

friendliness. Robert Louis Stevenson writes: "My dear Henrietta," to his cousin; "My dear Colvin," to one of his dearest friends; but, "Dear Mr. Archer" to an unknown correspondent. The American use is different. A modern text-book on composition says:

Contradictory as it may seem, fashion in America has determined that to write "Dear Mr. Stevenson" indicates a greater degree of intimacy than "My dear Mr. Stevenson." One may write "My dear Mr. Stevenson" to a comparative stranger; not to "Dear Mr. Stevenson."

"In America," here means "in the United States." I do not know that Canadians have set up any fashion of their own in this matter, but the underlying principle of the English distinction seems to me more sensible, consisting, as it does, in the idea of appropriation expressed by the "my."

A common mistake of unpractised letter-writers is that of beginning a letter with excuses for writing at all, and closing it with apologies for leaving off. "I thought I would write to you," "Having a short time to spare, I take my pen in hand," etc., "I cannot think of anything more to say," or "I must stop, as the mail will soon close," or "Dinner is ready." Some of these statements are uncomplimentary, and all are unnecessary; but young people sometimes find it hard to write a letter without using them, or their equivalents. If the letter is considered as a means of giving pleasure to the receiver, and not as an irksome task to be accomplished with as little trouble as possible, such ungracious expressions will not occur to the writer.

Some people seem to think that the use of the pronoun "I" is to be avoided, and so make awkward, jerky sentences without any subjects, as: "Went to the Exhibition on Tuesday. Saw several people I knew. Got caught in the rain." Do not write, any more than you would talk, exclusively about yourself; but remember that your friend, if she cares to hear from you at all, wants to know about your doings and thoughts, and the mere omission of the pronoun will not make your letter any less egotistic.

Comparatively few people attend to paragraphing a letter properly. It is very important in a business letter, and convenient in a friendly letter, to have different topics treated in different paragraphs, so that if the reader wants to refer to what has been said on any particular subject, he need not read the letter all through to find it.

The complimentary close is a stumbling-block to many. Sometimes we find a close like this:

"Hoping to see you soon,

Believe me,

Yours sincerely."

The word "hoping" agrees with the "I," which should form the subject of the sentence. A correct expression would be:

"Hoping to see you soon,

I remain."

Another error is that of beginning a note in one person and changing it in another, as:

"Will Mrs. Smith be kind enough to send Mary home at five o'clock and oblige

Yours truly."

These are serious mistakes in grammar, but even teachers make them.

The close should be in keeping with the salutation, whether it be formal, respectful, friendly, or affectionate. "Yours truly" should be confined to business letters; it is too curt for friendly correspondence. Choice among other forms is a matter of degree of intimacy and personal taste. I see that the writer in *Harper's Bazar* considers "Cordially yours" less personal than "Sincerely yours," while I have always thought that the first expression filled a place between "Sincerely yours" and "Affectionately yours."

Care should be taken to fold a note or letter and place it in the envelope in such a way that when taken out and unfolded it will at once be in position to be read. Lastly, the address should be accurate and full. It is almost incredible how many letters go to the Dead Letter Office because of incorrect, incomplete, or illegible addresses, or, harder still to believe, no addresses at all. I have heard that some people think it a compliment to receive a letter with an address that omits street and number, implying that they are too well known to need a detailed direction, but such a tribute to vanity may well be neglected in consideration for mail clerks and postmen.

Keep a little box, with a slit in the cover, on your desk. Give to each pupil some small slips of paper, on which they are to write every incorrect expression heard at recess, on the playground, or when they are not at school, if you wish to break up bad habits as quickly as possible. The slips are to be dropped into the box, some time during the day. The language lessons are heard, in this case, late in the school day. At that time the box is opened, the slips read by the teacher, and corrected by the class.—*Normal Instructor*.

ALWAYS place on the black board each morning a choice quotation to be memorized.