

# The Complete Letter Writer

BEING A COMPREHENSIVE AND PRACTICAL

GUIDE and ASSISTANT

TO

LETTER WRITING

AND CONTAINING A LARGE COLLECTION OF MODEL  
LETTERS AND FORMS ADAPTED TO ALL OCCASIONS:  
INTRODUCTIONS, BUSINESS LETTERS, LETTERS  
OF CONGRATULATIONS AND CONDOLENCE,  
LETTERS OF LOVE, COURTSHIP AND  
MARRIAGE : FRIENDSHIP AND AF-  
: : : : FECTION : : : : :

*Examples from Great Men and Women*

EMBRACING ALSO A VAST AMOUNT OF INFORMATION  
NECESSARY TO CORRECT AND MAKE COR-  
RESPONDENCE EFFECTIVE

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# INTRODUCTION.

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The chief requisites of a letter should be *clearness, explicitness* and conciseness; there should be nothing ambiguous, nothing superfluous and nothing omitted or defective. If you would have the full purpose of the letter effective these factors must all be observed. Letters should by all means be *complete* and yet one should avoid unnecessary words or details. Full information of the business you wish to transact, if it is a business letter you are writing, should be contained in *each* letter, thus avoiding needless reference or prolonged correspondence.

There is a great deal of difficulty *imagined* in the construction of a mercantile letter, for which in reality there exists no foundation whatever. The principal characteristic of a merchant's correspondence is *arrangement*. Fine writing, rounded periods, rhetorical and pen flourishes (where a machine is not used) and elaborate sentences are out of place in a business letter. Every merchant should keep an exact copy of all letters of a business nature which he dispatches that he may refer to same when necessary.

In the matter of Leases, Wills, Conveyances, Notes, Petitions, Loans—in brief, commercial forms of all kinds,—the services of a lawyer are oftentimes required. Why should they be? The price of this book is inconsiderable as compared with the fee asked by any lawyer. Reference to the particular form desired, will, with slight alteration and such additions as the nature of the case requires, save the reader hundreds of dollars in the course of a few years.

There are some rules in connection with letter writing and styles of social forms which are not always remembered and therefore a book of the nature of which this volume treats will be found of exceeding value. Many, who from want of practice or from a natural disinclination to write letters or in preparing any desired social will find such a work as the present decidedly helpful. It is for this reason that the author has been careful to include every style of both business and social correspondence as well as a variety of social and business forms.

When one reflects that a letter is little more than written conversation, it should be an easy matter for a person of average intelligence to form any desired style of letter. It is a matter of fact that few letters would be written if it was possible or convenient to meet the person to whom the letter is to be sent. It therefore follows that the letter should be *natural* and *direct* in its treatment of the subject written about as the actual discussion of the subject would be if the parties were to meet.

Generally it is best that the purpose of the letter should appear in its earlier portions; that is, the most important part of the letter should come first, that which is less important coming next and any interesting information—whether disconnected or otherwise—bringing up the concluding part of the letter.

The purpose of the letter whether of a business or social nature should never be lost sight of, neither should its influence on the mind of the recipient, by being either unduly or insufficiently expressed.

The use of stereotyped phrases and expressions should be carefully avoided—who does not know the old time-worn sentences with which countless letters have been commenced and ended, which still does duty, even in these days of educational progress? It is scarcely necessary to point out the danger as well as inadvisability of

reproducing the *letters* given in this book; they are presented merely to show the form and not the subject matter. It is necessary then, in consulting any of the examples here given to ask the question,—how does the example agree in its details with the object intended? In this way the points of difference as well as the points of resemblance will appear and common sense and a very small amount of tact will enable the most inexperienced letter-writer to steer himself into the haven where he should be.

There are some defects which are very common in letter-writing, even among fairly educated people. They have somewhat delayed possibly in answering a friend's letter. They proceed therefore, at great length to apologize for such delay, giving often such trivial reasons and expressing their regrets in long-drawn-out sentences, that they produce an effect on the mind of the recipient just the opposite of what they intended.

It is curious, but is a fact, that many people who may generally be relied upon to act sensibly in ordinary everyday transactions, lose their heads when they take up a pen, and act as though they had no brains and as if a copy of some one else's letters on a totally different subject would bring about the state of things on which the mind is set. Borrowed wit very rarely fits the occasion on which it is used; so borrowed phraseology, whether in speech or writing, oftener exposes than helps the borrower.

There is really no excuse for an illegible letter any more than for indistinct speech, unless in both cases the person is maimed or deformed or has some impediment in his speech, all of which is a misfortune. The man who should intentionally and habitually run several words together when speaking to another would soon see the change in the demeanor of the person addressed if they should chance to meet often—unless of course he be a stammerer. Carelessness in penmanship applies in this

sense to letter-writing where it is done with a pen as much as to one who stammers while talking if he really has no impediment.

With many, punctuation is a life-long difficulty. There is no mystery about it, and a very moderate amount of attention, combined with common sense, will overcome whatever difficulties may appear to surround it. The use of the various points depends entirely upon the meaning of the sentence, and this meaning they certainly help to make more obvious. Some sentences, however, if pointed in two or more ways, may be made to bear as many different meanings, or shades of meanings. This fact has a curious bearing on legal documents, which are seldom ever punctuated; perhaps because it is desirable to make them bear more than one meaning, according to convenience.

Very much more might be said by way of caution, but it is believed that the reader fully understands the importance of avoiding the use of the exact language presented in this work, for it is intended to convey only the general style and form and not phraseology.—C. W. B.