

ability to write an excellent letter, with beautiful penmanship, is a very graceful accomplishment. That so few possess this ability is not because the art is very difficult to acquire, but because it is undervalued. Little importance is attached to it. Scribbling will do very well in writing to a familiar friend. Youth of both sexes see no particular need of excellence in writing letters to each other, or even to their parents. They dash them off as if it were of the smallest consequence whether chirography or the King's English suffer or not. Were they writing to a professor, governor, or president, they might select their words, and wish they had given more attention to penmanship, as well as to spelling, which is a valuable acquisition when it is perfect. A good composer, penman, and speller will make a fine letter-writer. Application and persistent effort for a fractional part of the time which the expert pianist spent—six hours a day for twenty years—will qualify a young man or woman to write to the Queen. The commonness of letter-writing makes youth indifferent to it as an art to be acquired, when this fact ought to awaken their liveliest interest in it. What must be done so frequently, and with so many people, deserves to be well done. "What is worth doing at all is worth doing well," is just as true of correspondence as it is of any other business. The letter referred to in the beginning of this paper was more ornamental to the school girl who wrote it than diamond earrings and necklace.

In letter-writing, the versatility of talents which the author possesses appears. However highly educated the correspondent may be, however large the acquisitions he or she has made, letter-writing calls into use the entire culture. The whole life discipline is poured into the epistle, so that the character of the writer is

manifest. D'Israeli claims that chirography reveals the character of the author. Queen Elizabeth's penmanship was very fine, having been taught by Roger Ascham; and a French editor said of her chirography, in connection with that of her cousin, Mary Stuart, "Who would believe that these writings are of the same epoch? The first denotes asperity and ostentation; the second indicates simplicity, softness, and nobleness. The one is that of Elizabeth, Queen of England; the other that of her cousin, Mary Stuart. The difference of these two handwritings answers most evidently to that of their characters." He said also of Queen Ann, "She wrote a fair, round hand. That is the writing she had been taught by her master, probably without any alteration of manner naturally suggested by herself—the copying hand of a 'common character.'" Take the hint about a "common character," and couple it with the remark of Hannah More, viz., "To read so as not to be understood, and to write so as not to be read, are among the minor immoralities," and the claims of good letter-writing are greatly magnified. Mrs. Sigourney wrote, "Elegant chirography and a clear epistolary style are accomplishments which every educated female should possess. Their indispensable requisites are neatness, the power of being easily perused, or the graphical and grammatical correctness. Defects in either of these particulars are scarcely pardonable. You are aware that the handwriting is considered one of the talismans of character. Whether this test may be depended on or not, the fact that letters travel farther than the sound of the voice, or the sight of the countenance can follow, renders it desirable that they should convey no incorrect or unfavourable impression. The lesser niceties of folding, sealing, and superscription, are not beneath