

DESIGNED FOR LEONARD LETTER WRITER.



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Durham,  
John

A  
NEW CLASSICAL  
**SELECTION OF LETTERS ;**

INTERSPERSED

WITH SOME ORIGINAL PRODUCTIONS

ON

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|-------------|-----------|
| BUSINESS,   | LOVE,     |
| DUTY.       | MARRIAGE, |
| FRIENDSHIP, | &c. &c.   |

WITH

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES,

IN PROSE AND VERSE ;

PETITIONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

COMPLIMENTARY CARDS, FORMS IN LAW,

AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

—  
THIRD EDITION.  
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BOSTON :

PUBLISHED BY JOHN M. DURHAM

1810.

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from  
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DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS—TO WIT.

L.S. *Be it remembered, that on the twentieth day of April, in the thirty-first year of the Independence of the United States of America, JOHN M. DUNHAM, of the said District, has deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the words following, to wit: "A new classical selection of Letters, interspersed with some original productions, on business, duty, friendship, love, marriage, &c. &c. with miscellaneous pieces, in prose and verse, petitions on various subjects, complimentary cards, forms in law, and the declaration of independence of the United States of America." In conformity to the Act of Congress of the United States, intitled, "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the time therein mentioned;" and also an Act, intitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, intitled, an Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned: and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints."*

WILLIAM S. SHAW, Clerk of the  
District of Massachusetts.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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IT may appear somewhat presumptuous to offer any thing NEW, under the hackneyed title of a LETTER WRITER ; but we rest our hopes of success on the idea that those to whom such an assistant is necessary, must of course wish to meet brevity and economy. We have therefore, taken care to avoid all extraneous matter, and confined ourselves to those subjects which generally concern every person during some part of life, viz. *Love, Duty, Friendship, and Business*; and we presume to assert, without much dread of contradiction, that with regard to utility and cheapness, our little work cannot be excelled by any other extant.

Conformably to our plan of brevity, we shall occupy no more space or time with farther observations on our plan, but proceed to give some general rules, essentially necessary to be observed.

Epistolary writing appears, at first view, to stretch into a very wide field. For there is no subject whatever, on which one may not convey his thoughts to the public, in the form of a letter. Lord Shaftesbury, for instance, Mr. Harris, and several other writers, have chosen to give this form to philosophical treatises. But this is not sufficient to class such treatises under the head of epistolary composition.

Epistolary writing becomes a distinct species of composition, subject to the cognizance of criticism, only or chiefly, when it is of the easy and familiar kind: when it is conversation carried on upon paper, between two friends at a distance. Such an intercourse, when well conducted, may be rendered very agreeable to readers of taste. If the subject of the letters be im-

*Plain?*

portant, they will be the more valuable. Even though there should be nothing very considerable in the subject, yet if the spirit and turn of the correspondence be agreeable; if they be written in a sprightly manner, and with native grace and ease, they may still be entertaining; more especially if there be any thing to interest us, in the characters of those who write them. Hence the curiosity which the publick has always discovered, concerning the letters of eminent persons. We expect in them to discover somewhat of their real character. It is childish indeed to expect, that in letters we are to find the whole heart of the author unveiled. Concealment and disguise take place, more or less, in all human intercourse. But still, as letters from one friend to another make the nearest approach to conversation, we may expect to see more of a character displayed in these than in other productions, which are studied for publick view. We please ourselves with beholding the writer in a situation which allows him to be at his ease, and to give vent occasionally to the overflowings of his heart.

Much, therefore, of the merit, and the agreeableness of epistolary writing, will depend on its introducing us into some acquaintance with the writer. There if any where, we look for the man, not for the author. Its first and fundamental requisite is, to be natural and simple; for a stiff and laboured manner is as bad in a letter, as it is in conversation. This does not banish sprightliness and wit. These are graceful in letters, just as they are in conversation; when they flow easily, and without being studied; when employed so as to season, not to cloy. One who, either in conversation or in letters, affects to shine and to sparkle always, will not please long. The style of letters should not be too highly polished. It ought to be neat and correct, but no more. All nicety about words, betrays study; and hence musical periods, and appearances of a number and harmony in arrangement, should be carefully avoided in letters. The best letters are commonly such as the authors have written with most facility. What the heart or the imagination dictates, always flows readily; but where there is no subject

*plain?*

to warm or interest these, constraint appears; and hence, those letters of mere compliment, congratulation, or affected condolence, which have cost the authors most labour in composing, and which for that reason, they perhaps as their master-pieces, never fail of being the most disagreeable and insipid to the readers.

It ought at the same time to be remembered, that the ease and simplicity which I have recommended in epistolary correspondence, is not to be understood as importing entire carelessness. In writing to the most intimate friend, a certain degree of attention, both to the subject and the style, is requisite and becoming. It is no more, than what we owe both to ourselves, and to the friend with whom we correspond. A slovenly and neglected manner of writing, is a disobliging mark of want of respect. The liberty, besides, of writing letters with too careless a hand, is apt to betray persons into imprudence in what they write. The first requisite both in conversation and correspondence, is to attend to all the proper decorums which our own character, and that of others, demand. An imprudent expression in conversation may be forgotten and pass away; but when we take the pen into our hand, we must remember, that "*Litera scripta manet.*"

When corresponding with relations or friends, the feelings of the heart will dictate the best salutation; but in addressing superiors, great attention should be paid to rank and title; for which purpose, we insert the following

OFFICIAL TITLES.



*The usual stile of Address, for the principal publick Officers, in the United States, is as follows, viz.*

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES**, is sometimes addressed by that appellation only: The most customary style of addressing him, is, *His Excellency the PRESIDENT of the United States*; or, *His Excellency the PRESIDENT.*

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goodness, to enable me to get my future bread. I am sensible how little I deserve any favour from you, and how much you are justly offended; but I humbly hope, that when you consider how I am situated, without a character, and the distress I am thereby likely to be driven to, your humanity will induce you to put it in my power once more to obtain a livelihood; and I solemnly assure you, that a grateful remembrance shall be proved by the future good conduct of

Your very humble  
And penitent servant,

---

ON DUTY.

LETTER from a youth at school to his father.

HONOURED SIR,

I EMBRACE the first opportunity of informing you how happily I feel myself situated with Mr. ——. That gentleman and his family do every thing to render their pupils comfortable; and my master spares no pains to instruct us in every useful branch. I have a just sense, dear father, of your indulgence in allowing me the pocket money which Mr. —— regularly pays me; and I promise to be as frugal as possible. At present, I am in want of a few books; which, I have no doubt, your goodness will enable me to purchase, and that I shall hear from you soon. Pray make my duty to my mother, and love to my sisters. I am, dear sir,

Your affectionate and dutiful son.

*The Answer.*

DEAR ———,

YOUR letter gave me much pleasure, ~~as and that you feel personally satisfied with~~ your situation. I am certain Mr. ———, is a worthy and indulgent man, fully competent to the business he professes : and it will be your own fault if he does not treat you as his child, and make you a good scholar. The enclosed order will convince you how willing I am to supply you with books, or any thing else you may stand in need of ; and I only require on your part, a continuance of that good conduct, and attention to your studies, which in the end, will not fail to make you happy, and in the mean time add to the happiness of your loving parents.

I am, dear ———, your affectionate father.

LETTER *from a young Lady at boarding school to her parents.*

MY DEAR PARENTS,

I TAKE the first opportunity, since I have been learnt to join my letters, of writing to you, for the purpose of saying how truly sensible I am of all the cares and attention you have bestowed upon me, and that I shall endeavour to merit a continuance of them. You cannot imagine how good Mrs. ——— is to me, and how happy I am in being placed under her care. She has just given, Miss ——— and me, each a

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sampler to work, and has promised to let me take it for your inspection. I hope shortly to have the pleasure of seeing you ; and believe me I lose no opportunity of offering up my prayers to heaven, to preserve my dear parents, and that I may live to make them some recompence for the indulgence they bestow on their

Dutiful and affectionate daughter,

—\*—  
*The Father's Answer.*

MY DEAR —,

YOUR mother and I have been overjoyed at the receipt of your letter. We congratulate you, my dear child, on the proficiency you have made in your education ; which is a proof not only of your own genius but of the great care and attention your governess pays to your improvement. I have written to her, to thank her for her goodness ; and that she will also be pleased to permit you to visit us as soon as convenient. That God may continue his blessing to you, in addition to that of your delighted parents, is, my dear child, the continual prayer of

Your loving father and mother,

—\*—  
**LETTER** *from a father to his son at school, recommending diligence, &c.*

DEAR —,

I THOUGHT to have paid you a visit at the school, but a bad state of health pre-

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vents my going so far. As it will probably be some time, therefore, before I shall see you, I have thought it necessary to write to you. Let me entreat, my dear child, that for the remainder of the short time you have to stay at school, you will pay the greatest attention to your studies. Youth is the proper time for acquiring knowledge, which if properly improved and reduced to practice, will be of the utmost service hereafter. As you are nearly at an age proper to be placed out as an apprentice, I request you will think of some business to which you would prefer being brought up, that you may hereafter be able to procure a decent subsistence. I wish to leave the choice, in this case, to yourself; but if you have no partiality to any particular trade, I will endeavour to fix on one for you; and nothing on my part shall be wanting to render your life comfortable. I shall expect a letter from you shortly. In the mean time I remain

Your affectionate father,

—•—

*The Answer.*

HONOURED SIR,

I FELT the most unfeigned sorrow on hearing of your ill state of health, and fervently pray to God that he will be pleased speedily to restore it. I am confident, my dear father, your advice is such, that, if strictly followed, must be attended with the best consequences to myself; and it shall be

my care to obey the precepts of my kind father. With regard to the choice of a trade, I have had some thoughts, if agreeable to you, of being apprenticed to a —, but I shall be guided wholly by your approbation. Pray, let me hear from you as soon as possible, as I shall labour under the greatest uneasiness till I learn that your health is restored. I am, dear father,

Your affectionate and dutiful son,

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**LETTER** *from a mother to her daughter at a boarding school, recommending the practice of virtue, &c.*

DEAR CHILD,

As my thoughts are continually bent on your future welfare, I cannot omit any opportunity of pointing out to you the paths whereby you may gain everlasting happiness. Religion and virtue, my dear, must be the foundation of your hopes; let me therefore request that you will devote one hour in the day at least to the perusal of your bible: and you will not find religion to be of that gloomy nature which some enthusiasts have represented it. Avoid the fashionable follies of a gay, unthinking world; but I would not by any means prohibit you from that pleasing gaiety which it is necessary to observe in company, nor from any rational amusement, so far as is consistent with prudence and morality. I find it less necessary to dwell on those topics, from the

consideration that you have the friendly care and advice of your governess, for whose knowledge and merit I have the highest respect. I have no doubt, my dear, you will consider attentively what I have written ; which, at the same time that it cannot fail to insure your own happiness, will add to that of


Your ever affectionate mother,

——  
*The Answer.*

HONOURED MADAM,

DUTY to the best of parents obliges me to assure you, that I shall pay the most implicit obedience to your advice. I assure you, my dear Madam, that I love religion and virtue ; and I sincerely hope that no consideration will ever lead me to deviate from them. My Governess is not remiss in her precepts and examples ; and I flatter myself that my general conduct will convince her and my dear parent that I am what they wish me to be, and

Your ever dutiful daughter,

——  
*LETTER from an Apprentice to his Parent.*

HONOURED —,

I take this opportunity of writing, to give an account of my situation since you bound me to Mr. —. He as well as my mistress, treats me with every reasonable indulgence ; and I assure you that, on my part, I do every thing in my power to prove

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