. — TRUTH ESSENTIAL TO A CORRESPONDENCE. — THE EVILS OF FALSE ACCOUNTS. — FOLLY OF WRITING WHEN ANGRY.

It was now Louisa's turn to write, and all her secret hopes that something would occur, that would make as good a subject for a letter as Henry had had, were fulfilled. There was a dear long letter from her father to acknowledge, and a most important change in the family to announce. Louisa was a silent, thoughtful child, devoted to books, and to her own reveries. She was often seen composing letters to her absent brother, but could seldom be prevailed upon to send them to him, or to show what she had written. She was painfully alive to criticism, and could ill bear the free discussions and off-hand speeches of her brothers and sisters. She had been known to write poetry, but the least observation of others upon what she had been doing, would make her burn or efface her lines. She knew that her letter to her father would be regarded as public property, in the little community at Oakwood, because An-

na's, William's, and Henry's had been ; and therefore, she had made a great effort to conceal her repugnance to showing it, and to write such a one as she would like that William should see. He was the 'lion in her path'; there was nothing that she dreaded like Willy's criticism, except that he should find out how much she cared for it.

Nobody knew when Louisa wrote her letter ; but on the third evening after Henry's epistle was finished, this quiet little girl put hers into her sister's hands, and asked her to seal and direct it. 'I suppose I may read it too,' said Anna. 'Oh yes, read it aloud for the good of all,' added William. Louisa blushing assented, and Anna read as follows :

'My dear father,

'We were all made very happy by the receipt of your entertaining letter from New York. We all thought that you would write from Albany ; but as you took the night-boat, that was impossible. I would say more about your letter, were it not for a great family misfortune, which occurred yesterday, and which has made us all so miserable that I cannot write of any thing else.

'It falls to my lot to inform you of this sad event ; so without further preface, I will tell you, at once, what the terrible stroke is. Our beloved Neptune has been taken away from us. He is gone,

never to play with us more ; and when you come home, that good dog will not be here to welcome you. Yet he is not dead ; he still lives to amuse others. He has been torn from us by the hand of man. Captain J—— has given up being a farmer ; he is going to sea again, and he sent a man here for Neptune, who said that the captain gave him to you on this condition, that he should have him back again whenever he went to sea. It was a hard condition, I think ; and we wish now that he had never given Neptune to us at all. To have such a dear dog with us long enough for us all to become passionately fond of him, and then to lose him ! It is too bad ; don't you think so, father ? William thinks that the captain had a right to take the dog, but that it was very unkind of him to do it. Anna says we ought to feel more for Captain J——, and judge of his feelings for the dog, by our own. What do you think about it, papa ? You will feel for us children, I am sure ; and as you often say, that the happiness of a great many ought to be considered before the happiness of one, you will decide against the captain, and in favor of your unhappy children.

'As this one event engrosses all our thoughts and feelings, you will not expect me to write of any thing else ; so, with love from all the mourners,

'I remain your affectionate daughter,

Louisa Price.'

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The children all felt so much about the loss of the dog, that they were not at all aware of the extravagance of Louisa's language; neither did they perceive that there was a little affectation in the style, nor that the manner in which the loss of Neptune was announced was likely to alarm their father extremely. All this was, however, apparent enough to Anna; and it required great self-command on her part, to read the letter through gravely, and keep her thoughts to herself, when William and Henry were praising it. Knowing the sensitiveness of Louisa, and that it was as much as the poor child could bear to show her letter at all, she refrained from all comment upon it, and only considered within herself, how she should prevent her father from being alarmed by Louisa's way of announcing the removal of Neptune. As there was a good deal of blank paper left, she asked Louisa if she might fill it up. This request was readily granted; and as soon as Anna was thoroughly engaged in writing, and all fear of further attention being paid to her letter, was over, Louisa slipped off to bed.

Henry had watched his cousin Anna's looks, and observed that she did not join in the praises bestowed on Louisa's performance; and therefore, when the timid girl was gone, he asked Anna if she did not think that a very womanly letter, and remarkably well written for a child of twelve years of age.

'I do not admire it so much as I do some children's letters, Henry. Some of the expressions are too womanly. Louisa's letters are not simple enough to please me; but papa says that her faults are those of a fine mind partially developed, that Louisa must be let entirely alone, and never criticised, and that when she grows up she will write better than any of us.'

'Well, I like her letter very much,' said Henry; 'her manner of announcing the loss of Neptune is fit for a novel, it produces a sort of startling effect.'

'Yes, quite too much so,' rejoined Anna; 'it is enough to frighten papa, and make him think that one of us is dead at least. I would not on any account let it go so; but fortunately Louisa has begun her letter on the wrong page; I can therefore fold it the other way, and so put all her writing on the two inner pages, and write myself on that one which papa will read first. In this way, I shall save him from being unnecessarily alarmed. I have heard him say a great deal about the impropriety of frightening people unnecessarily by a startling way of telling or writing a piece of news; I shall like to know what he will say to Louisa's doing it; whether he will think it best to tell her of that fault, or let it alone to cure itself, as he does all the rest of hers. I beg that you and Willy will not say a word to her about her letter.'

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The boys promised not to speak of it. Henry begged leave to read it again, and then he saw how alarming her beginning was. Anna told Henry, that when her father was thrown from his horse and broke his arm, he made her write the account of it to her uncle Moreton three times over, before he was satisfied that it was so worded as to give the least possible alarm and anxiety.

'How was it worded at last? do you recollect, Anna?'

'Yes, I shall never forget it. I began in this way.

"I write at the request of my father," — he made me say that, to show that he was alive and in his senses, — "to tell you of an accident he met with yesterday, lest you should hear of it in some indirect and alarming way." — "Yesterday" was put in to show that several hours had elapsed since the event; and saying that we wrote to prevent his being alarmed, showed that what we should tell, would not alarm him.'

'Why did not you say "a trifling accident"?' asked Henry.

'Because that would not have been true, and you know that papa is truth itself. It was a bad fracture, and he was very much bruised and hurt besides. After breaking the news in this cautious way, at the beginning of the letter, he allowed me to go into all

the particulars, and tell the whole truth about it. Papa does not approve of keeping friends ignorant of the true state of the health of those they love. Did you never hear him tell the story of the siege of Dunkirk, and the false letters which the gentlemen there wrote to their absent wives?'

'No, never,' said Henry; 'I have heard my mother tell about the siege, but she never said a word about any false letters; what were they?'

'They were letters written by the gentlemen who remained in the besieged city, to their wives, who fled to Calais, to be out of danger. Those who were afraid their wives would return unadvisedly, sent them terrific accounts of the siege, and represented things as far worse than they really were. Other gentlemen, who had timid wives, and had no fear of their coming back, wrote that all was as safe and quiet as if the enemy were a thousand miles off. When the ladies tried, they compared these accounts, and found them so contradictory, that they knew not what to believe, and lost all confidence in their husbands' letters. Meanwhile, our grandfather always wrote the exact truth to our grandmother, and the letters she received were soon the only accounts that were believed by the refugees; and they used to say in French, "Tell us, Madam Price, what this brave

American writes, for our husbands send us nothing but lies."'

'To be sure in such a case as that,' said Henry, 'where there were so many together, any false account would be immediately detected, and then they would not know what to believe. I wonder the husbands had not thought of that.'

'Some were perhaps in the habit of deceiving their wives, and never thought of being detected. But in writing, as in speaking, it is not only the best policy to state the exact truth, but it is our duty to do so. In all our intercourse with others, it is of the utmost importance to preserve their confidence, and this cannot be done unless truth is scrupulously adhered to, in writing as well as speaking.'

'But there are some cases, Anna,' said William, 'in which we are not obliged to tell the whole truth; we may hold our tongues, and so I suppose we may sometimes avoid mentioning a subject in a letter.'

'Certainly,' replied Anna; 'there are many such cases; but where our friends are sick or in danger, we have a right to be informed of it, and papa says it is a mistaken attempt at kindness, to withhold the truth; for if the least suspicion crosses the mind, that we are not informed of the worst, our imaginations torment us far more than any known evil could. Do you remember, William, when Louisa

was ill and my father was in New York, and I kept him informed every day of her state?'

'O yes, I remember it; and I recollect too, that Dr. Smith advised you not to tell my father anything about her illness, as he could not leave his business to return to her.'

'I knew better what he would like. I wrote him every particular; and the confidence he had in me that I would do so, saved him a great deal of suffering. He has often said, that if he had had any suspicion of my trying to conceal the worst, he should have been miserable, and should have been tempted to return, though it would have ruined his affairs; but feeling sure that he knew the whole truth, from day to day, enabled him to continue in New York, and perform the urgent duties that detained him there. Oh there is nothing like truth, in all things! But now I must leave off talking with you, and make my additions to Louisa's letter. If you want something to read, Henry, you will find two very good fictitious letters in this excellent little book, "A Visit to the Sea-Side."'

Henry took the book and was soon wholly engrossed by it.

As the turns of the younger children came, to write to their father, the slates in the school-room were frequently filled with attempts at epistolary

composition; and some which were written without any intention of forwarding them, were so much better than the more elaborate attempts, that Anna encouraged the writers to copy them fairly on paper, and let her send them. She always persuaded those younger than Louisa to write their letters on slates, then she corrected the spelling and rectified other mistakes, so that when they came to write them out fairly, they had only to attend to the penmanship; and as their father was very particular about his children's handwriting, they took great pains to write legibly and without any blots. Many were the sheets begun and condemned, on account of some accident with the ink, or because the writing was not good enough; but as the letter supplied the place of a copy, the children persevered, till they satisfied themselves with doing their very best for dear papa.

William had so much to say about the farming operations, that he could not wait for his turn to come round, but wrote much oftener. Once, he appeared with a flushed face and kindling eye, prepared to write a letter to his father, on the spur of the moment, having just witnessed something on the farm which he disapproved. Anna gently inquired what had happened, and William told her that a certain colt had been lamed through the awk-

wardness of Jem, and the obstinacy of the head man, who would put him to work that he was not fit for. Anna expressed her regrets, and then reminded William of certain things which he had to do then, and advised his deferring his letter till evening, when they should be all quietly employed round the table, and he could write with less interruption from the younger children. Though this impetuous youth was much excited, there was nothing in Anna's gentle way of speaking, to arouse opposition, and he immediately acceded to her proposal.

When the evening came, William had become calm, and, on talking the matter over again with Anna, he was less disposed to blame the farmer or Jem, and wrote a very different account of the accident from what he would have done, had he written in the morning. This was just what his judicious sister wished; for she knew the danger of writing a letter under the effects of a temporary ebullition of feeling. It is very unwise to speak in a passion, because we always say that which we are sorry for, when the excitement is over; but it is still more foolish and inexcusable to write under such an influence, as there is then time enough to think twice of what we are about, and to repress the written words, before it is too late.

## CHAPTER XI.

ANNA'S LESSONS IN LETTER-WRITING TO A BOY ON  
HIS FATHER'S FARM.

It was a rule of Mr. Price's house, that all letters should be carried to and from the post-office in a small leathern bag or wallet, with a spring-lock to it, provided for the purpose. When it was brought home, and its contents distributed, it was hung up in the hall, to receive the letters of the family which were going to the mill; and it was the business of one of the farming men to carry it every morning, at an early hour, to the post-office, where it was left till the arrival of the next mail, that it might be ready to receive the next budget for Oakwood. In consequence of this arrangement, Mr. Price escaped the trouble of lost letters, of which he often heard his neighbours complain.

During his father's absence, it was William's privilege to go for the letters and distribute them, a business which he very well liked. One day there was found, in the leathern wallet, a letter directed to James Williams. This was a boy of fourteen years of age, who worked on the farm; he was so familiarly known as boy Jem, that his name at full

length was hardly recognised; when, however, it was ascertained that the letter was for him, John Price ran off with it to him, and, on his return, he told every one that it was a letter from Jem's mother, and though very badly written, and full of bad spelling, he had helped Jem to make out the greater part of it, and Jem was so pleased to hear from home, that he could not help crying for joy. He said he had been away from home the greater part of a year, and had not heard a word about any of them till now. John had hardly finished his account, when they saw Jem approaching the house with rapid strides. Anna suspected that he was coming to get further aid in deciphering the precious letter he held in his hand, and kindly put herself in his way. She was the very person whose help and sympathy he most desired, and they were soon to be seen standing under the shade of a spreading elm tree, Anna reading, and Jem looking earnestly in her face. Nothing could be more incorrect than the composition, orthography, and penmanship of this letter, and yet, as a messenger of love and good tidings, it was a valuable and respectable performance; it certainly gave more real happiness than many a more elaborate composition. It must have cost the writer a great effort; but, could she have seen the countenance of her son

on hearing its contents, she would have felt amply repaid. None, therefore, should omit writing to their friends because they cannot do it well; any letter is better than none, but all who have had any education ought to endeavour to acquire a facility in writing letters.

Anna found, on inquiring, that Jem had never written to his family since he left them; and yet he had had education enough to enable him to read with ease, and to write a tolerable hand. He said he had often wished to write, but thought it too great an undertaking for him. Anna offered to assist him, and encouraged him to reply immediately to his mother's letter. She perceived that his heart was full of feeling for his family, which he would find it extremely difficult to put on paper, in any intelligible form; and, therefore, she proposed that he should tell her what he wished to say, when she would write it down for him, and he could copy it in his own hand-writing. Anna felt so much for the mother's anxiety for her son, that she appointed an hour that very evening for writing Jem's letter. She had him alone with her in the school-room, and with a great deal of drawing out, questioning, and suggesting, she contrived to make him speak out some of the affectionate things he had in his heart; and to tell how he was situated, and what he had done

ever since he left his father's house. When he was quite *stuck fast*, and could not think of anything else to say, Anna advised him to shut his eyes, and think how they all looked at home, to fancy himself there talking to them, and then he might think of something more to tell them in his letter. After pondering a long while with his hand over his eyes, he said he could not think of anything to say, only questions that he should put to them if he were really with them.

"Very well," said Anna; "tell me the questions, and put them all in your letter; perhaps your mother will answer them."

That was a new idea to Jem; he went on very fluently on this new track, and soon made his letter quite long enough, considering he had to copy it all.

Anna had written his sentences very plainly, and arranged his matter as it should be in a letter; and having put a sheet of ruled paper before him, and given him a good pen, she left him to make a literal copy of her manuscript. It was slow work for such clumsy, unpractised fingers; and when Anna returned to the school-room, at the end of an hour, he had but half completed his task, and was very much tired; so she advised him to leave the rest till another time. She promised to take care of his unfinished letter, and not let any one see it, as that was a point on which he was very sensitive.

On looking over her pupil's letter, Anna was surprised to find how many blunders he had contrived to make, notwithstanding he had hers before him as a model. He had paid no attention at all to her paragraphs, but had written it all close together. He did not know that words should be divided according to their syllables; so he put in as many letters of a word as he could crowd in at the end of a line, and added the remainder at the beginning of the next, whether they made a syllable or not; sometimes he joined several words together, as if they were one; frequently he wrote the same word twice over, he put in and left out syllables, and what looked worst of all, he wrote the pronoun *I* with a small letter.

Anna felt rather discouraged at the sight of so many mistakes; but her benevolent wish that the boy's mother should hear from him, made her resolve not to damp his energies by any criticisms, but encourage him to finish and despatch this letter, and afterwards try to improve him in the art of letter-writing. Accordingly, the next evening, Jem finished copying out his letter; Anna sealed and directed it in his presence, and it was safely deposited in the family letter-bag. She found he was aware of having made numerous mistakes in copying from her manuscript; and on his expressing a wish that he knew how to write a letter, Anna offered to instruct

him, and appointed a meeting with him in the school-room, at the same hour the next evening.

On Anna's return to the parlour, the boys were eager to know all about Jem's letter, his mistakes and difficulties. Anna told them he had the same fondness for a regular beginning, that William had; for his first sentence was, 'This comes to inform you that I am well, and hope you are the same.'

William approved of this beginning, Henry thought it very stiff and old fashioned, Anna objected to it as altogether superfluous.

'Every letter,' she said, 'comes to inform one of something; and therefore it is unnecessary to say that it does; and unless you had been ill, and there were great anxiety about your health, there is too much egotism in making that your first topic. Jem should have begun with saying, that he had just received his mother's letter, and that it had made him very happy.'

After describing Jem's numerous difficulties to the boys, Anna told them of her promise to instruct him in the art of letter-writing, and consulted with them on the best means. Jem's imperfect education in the first rudiments of learning, and his want of familiarity with books, made it necessary to teach him very differently from a well-educated boy. His ignorance of orthography was the first great diffi-

and of less advantage than writing from a book, or correct manuscript, by copying which, other things might be learned at the same time, such as where to use capitals, how to divide words, &c. When, by this exercise, he had acquired some facility in putting words and sentences together, she would set him to writing original matter, in the shape of a diary of his own life. Noting down, each evening, what he had done during the day, was the easiest of all composition, and would be a good introduction to letter-writing. All were of opinion that it would be pleasanter to Jem, to copy from manuscript, than from print; and as Anna's hand-writing was such an one as he could not hope to imitate, it was decided that he should copy one of the boys'. As William was willing to lend his aid, and his writing was very good, he wrote about ten lines in his best manner, making the farming operations of the day his theme. His manuscript was criticised, altered, and re-written, that it might be as correct as possible, and Anna said Jem should copy it till he could do it without a fault.

The pupil liked his lesson very much, and did his best to imitate his model; but he was obliged to copy

When at last the task was accomplished, William wrote ten lines more in the same legible and correct manner, and these were copied with rather more facility than the first, which was encouraging to all parties.

By the end of a week's instruction, Jem's progress was considerable; and he even lengthened his exercise, by adding a sentence of his own to the farming journal. The moment, however, that he attempted to go alone, he failed; the very words which he had written properly, when copying, he spelt in a totally different manner, when he wrote from his own head. This convinced him of the advantage of continuing still longer to copy from correct models; so, besides writing William's journal, he made long extracts from books.

When, by long practice, Jem had at last acquired some facility in writing and spelling, he began original composition under Anna's guidance, and soon learned to write a very good account of his day's occupations. He became fond of keeping a diary, and never failed to note down in the evening, what he had been doing during the day. Being a youth of good abilities, he by degrees added a few reflec-

tions to the facts he recorded. The step from this sort of composition to letter-writing was a very easy one, and what Jem had dreaded as the most difficult task, proved so agreeable to him, that he was in danger of making his friends pay too much postage, and tiring them with long details of what could interest no one but himself. His kind instructress warned him against these errors, and he readily profited by her hints. It was more difficult to correct him of the fault which he next committed; that of writing in a flourishing, bombastic style, which is most especially to be avoided by young persons. Jem now aimed at making a fine, high-sounding beginning to his letters, such as the following:

' My dear brother,

' My pen, which has lain so long in idleness, has now commenced its important task. It being my duty, and I trust, my interest to inform you of my circumstances, I shall lead you to understand that I am in good health and prosperous condition. I have been, and still am, at work on Mr. Price's farm.'

It was in vain that Anna hinted to her pupil that she thought all, but the last sentence of the above paragraph, superfluous. He valued himself very much upon it, and did not like to have it found fault

with. Anna showed it to William, and it proved a good warning to him. This specimen of Jem's composition did more towards curing William of his fondness for formal beginnings, than all the criticism he had heard on the subject. Another of Jem's errors was, fancying that he showed his learning by using long words, and expressing himself in a round-about way. Being troubled once by an inflammation in his eyes, he was informing his mother of it; and instead of saying in a simple way that his eyes were weak, and would not allow of his writing much at a time, he wrote thus: 'At present, if I were to demonstrate on behalf of my eyes, I should say they were very poor.'

He was very much surprised when Anna told him that he had written absolute nonsense, in trying to write elegantly, and that if she had occasion to mention such a thing, she should express herself in the plainest way.

It was long before Jem could be convinced that the simplest expression is the best. Many young persons err in this particular; but they need only examine the best models, to become sensible of its truth.

## CHAPTER XII.

## RETURN OF MR. PRICE. — NOTES OF INVITATION.

During Mr. Price's absence from home, he wrote constantly to his children, adapting his letters to their different ages and characters, and setting them excellent examples of the familiar epistolary style. The children often observed that a letter from papa was just like hearing him talk. Henry was loud in his uncle's praise; every letter was a study to him. William sometimes tried to criticise, but found little on which to exercise his abilities. At last there came the most welcome of all Mr. Price's communications, that which announced the day of his return home. This news caused so much joyous excitement throughout the family, and made the younger children so wild with delight, that no lessons could be thought of, nor anything attended to but what was considered as preparation for their beloved father's reception. It was well that the interval, between the arrival of the letter and that of Mr. Price, was only twenty-four hours.

All Anna's firmness and gentleness were required in settling who should go in the dearborn, to meet their father at the place where the stage-coach

stopped. It was a pleasure which all desired, but which only three could have. William must go to drive, Henry, to jump out and open gates, and Anna thought the female part of the family should be represented by Louisa. The younger children were reconciled to staying at home, by the promise of meeting their father at the bottom of the avenue, and being the first to show him certain new plants that were just in flower.

Happily for these impatient young spirits, Mr. Price made his appearance among them at the time he was expected; each, in turn, shared his affectionate caresses, and the day was devoted to showing him every domestic novelty, talking over all that had passed in his absence, and hearing his account of what he had seen and heard.

In the evening Mr. Price looked over and arranged the papers which he had brought home with him. Among these were all the cards and notes of invitation that he had received, and which he had preserved, in order to amuse his children, and remind him of people and circumstances which they would like to hear of. Notes of all sizes, shapes, and tints, were now spread out upon the centretable. William compared the different handwritings; Anna observed the variety of expression to convey the same idea; and there was some discussion as to

which was best. William objected very much to any one's asking *the honor* of a person's company, because it must so often be written, where the visitor conferred no honor at all.

Mr. Price approved William's nice sense of truth ; but told him that the more a certain form of words was used, the less it implied. 'If every one uses the word *honor* in that ceremonious way to every one, it cannot be supposed to mean anything particular, it is a mere form of civility. Whereas, if we continually vary the expression according to the person addressed, and call the company of one visitor *an honor*, and that of another *a favor*, or a pleasure, the choice between these terms has a meaning, and, if we misuse them, we may convey a false impression. Now I think, that, for a ceremonious dinner invitation from one gentleman to another, there cannot be a better form than this ;' and he pointed to the following note :

"Mr. Smith requests the honor of Mr. Price's company at dinner, on Monday, the 12th instant, at four o'clock."

'For a less ceremonious dinner,' continued Mr. Price, 'it may be well to use the word *favor*, instead of *honor*, and a lady should never use the latter word in a note to a gentleman. Now I think of it, boys, let me ask you, if you know how to answer

such an invitation as that.' Both William and Henry acknowledged their ignorance, and begged to know what Mr. Price had written in reply.

'I wrote in this way ; "Mr. Price accepts, with much pleasure, the honor of Mr. Smith's invitation to dine, on Monday, the 12th instant, at four o'clock," making my answer, as nearly as possible, an echo of the invitation. Many people say *will accept with much pleasure*, making the acceptance future instead of present, which is a great mistake. Some would answer Mr. Smith's invitation thus ; "Mr. Price will do himself the honor of waiting upon Mr. Smith, according to his polite invitation for Monday next." But I do not like this positive assertion that he will go. A thousand things may occur to prevent the fulfillment of an engagement ; but we may speak positively of accepting the invitation, and therefore I prefer my mode of reply. I object also to the latter part of this note ; it is always better to repeat, in an answer, the very words used in the invitation, to denote the day, hour, and nature of it. Then, if there is any mistake, it will be corrected. If I had mis-read, and supposed the hour to be *five* instead of *four*, an answer, worded as mine was, would lead to my being corrected.

'Here,' continued Mr. Price, pointing to another note on the table, 'is a pleasant, familiar way of asking a friend to dine,' and he read as follows :

"My dear Sir,  
 "Will you do me the favor to dine with me to-morrow, at three o'clock, in company with Col. T—, and a few friends?"

"Yours very truly,  
 "J— C — W—.

"Washington, June 20th."

'This should be answered, in the first person, as it is written, thus :

"My dear Sir,  
 "It will give me great pleasure to dine with you to-morrow, at three o'clock, as you kindly propose.

"Yours, very truly,  
 "C. Price."

'There is one great mistake, into which people are apt to fall, who are not accustomed to write notes, and that is, beginning in the third person, and changing to the first; as if I should begin, "Mr. Price presents his compliments to Mr. *such-an-one*, and wishes to know &c.," and then went on to say, "I hope this affair will soon be settled." Some make a similar blunder in regard to the person addressed, and say *you* instead of *he*, in the course of the note. It is difficult to write a long note correct-

ly in the third person, and therefore it is best to begin in the first person, as you do in a letter, when you have more than a few lines to write.'

Henry begged to know how a boy of his age should reply to a note written in the third person; 'Ought I to call myself Mr. Moreton?' 'No; during your boyhood, it is most proper to call yourself plain Henry Moreton, however other people may choose to address you. If you should, by any chance, receive a formal invitation to dine, your answer should be "Henry Moreton accepts with much pleasure the favor of Mr. —'s invitation," &c. and then copy the words of the invitation.'

Whilst Mr. Price had been talking to Henry, Anna had been looking over the notes on the table, and as she had been thoroughly drilled in the business of note-writing, by an accomplished and fashionable friend, whom she visited in New York, she was able to point out to her younger sister, as well as to the boys, the faults and excellences of the various specimens before her. She showed them how much better those notes looked, in which the writing was so placed as to occupy the centre of the paper, and to fill out the lines evenly at each end. One note, on pink paper, was written so singularly as to attract particular attention; it was found, on examination, that the unequal length of the lines was occa-

sioned by the writer's having scrupulously avoided dividing the syllables of a word; when there was not room for the whole word, she would not write any part of it. All agreed that this was more nice than wise, and that it spoiled the appearance of the note. Anna said she had been taught never to divide the syllables of a proper name, or to separate the title from the name. A little consideration would enable any one to avoid it, and it was better to write a note twice over, than to do any thing so awkward. 'Such notes as these,' continued Anna, 'are so short, and so easily written, that there is no excuse for any erasure, or interlining, or blot; when such occur, they should be re-written.'

'City notes should always have the name of the street or avenue, and country notes, the name of the place in which the writer lives, prefixed to the date. Unlike a letter, the date of a note should be at the left hand lower corner of the page, and the day of the week is generally put before that of the month. To prevent this line from reaching too far across the page, and looking too much like the other lines in the note, the place of residence should be put above the date. Here is one note, on fine, hot-pressed paper, that seems to be perfectly well arranged, well written, and well expressed. I suppose it is an invitation to a ball, for it is simply, "Mr. G— W— re-

quests the pleasure of Mr. Price's company, on Thursday evening, the 17th inst., 9 o'clock." Here is another, equally well written, on an occasion less ceremonious.

"Mrs. J— S— expects a few friends at her house on Saturday evening next, and hopes it will be agreeable to Mr. Price to join them, and hear a little music. 8 o'clock.

"Chestnut Street,  
"Wed., June 10th."

'Was this really a small party, as the note implies?' asked Anna, 'or was it one of those silly deceptions which are too common, when a lady asks a house-full of people, and says to each one, "to meet a few friends"?''

'It was,' said Mr. Price, 'what the note announced, a small assemblage of people with some fine music, and I was much obliged to Mrs. S— for so wording her note, as to let me know what sort of entertainment I might expect; for had she not named the music, I should not have gone, and should have missed the pleasantest evening I spent in Philadelphia. I was glad to find it so much the fashion to name the hour at which guests are expected to come; for that is so different at different places, that a stranger is often at a loss, and this settles the matter

at once, and in the best way. When a time is fixed, I think it is due to the lady of the house, to go as nearly as possible at the hour named ; so I went a few minutes after eight, and found many there before me. The music began at half past eight and lasted till half past ten, when we had a very pretty supper, that detained us till a little after eleven o'clock.'

Anna asked her father how he replied to Mrs. S——'s note, and he said, 'In these words, "Mr. Price has much pleasure in accepting Mrs. J—— S——'s invitation for Saturday evening, at eight o'clock." Was that right, my dear daughter? You know more about these things than I do.'

Anna approved entirely of her father's note, and was going to disclaim knowing more about it than he did, when she was interrupted, by Henry's inquiring how notes of invitation should be answered, when we wish to refuse them.

'When you have a previous engagement, you have only to plead that, and say, "Mr. Moreton regrets that a previous engagement prevents his having the pleasure of accepting," &c. If you have business that interferes, you can say "regrets that his engagements are such, he cannot have the pleasure," &c. If you have no hindrance, but want of inclination, you can say "you are much obliged by Mrs. such-an-one's polite invitation, and regret that you cannot have the pleasure of accepting it."'

Henry now arranged the more friendly notes, according to the degrees of intimacy implied by their manner of address, and begged his uncle to see if he were right ; the series ran thus, 'Sir,' 'Dear Sir,' 'My dear Sir,' 'My dear Mr. Price,' 'My dear friend.' Mr. Price said that was a very good *cre-scendo*,\* and told him to arrange them now according to their terminations ; so he began with 'Your ob't serv't,' as the most formal and cold of all ; then he put, 'I am, with the highest respect, your ob't serv't,' as meaning rather more than the first ; 'Yours very faithfully,' seemed more friendly, and 'Yours very sincerely,' more familiar still ; but he could not tell where to place 'Yours truly,' and 'Yours very truly.' Mr. Price said, therein consisted the convenience of those terms ; they were so vague, they might mean any degree of friendship, and he did not wonder that Henry was at a loss where to put them in his series. 'These expressions are very useful in writing notes ; they mean very little, and yet are sufficient for any one, except such as we wish to treat with great ceremony and respect.'

Henry inquired how a youth of his age should conclude a note to a grown up person.

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\* A word used in music to denote a gradual increase of sound.

'If it is an intimate friend or relation, you may say, "Yours very affectionately," or "Yours with great respect and affection." If the note is a reply to a favor conferred, you can say, "Yours very gratefully ; if there is no reason for expressing any thing more, respect is always due from the young to their elders and superiors ; therefore it is always safe to write, "Yours respectfully." There are words enough in use, to express every grade of feeling, and they should be carefully selected for this purpose, as the conclusion of a letter or a note makes a great impression on the person reading it. If you wish to recommend yourself to your elders, be sure to close with a respectful salutation ; and never indulge in the careless and impolite way of concluding, practised by some ; who, instead of choosing a proper expression, think to cut the matter short, by saying, "Yours, &c."'

William now begged Henry not to pore over those notes any longer, but to play a game of chess with him, adding, 'It will be time enough, some years hence, for you and me to learn how to write notes ; boys need not know about such things.'

'Time slips away so fast,' observed Mr. Price, 'that you will be young men, before you are aware of it ; and when you are first obliged to answer a ceremonious note, with no one at hand to consult,

you will be glad to call up all you can recollect of what has passed this evening ; and it will be well for you if you can remember enough of it, to preserve you from the awkward predicament of being utterly at a loss how to respond to a civility.'

Soon after Mr. Price's return, Henry was summoned home ; and his letters to his kind friends at Oakwood showed how much he had profited, by their example and instruction, in the epistolary art. A painful duty had become an agreeable occupation, and the facility he had acquired in three months, proved a fruitful source of pleasure to him all the rest of his life.