

LETTERS OLD AND NEW.



WITH all the improvements of the last fifty years in making and sizing paper, and in closing and securing letters, still there is a charm about a quaint old letter of half a century ago that is rarely found in one of the telegraphic notes of the present day. Not only is there a charm which might be given by the respectable age and probable associations of an old letter, but there is an air of dignity and quiet style that is commonly wanting in more modern letters, notwithstanding the later adjuncts of heavy calendered paper, embossed crests, and shapely envelopes. The old letter as it comes out of its trunk in the garret, is almost a patent of respectability for its writer. With its rough surface so full of ridges and uneven spots, one wonders it could ever have been written upon ; with its carefully worded address, the Ministers and Esquires and all the titles inserted with great precision ; with its old-fashioned stamp, the like of which many a fine old gentleman has licked and grumbled over because it would not stick ; and, above all, with its great seal of wax, bearing the heavy impression, perhaps, of a coat-of-arms, perhaps of some family emblem cut in a ring, perhaps only the imprint of a coin—with all these things to recommend it to the present generation of lovers of old things, the old letter is grand, and stately, and attractive. Unfolding the intricate creases that make an envelope of the back of the sheet, the contents keep up the impression created by the exterior. The penmanship is rigid and formal as the style of the letter, and the wording, even when written by a husband to his wife, as dignified as if addressed to his sovereign. The beginning solemnly with " My dear wife," and the courtly ending of " Permit me to subscribe myself your affectionate husband,"