Riverside Literature Series

SELECTED
ENGLISH
LETTERS

Houghton Mifflin Co.

The Riverside Literature Series

SELECTED ENGLISH LETTERS

EDITED BY

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INTRODUCTORY

Since the letter is the one form of writing which everybody finds it necessary at one time or another to use, it shows perhaps a wider range and a greater diversity than any other literary type. As an aid to business or as a convenience in polite society, it is, of course, indispensable and universal in our modern life, although when employed for these purposes it is bound by rules so fixed that individuality has seldom chance for play; on the other hand, as a means of friendly communication, a substitute for familiar talk, it is governed by few, if any, restrictions, and may thus, in style as well as in substance, become a free expression of the moods and personality of its author. In the first case, however great may be its immediate and practical usefulness, it is, as art, usually undistinguished and ephemeral; in the second, it has boundless possibilities, and may, when handled by a master, become autobiographical writing of high excellence. So many letters being of the transitory character represented by this former class, any discussion of the letter as literature must begin by eliminating the large proportion of everyday correspondence which has no permanent value.

A further limitation arises from the fact that because the most spontaneous and genuine letters are ordinarily composed without any thought of publication, only an insignificant number, probably, are preserved. Unless there is some definite reason for keeping them for future reference, or unless the recipient has a ready sense of literary appreciation, many valuable letters inevitably disappear. Even if not actually destroyed, it has been, until recent years, only in exceptional instances that they have found their way to publication. It is certain that through carelessness, accident, or the natural reluctance of men to give their own or

their friends' private affairs to the world, much of the product of even the finest letter-writers has been lost. We have, then, for examination only a small part of the real literature dispatched as letters, and from this remnant the type must be studied if it is to be studied at all.

Valuable as formal business or social letters may be in their own field, they offer scant opportunity for personality to show itself. They are sent with specific motives; they follow, to a large extent, stereotyped rules; and their most essential requisites are brevity and clearness, so that no statement may be loose or equivocal. To diverge in any marked degree from settled usage in letters such as these is deliberately to set one's self apart as ignorant or peculiar; indeed, the disregard of custom is, for the average person, undesirable, even senseless, for it obviously lessens his chances of gaining his end. Just as men wisely comply with arbitrary requirements in dress or manners, so they compose their commercial letters in the mode prescribed by convention. The rules of formal letter-writing, moreover, are not irrational or petty; each has its origin in some demand for economy in time or energy. For the sake of illustration a few characteristic examples of such letters have been inserted at the end of this volume, and the mechanical details so important in correspondence of this kind may be investigated further, either in any treatise on the subject, or, better still, in the procedure of any reputable business house.

A fair share of letters, however, as has been said, are written under circumstances which tend to make letter-writing an art and may turn the letter itself into literature. In a private correspondence between friend and friend, without any ulterior aim beyond sociability, formality and rigidity of construction ought to be neglected, as they are in intimate conversation. Such letters are really, as Cowper suggested, merely "talking on paper," and their structure makes little difference if only they are animated by the spirit of their writers. We seek in them the virtues that

belong to so-called confessional literature. Unless a letter of this nature has personality, unless it is a revelation of the undisguised man, without affectation, stiffness, or reticence, it is scarcely worth considering. The most skillful letter-writers — Cowper, Byron, FitzGerald, and Stevenson — have been people of unabashed egotism, whom nothing could deter from gossiping about themselves, their opinions, experiences, and ambitions. It is recognized that in confidential correspondence an author is privileged to be in mental undress, as he is at his own fireside, at liberty to disclose emotions and vanities commonly veiled from the public. Furthermore, an absolute sincerity is demanded; anything theatrical, hypocritical, or self-conscious strikes a false note at once. A certain ease and grace of style, the embodiment of a chatty habit of mind, is also an element of the fine familiar letter. Finally, it must have entertaining qualities, displaying freshness and intelligence of vision with the added charm of sensitiveness to impressions and an unusual attitude towards life; if it simply repeats the shopworn phrases that serve so often in the place of thought, we ignore it as lacking in originality. Of course, only in exceptional instances does any letter meet these exacting requirements; but an outline of them serves to create an ideal by which correspondence may be measured.

It is evident, then, that good letter-writing, being dependent so largely on personality, is really a gift. Many otherwise famous literary men have apparently been deficient in the ability to write artistic letters: the correspondence of three such different authors as Addison, Wordsworth, and Matthew Arnold, for instance, is alike in its singular lack of flexibility and vivacity. On the other hand, some genius usually estimated as minor may be endowed with just the peculiar attributes which fill a letter with spice and flavor. Persons like Horace Walpole, Jane Welsh Carlyle, and Lafcadio Hearn, with their foibles, prejudices, and eccentric temperaments, are among the finest letter-writers. No essay can hope to analyze the type of letter which they

perfected; it would be as vain as an attempt to dissect lyric poetry in the classroom. Artlessly, often unwittingly, in fugitive whims and fancies, these writers have drawn portraits of themselves, and have so sketched their own characters that it is possible, from their letters alone, to reconstruct a complete personality. Individuality is discernible in tricks of phrasing, in delicate touches of allusion, in ideas which are unique and unhackneyed. But in the end each of us must find his own way. To imitate, to play the "sedulous ape" to another, is to lose naturalness and truth. To observe the methods of others may be stimulating, in so far as it teaches the lesson that a letter can be good only by being an open manifestation of one's thoughts and feelings; but the letter of one writer can rarely be the model for another. The only recipe for success is to look in one's heart, and write.

In the anthology here presented, an effort has been made to furnish an opportunity for study, from the documents themselves, of those eminent English letter-writers whose correspondence is available for publication. In order that the evolution of the type may be traced, the selections have been arranged, whenever practicable, chronologically in accordance with the birth-dates of the authors, the letters of one writer being thus ordinarily grouped together. Letters have usually been given complete, not in extracts or parts. None except genuine letters from one person to another have been included, all artificial forms, in books, for instance, being disregarded. Since the letters, in general, speak for themselves, extended annotation is both unnecessary and supererogatory; the notes, therefore, are few in number, compact, and confined either to short outlines of authors' lives or to explanations of passages which hinder the understanding of the letters.

A word may be added as to the principles which have determined the selection. Most of the letters are by men and women who are of interest in connection with books often set for reading in schools and colleges; indeed, the volume

is intended primarily for such students, though it is hoped that its scope and variety may appeal to a wider public. Not a few of the letters are, perhaps, somewhat hackneyed; but following Sir Arthur Quiller Couch in his choice of poems for the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, I have remembered that "the best is the best, though a hundred critics have declared it so." Letters have been picked, not only adequately illustrating the characters of their writers, but also possessing some added interest of an amusing or entertaining sort; for the end of a compilation of this kind is less to provide knowledge than to arouse pleasure and emulation in an art which does not deserve to be neglected. The percentage of modern letters is comparatively large, the idea being that they have the advantage of bringing literature into close touch with the life around us.

SELECTED ENGLISH LETTERS

I

A fortunate chance has preserved to us a large portion of the correspondence of a certain Paston family from Norfolk, England, during the period from 1422 to 1509. These Paston letters constitute our earliest collection of the sort in English, and, being largely of a private character, they throw much light on the informal letter-writing of the fifteenth century. The following, from a young fellow at Eton to his elder brother, is, in substance, such a schoolboy plea as might have been sent yesterday.

William Paston, Junior, to his Brother, John Paston

Nov. 7, 1478.

RIGHT REVERENT AND WORSHIPFUL BROTHER, —

I recommend me on to you, desiring to hear of your welfare and prosperity, letting you wit that I have received of Alwedyr a letter, and a noble in gold therein. Furthermore my creditor, Master Thomas, heartily recommended him to you, and he prayeth you to send him some money for my commons; for he saith ye be twenty-two shillings in his debt, for a month was to pay for when he had money last.

Also I beseech you to send me a hose cloth, one for the holydays of some color, and another for the working days, how corse so ever it be it maketh no matter; and a stomacher, and two shirts, and a pair of slippers. And if it like you that I may come with Alwedyr by water, and sport me with you in London a day or two

this term time, then you may let all this be till the time that I come, and then I will tell you when I shall be ready to come from Eton, by the grace of God, Whom have you in His keeping.

Written the Saturday next after All Hallowe'en Day with the hand of your brother,

WILLIAM PASTON.

II

This letter was sent by Sir Henry Sidney (1529–86) to his more famous son, Philip, then a scholar in Shrewsbury School. Sir Philip Sidney (1554–86), who lived to exemplify in his character the Renaissance ideals expressed in his father's counsel, became a picturesque figure at the court of Queen Elizabeth, wrote the pastoral romance of *Arcadia* and a series of brilliant sonnets called *Astrophel and Stella*, and finally died fighting gallantly on the battle-field of Zutphen. As a specimen of parental admonition, this should be compared with Lord Chesterfield's letter to his son in the eighteenth century (see page 16).

Sir Henry Sidney to his Son, Philip Sidney

[1566.]

I have received two letters from you, one written in Latin, the other in French, which I take in good part, and will you to exercise that practice of learning often: for that will stand you in most stead, in that profession of life that you are born to live in. And, since this is my first letter that ever I did write to you, I will not, that it be all empty of some advices, which my natural care of you provoked me to wish you to follow, as documents to you in this your tender age. Let your first action be, the lifting up of your mind to Almighty God, by hearty prayer, and feel-

ingly digest the words you speak in prayer, with continual meditation, and thinking of him to whom you pray, and of the matter for which you pray. And use this as an ordinary, and at an ordinary hour. Whereby the time itself will put you in remembrance to do that which you are accustomed to do. In that time apply your study to such hours as your discreet master doth assign you, earnestly; and the time (I know) he will so limit, as shall be both sufficient for your learning, and safe for your health. And mark the sense and the matter of that you read, as well as the words. So shall you both enrich your tongue with words, and your wit with matter; and judgment will grow as years groweth in you. Be humble and obedient to your master, for unless you frame yourself to obey others, yea, and feel in yourself what obedience is, you shall never be able to teach others how to obey you. Be courteous of gesture, and affable to all men, with diversity of reverence, according to the dignity of the person. There is nothing that winneth so much with so little cost. Use moderate diet, so as, after your meat, you may find your wit fresher, and not duller, and your body more lively, and not more heavy. Seldom drink wine, and yet sometime do, lest being enforced to drink upon the sudden, you should find yourself inflamed. Use exercise of body, but such as is without peril of your joints or bones. It will increase your force, and enlarge your breath. Delight to be cleanly, as well in all parts of your body, as in your garments. It shall make you grateful in each company, and otherwise loathsome. Give yourself to be merry, for you degenerate from your father, if you find not yourself most able in wit and body, to do any thing,

when you be most merry; but let your mirth be ever void of all scurrility, and biting words to any man, for a wound given by a word is oftentimes harder to be cured than that which is given with the sword. Be you rather a hearer and bearer away of other men's talk, than a beginner or procurer of speech, otherwise you shall be counted to delight to hear yourself speak. If you hear a wise sentence, or an apt phrase, commit it to your memory, with respect of the circumstance, when you shall speak it. Let never oath be heard to come out of your mouth, nor words of ribaldry; detest it in others, so shall custom make to yourself a law against it in yourself. Be modest in each assembly, and rather be rebuked of light fellows, for maiden-like shamefacedness, than of your sad friends for pert boldness. Think upon every word that you will speak, before you utter it, and remember how nature hath rampired[1] up (as it were) the tongue with teeth, lips, yea, and hair without the lips, and all betokening reins, or bridles, for the loose use of that member. Above all things tell no untruth, no, not in trifles. The custom of it is naughty, and let it not satisfy you, that, for a time, the hearers take it for a truth; for after it will be known as it is, to your shame; for there cannot be a greater reproach to a gentleman than to be accounted a liar. Study and endeavour yourself to be virtuously occupied. So shall you make such an habit of well-doing in you, that you shall not know how to do evil, though you would. Remember, my son, the noble blood you are descended of, by your mother's[2] side; and think that only by virtuous life and good action, you may be an ornament to that illustrious family; and otherwise, through vice and

sloth, you shall be counted *labes generis*,[3] one of the greatest curses that can happen to man. Well (my little Philip) this is enough for me, and too much, I fear, for you. But if I shall find that this light meal of digestion nourish anything the weak stomach of your young capacity, I will, as I find the same grow stronger, feed it with tougher food. Your loving father, so long as you live in the fear of God.

III

Francis Bacon (1561–1626), essayist, statesman, and philosopher, passed through several stages of political preferment, eventually becoming Lord Chancellor (1619) and Viscount St. Albans (1621). He was, however, accused of corruption in 1621 and forced to retire from public life. As a philosopher, he established the value of the inductive method of reasoning, and published several authoritative works in Latin; his *Essays*, in English, are models of compressed style and profound thought. The following letter was written to Sir Edward Coke, a distinguished lawyer, who had thwarted Bacon in his desire to become Attorney-General, and was his most conspicuous public enemy.

Sir Francis Bacon to Sir Edward Coke

[Before June, 1606.]

MR. ATTORNEY, —

I thought best once for all, to let you know in plainness what I find of you, and what you shall find of me. You take to yourself a liberty to disgrace and disable my law, my experience, my discretion. What it pleaseth you, I pray, think of me: I am one that knows both mine own wants and other men's; and it may be, perchance, that mine mend, when others stand at a stay. And surely I may not endure, in

public place, to be wronged without repelling the same to my best advantage to right myself. You are great, and therefore have the more enviers, which would be glad to have you paid at another's cost. Since the time I missed the solicitor's place, the rather I think by your means, I cannot expect that you and I shall ever serve as attorney and solicitor together: but either to serve with another upon your remove, or to step into some other course; so as I am more free than ever I was from any occasion of unworthy conforming myself to you, more than general good manners, or your particular good usage shall provoke; and if you had not been short-sighted in your own fortune, as I think you might have had more use of me. But that tide is passed.

I write not this to shew my friends what a brave letter I have written to Mr. Attorney; I have none of those humours; but that I have written is to a good end, that is, to the more decent carriage of my master's service, and to our particular better understanding one of another. This letter, if it shall be answered by you in deed, and not in word, I suppose it will not be worse for us both; else it is but a few lines lost, which for a much smaller matter I would have adventured. So this being to yourself, I for my part rest &c.

IV

Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), the vigorous English satirist who wrote *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), had returned to his native Ireland, after being disappointed in his ambition to gain a high position in the Church, and there was rapidly sinking into that sour and gloomy misanthropy which ended in his madness and death. This letter to his intimate friend,

Alexander Pope, voices the savage mood which, even before 1725, was gradually growing habitual with Swift.

Dean Swift to Alexander Pope

September 29, 1725.

I have employed my time (besides ditching) in finishing, correcting, amending, and transcribing my *Travels* [Gulliver's] in four parts complete, newly augmented and intended for the press when the world shall deserve them, or rather when a printer shall be found brave enough to venture his ears. I like the scheme of our meeting after distresses and dispersions.

But the chief end I propose to myself in all my labors, is to vex the world, rather than divert it; and if I could compass that design without hurting my own person or fortune, I would be the most indefatigable writer you have ever seen without reading. I am exceedingly pleased that you have done with translations.[4] Lord Treasurer Oxford[5] often lamented that a rascally world should lay you under a necessity of misemploying your genius for so long a time. But since you will now be so much better employed, when you think of the world, give it one lash the more at my request.

I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities; and my love is towards individuals.

For instance, I hate the tribe of lawyers; but I love Counsellor Such-a-one, and Judge Such-a-one.

It is so with physicians. I will not speak of my own trade, soldiers, English, Scotch, French, and the rest.

But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth. This is the system upon which I have

governed myself many years (but do not tell), and so I shall go on until I have done with them.

I have got materials toward a treatise proving the falsity of that definition *animal rationale*, and to show it should be only *rationis capax*. Upon this great foundation of misanthropy (though not in Timon's[6] manner) the whole building of my travels is erected; and I never will have peace of mind till all honest men are of my opinion.

By consequence you are to embrace it immediately, and procure that all who deserve my esteem may do so too.

The matter is so clear, that it will admit of no dispute; nay, I will hold a hundred pounds that you and I agree in the point.

V

Joseph Addison (1672–1719), not yet famous as the essayist of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, writes while traveling on the Continent, to thank a friend for the gift of a snuffbox. This letter is one of the earliest in English literature to show something of the ease and vivacity with which we have become familiar in modern letters. This is the more curious because Addison's correspondence in general is dull and commonplace.

Joseph Addison to Chamberlain Dashwood

GENEVA: July, 1702.

DEAR SIR, —

About three days ago Mr. Bocher put a very pretty snuffbox in my hand. I was not a little pleas'd to hear that it belonged to myself, and was much more so when I found it was a present from a Gentleman that I have so great an honour for. You did not probably

foresee that it would draw on you y^e^ trouble of a Letter, but you must blame yourself for it. For my part I can no more accept of a Snuffbox without returning my Acknowledgements, than I can take Snuff without sneezing after it. This last I must own to you is so great an absurdity that I should be ashamed to confess it, were not I in hopes of correcting it very speedily. I am observ'd to have my Box oft'ner in my hand than those that have been used to one these twenty years, for I can't forbear taking it out of my pocket whenever I think of Mr. Dashwood. You know Mr. Bays[7] recommends Snuff as a great provocative to Wit, but you may produce this Letter as a Standing Evidence against him. I have since y^e^ beginning of it taken above a dozen pinches, and still find myself much more inclin'd to sneeze than to jest. From whence I conclude that Wit and Tobacco are not inseparable, or to make a Pun of it, tho' a Man may be master of a snuffbox,

Non cuicunque datum est habere Nasam.[8]

I should be afraid of being thought a Pedant for my Quotation did not I know that y^e^ Gentleman I am writing to always carries a Horace[9] in his pocket. But whatever you may think me, pray S^r^ do me y^e^ Justice to esteem me

Your most &c.

VI

The first of these two letters of Richard Steele (1672–1729), the warm-hearted Irishman who originated the *Tatler* (1709) and, in 1711, joined with Addison in editing the *Spectator*, was written to Miss Mary Scurlock, who, shortly after, became Steele's second wife. It is a fine illustration of the author's grace and charm of style.

Richard Steele to Mary Scurlock

September 1, 1707.

It is the hardest thing in the world to be in love, and yet attend to business.

As for me, all who speak to me find me out, and I must lock myself up, or other people will do it for me.

A gentleman asked me this morning, "What news from Lisbon?" and I answered, "She is exquisitely handsome." Another desired to know when I had been last at Hampton Court. I replied, "I will be on Tuesday come se'nnight." Pr'ythee, allow me at least to kiss your hand before that day, that my mind may be in some composure. O love!

> A thousand torments dwell about thee!
> Yet who would live to live without thee?

Methinks I could write a volume to you; but all the language on earth would fail in saying how much, and with what disinterested passion, I am ever yours,

RICH. STEELE.

VII

That the second Mrs. Steele turned him into a somewhat henpecked husband is quite evident from this hasty note, sent from a tavern where he was preparing for an evening of gayety.

Richard Steele to Mrs. Steele

Jan. 3, 1708, DEVIL TAVERN, TEMPLE-BAR.

DEAR PRUE

I have partly succeeded in my business to-day and enclose two guineas as earnest of more. Dear Prue, I

can't come home to dinner. I languish for your welfare and will never be a moment careless more.

Your faithful husband,

R: STEELE.

Send me word you have received this.

VIII

Alexander Pope (1688–1744), the guest of Lord Bolingbroke at the latter's country villa, writes to tell Dean Swift something of his manner of life. Most of Pope's letters have a touch of formality about them which does not add to their attractiveness; in this case, however, his style is less studied than usual, possibly because he and Swift were very close friends.

Alexander Pope to Dean Swift

DAWLEY: June 28, 1728.

I now hold the pen for my Lord Bolingbroke,[10] who is reading your letter between two haycocks, but his attention is somewhat diverted by casting his eyes on the clouds, not in admiration of what you say, but for fear of a shower. He is pleased with your placing him in the triumvirate between yourself and me; though he says that he doubts he shall fare like Lepidus[11] — while one of us runs away with all the power, like Augustus, and another with all the pleasures, like Antony. It is upon a foresight of this that he has fitted up his farm, and you will agree that his scheme of retreat at least is not founded upon weak appearances. Upon his return from the Bath, all peccant humours he finds are purged out of him; and his great temperance and economy are so signal, that the first is fit for my constitution, and the latter would enable you

to lay up so much money as to buy a bishopric in England. As to the return of his health and vigour, were you here, you might inquire of his haymakers; but as to his temperance, I can answer that (for one whole day) we have had nothing for dinner but mutton-broth, beans and bacon, and a barn-door fowl.

Now his lordship is run after his cart, I have a moment left to myself to tell you that I overheard him yesterday agree with a painter for £200 to paint his country-hall with trophies of rakes, spades, prongs, &c., and other ornaments, merely to countenance his calling this place a farm — now turn over a new leaf. — He bids me assure you he should be sorry not to have more schemes of kindness for his friends than of ambition for himself; there, though his schemes may be weak, the motives at least are strong; and he says further, if you could bear as great a fall and decrease of your revenues as he knows by experience he can, you would not live in Ireland an hour.

The "Dunciad" [12] is going to be printed in all pomp, with the inscription, which makes me proudest. It will be attended with proeme, prolegomena, testimonia scriptorum, index authorum, and notes variorum. As to the latter, I desire you to read over the text, and make a few in any way you like best; whether dry raillery, upon the style and way of commenting of trivial critics; or humorous, upon the authors in the poem; or historical, of persons, places, times; or explanatory, or collecting the parallel passages of the ancients. Adieu. I am pretty well, my mother not ill.

Dr. Arbuthnot [13] vexed with his fever by intervals; I am afraid he declines, and we shall lose a worthy man: I am troubled about him very much: I am, &c.

IX

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1690–1762), the most copious and brilliant woman letter-writer of the eighteenth century, was the wife of an English diplomat and passed much of her life in foreign countries. Many of her most interesting letters were sent from Turkey, to which country her husband was for a time ambassador, to her friends at home. The following letter, of the more formal essay type so common in the days of Pope and Addison, describes the Oriental method of inoculation for smallpox, a practice which Lady Montagu had the courage to introduce into England.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to Mrs. S. C———

ADRIANOPLE: April 1, 1717.

In my opinion, Dear S———, I ought rather to quarrel with you for not answering my Nimeguen letter of August till December, than to excuse my not writing again till now. I am sure there is on my side a very good excuse for silence, having gone such tiresome land journeys, though I don't find the conclusion of them so bad as you seem to imagine. I am very easy here, and not in the solitude you fancy me. The great number of Greeks, French, English, and Italians, that are under our protection, make their court to me from morning till night; and I'll assure you, are many of them very fine ladies; for there is no possibility for a Christian to live easily under this government but by the protection of an ambassador — and the richer they are the greater is their danger.

Those dreadful stories you have heard of the plague have very little foundation in truth. I own I have much ado to reconcile myself to the sound of a word

which has always given me such terrible ideas, though I am convinced there is little more in it than in a fever. As a proof of this, let me tell you that we passed through two or three towns most violently affected. In the very next house where we lay (in one of those places) two persons died of it. Luckily for me I was so well deceived that I knew nothing of the matter; and I was made believe, that our second cook who fell ill here had only a great cold. However, we left our doctor to take care of him, and yesterday they both arrived here in good health, and I am now let into the secret that he has had the plague. There are many that escape it; neither is the air ever infected. I am persuaded that it would be as easy a matter to root it out here as out of Italy and France; but it does so little mischief, they are not very solicitous about it, and are content to suffer this distemper instead of our variety, which they are utterly unacquainted with.

Apropos of distempers, I am going to tell you a thing that will make you wish yourself here. The small-pox, so fatal and so general amongst us, is here entirely harmless by the invention of ingrafting, which is the term they give it. There is a set of old women who make it their business to perform the operation every autumn, in the month of September, when the great heat is abated. People send to one another to know if any of their family has a mind to have the small-pox: they make parties for this purpose, and when they are met (commonly fifteen or sixteen together), the old woman comes with a nut-shell full of the matter of the best sort of small-pox, and asks what vein you please to have opened. She immediately rips

open that you offer to her with a large needle (which gives you no more pain than a common scratch), and puts into the vein as much matter as can lye upon the head of her needle, and after that binds up the little wound with a hollow bit of shell; and in this manner opens four or five veins. The Grecians have commonly the superstition of opening one in the middle of the forehead, one in each arm, and one on the breast, to mark the sign of the cross; but this has a very ill effect, all these wounds leaving little scars, and is not done by those that are not superstitious, who choose to have them in the legs, or that part of the arm that is concealed. The children or young patients play together all the rest of the day, and are in perfect health to the eighth. Then the fever begins to seize them, and they keep their beds two days, very seldom three. They have very rarely above twenty or thirty in their faces, which never mark; and in eight days' time they are as well as before their illness. When they are wounded, there remain running sores during the distemper, which I don't doubt is a great relief to it. Every year thousands undergo this operation; and the French ambassador says pleasantly, that they take the small-pox here by way of diversion, as they take the waters in other countries. There is no example of any one that has died in it; and you may believe that I am well satisfied of the safety of this experiment, since I intend to try it on my dear little son.

I am patriot enough to take pains to bring this useful invention into fashion in England; and I should not fail to write some of our doctors very particularly about it, if I knew any one of them that I thought had virtue enough to destroy such a considerable

branch of their revenue for the good of mankind. But that distemper is too beneficial to them, not to expose to all their resentment the hardy wight that should undertake to put an end to it. Perhaps, if I live to return, I may, however, have courage to war with them. Upon this occasion admire the heroism in the heart of your friend, etc. etc.

X

The letters of the 4th Earl of Chesterfield (1694–1773) to his natural son, Philip Dormer Stanhope, cover a period of nearly thirty years from 1738 to 1768, and reflect accurately the wit, the worldliness, and the graceful manners of the writer. Unfortunately the Earl was unsuccessful in his effort to teach his son ease and politeness, and the boy grew up incorrigibly awkward and stupid.

The Earl of Chesterfield to his Son, Philip Stanhope, Esq.

LONDON: November 24, 1747.

DEAR BOY,—

As often as I write to you (and that you know is pretty often) so often am I in doubt whether it is to any purpose, and whether it is not labour and paper lost. This entirely depends upon the degree of reason and reflection which you are master of, or think proper to exert. If you give yourself time to think, and have sense enough to think right, two reflections must necessarily occur to you; the one is, that I have a great deal of experience and that you have none; the other is, that I am the only man living who cannot have, directly or indirectly, any interest concerning you, but your own. From which two undeniable principles,

the obvious and necessary conclusion is, that you ought, for your own sake, to attend to and follow my advice.

If, by the application which I recommend to you, you acquire great knowledge, you alone are the gainer; I pay for it. If you should deserve either a good or a bad character, mine will be exactly what it is now, and will neither be the better in the first case, nor the worse in the latter. You alone will be the gainer or the loser.

Whatever your pleasures may be, I neither can nor shall envy you them, as old people are sometimes suspected, by young people, to do; and I shall only lament, if they should prove such as are unbecoming a man of honour, or below a man of sense. But you will be the real sufferer, if they are such. As therefore it is plain that I have no other motive than that of affection in whatever I say to you, you ought to look upon me as your best, and for some years to come, your only friend.

True friendship requires certain proportions of age and manners, and can never subsist where they are extremely different, except in the relations of parent and child; where affection on one side, and regard on the other, make up the difference. The friendship which you may contract with people of your own age, may be sincere, may be warm; but must be for some time reciprocally unprofitable, as there can be no experience on either side.

The young leading the young, is like the blind leading the blind; "they will both fall into the ditch." The only sure guide is he who has often gone the road which you want to go. Let me be that guide: who

have gone all roads; and who can consequently point out to you the best. If you ask me why I went any of the bad roads myself, I will answer you very truly, that is for want of a good guide; ill example invited me one way, and a good guide was wanting to show me a better. But if anybody, capable of advising me, had taken the same pains with me, which I have taken, and will continue to take with you, I should have avoided many follies and inconveniences, which undirected youth ran me into. My father was neither able nor desirous to advise me; which is what I hope you cannot say of yours. You see that I make use only of the word *advise;* because I would much rather have the assent of your reason to my advice, than the submission of your will to my authority. This, I persuade myself, will happen, from that degree of sense which I think you have; and therefore I will go on advising, and with hopes of success. You are now settled for some time at Leipsic: the principal object of your stay there is the knowledge of books and sciences; which if you do not, by attention and application, make yourself master of while you are there, you will be ignorant of them all the rest of your life: and take my word for it a life of ignorance is not only a very contemptible, but a very tiresome one. Redouble your attention then, to Mr Harte, in your private studies of the Literæ Humaniores,[14] especially Greek. State your difficulties whenever you have any; do not suppress them either from mistaken shame, lazy indifference or in order to have done the sooner. Do the same with Professor Mascow, or any other professor.

When you have thus usefully employed your morn-

ings, you may with a safe conscience divert yourself in the evenings, and make those evenings very useful too, by passing them in good company, and, by observation and attention, learning as much of the world as Leipsic can teach you. You will observe and imitate the manners of the people of the best fashion there; not that they are (it may be) the best manners in the world; but because they are the best manners of the place where you are, to which a man of sense always conforms. The nature of things is always and everywhere the same; but the modes of them vary, more or less, in every country; and an easy and genteel conformity to them, or rather the assuming of them at proper times, and in proper places, is what particularly constitutes a man of the world, and a well-bred man.

Here is advice enough, I think, and too much, it may be, you will think, for one letter; if you follow it, you will get knowledge, character, and pleasure by it; if you do not, I only lose *operam et oleum*,[15] which, in all events, I do not grudge you.

I send you, by a person who sets out this day for Leipsic, a small packet from your Mamma, containing some valuable things which you left behind, to which I have added, by way of New Year's gift, a very pretty tooth-pick case; and, by the way, pray take great care of your teeth, and keep them extremely clean. I have likewise sent you the Greek roots, lately translated into English from the French of the Port Royal.[16] Inform yourself what the Port Royal is. To conclude with a quibble; I hope you will not only feed upon these Greek roots, but likewise digest them perfectly. Adieu.

XI

Benjamin Franklin (1706–90), attending the meeting of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, writes to assure a friend in England of the temper of the American people.

Benjamin Franklin to Joseph Priestley

PHILADELPHIA, 3 October, 1775.

DEAR SIR: —

I am to set out to-morrow for the camp, and, having just heard of this opportunity, can only write a line to say that I am well and hearty. Tell our dear good friend, Dr. Price, who sometimes has his doubts and despondencies about our firmness, that America is determined and unanimous; a very few Tories and placemen excepted, who will probably soon export themselves. Britain, at the expense of three millions, has killed one hundred and fifty Yankees this campaign, which is twenty thousand pounds a head; and at Bunker's Hill she gained a mile of ground, half of which she lost again by our taking post on Ploughed Hill. During the same time sixty thousand children have been born in America. From this *data* his mathematical head will easily calculate the time and expense necessary to kill us all, and conquer our whole territory. My sincere respects to ——, and to the club of honest Whigs at ——. Adieu. I am ever your most affectionately,

B. FRANKLIN.

XII

Samuel Johnson (1709–84), after several years of privation in Grub Street, was engaged in 1747 by a group of London booksellers to prepare a *Dictionary of the English*

Language, the Prospectus for which Johnson addressed to the Earl of Chesterfield. Chesterfield, from motives of his own, refused to receive the struggling author, and accordingly Johnson, resolute in his independence, brought out his work in 1755 without a Dedication. On the eve of its publication, Chesterfield printed in the *World* two papers recommending the *Dictionary* and praising it highly. In reply Johnson sent the nobleman the following letter, the dignified scorn of which has made it celebrated in our literature.

Dr. Samuel Johnson to the Earl of Chesterfield

February, 1755.

My Lord, —

I have been lately informed by the proprietor of the World, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the publick, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*,[17] — that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in publick, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before. The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the publick should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

My Lord
Your Lordship's most humble
most obedient servant
SAM. JOHNSON.

XIII

Dr. Johnson perceived at once that the so-called "Ossianic poems," printed by James Macpherson (1736–96), a Scotch schoolmaster, as translations from the ancient Gaelic language, were really Macpherson's own work, and did not hesitate to express his opinion freely. In response to an indignant protest from Macpherson, Johnson sent him the following angry retort.

Dr. Samuel Johnson to Mr. Macpherson

MR. JAMES MACPHERSON, —

I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered to me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think to be a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.

What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable; and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

SAM. JOHNSON.

XIV

Horace Walpole (1717–97), the third son of Sir Robert Walpole, took little part in public affairs, but devoted himself largely to collecting curios and writing unusual books. His intimate knowledge of court life and his fondness for gossip made him an admirable chronicler of the events going

on around him in politics and society, and his *Memoirs* are therefore of permanent value. In his large correspondence — nearly three thousand letters of his exist — he showed himself a witty and entertaining man of the world, and he was among the first to reveal the possibilities of the letter as a literary type. With all their grace and charm, however, his letters have a touch of formality, and were evidently intended for publication. The first one here printed presents a chatty description of the events attending the coronation of George III.

The Honourable Horace Walpole to George Montagu

ARLINGTON STREET: November 13, 1760.

Even the honeymoon of a new reign don't produce events every day. There is nothing but the common saying of addresses and kissing hands. The chief difficulty is settled; Lord Gower yields the mastership of the horse to Lord Huntington, and removes to the great wardrobe, from whence Sir Thomas Robinson was to have gone into Ellis' place, but he is saved. The city, however, have a mind to be out of humour; a paper has been fixed on the Royal Exchange, with these words, — "No petticoat government, no Scotch minister,[18] no Lord George Sackville"; [19] two hints totally unfounded, and the other scarce true. No petticoat ever governed less, it is left at Leicester House; Lord George's breeches are as little concerned; and except Lady Susan Stuart and Sir Harry Erskine, nothing has yet been done for any Scots. For the King[20] himself, he seems all good nature, and wishing to satisfy everybody; all his speeches are obliging.

I saw him again yesterday, and was surprised to find the levee-room had lost so entirely the air of the lion's den. This sovereign don't stand in one spot,

with his eyes fixed royally on the ground, and dropping bits of German news; he walks about, and speaks to everybody. I saw him afterwards on the throne where he is graceful and genteel, sits with dignity and reads his answers to addresses well; it was the Cambridge address, carried by the Duke of Newcastle [21] in his doctor's gown, and looking like the *Médecin malgré lui.*[22] He had been vehemently solicitous for attendance for fear my Lord Westmoreland, who vouchsafes himself to bring the address from Oxford, should outnumber him. Lord Litchfield and several other Jacobites have kissed hands; George Selwyn says, "They go to St. James', because *now* there are so many Stuarts there."

Do you know, I had the curiosity to go to the burying [23] t' other night; I had never seen a royal funeral; nay, I walked as a rag of quality, which I found would be, and so it was, the easiest way of seeing it. It is absolutely a noble sight. The Prince's chamber, hung with purple, and a quantity of silver lamps, the coffin under a canopy of purple velvet, and six vast chandeliers of silver on high stands, had a very good effect. The ambassador from Tripoli and his son were carried to see that chamber.

The procession, through a line of foot-guards, every seventh man bearing a torch, the horse-guards lining the outside, their officers with drawn sabres and crape sashes on horseback, the drums muffled, the fifes, bells tolling, and minute guns, — all this was very solemn. But the charm was the entrance of the abbey,[24] where we were received by the dean and chapter in rich robes, the choir and almsmen bearing torches; the whole abbey so illuminated, that one saw it to greater

advantage than by day; the tombs, long aisles, and fretted roof, all appearing distinctly, and with the happiest *chiaro scuro*. There wanted nothing but incense, and little chapels here and there, with priests saying mass for the repose of the defunct; yet one could not complain of its not being Catholic enough. I had been in dread of being coupled with some boy of ten years old; but the heralds were not very accurate, and I walked with George Grenville, taller and older, to keep me in countenance. When we came to the Chapel of Henry the Seventh, all solemnity and decorum ceased; no order was observed, people sat or stood where they could or would; the Yeomen of the Guard were crying out for help, oppressed by the immense weight of the coffin; the bishop read sadly and blundered in the prayers; the fine chapter, *Man that is born of a woman*, was chanted, not read; and the anthem, besides being immeasurably tedious, would have served as well for a nuptial. The real serious part was the figure of the Duke of Cumberland,[25] heightened by a thousand melancholy circumstances. He had a dark brown adonis, and a cloak of black cloth, with a train of five yards.

Attending the funeral of a father could not be pleasant: his leg extremely bad, yet forced to stand upon it near two hours; his face bloated and distorted with his late paralytic stroke, which has affected, too, one of his eyes; and placed over the mouth of the vault into which, in all probability, he must himself so soon descend; think how unpleasant a situation! He bore it all with a firm and unaffected countenance. This grave scene was fully contrasted by the burlesque Duke of Newcastle. He fell into a fit of

crying the moment he came into the chapel, and flung himself back in a stall, the archbishop hovering over him with a smelling-bottle; but in two minutes his curiosity got the better of his hypocrisy, and he ran about the chapel with his glass to spy who was or was not there, spying with one hand, and mopping his eyes with the other. Then returned the fear of catching cold; and the Duke of Cumberland, who was sinking with heat, felt himself weighed down, and turning round, found it was the Duke of Newcastle standing upon his train, to avoid the chill of the marble. It was very theatric to look down into the vault, where the coffin was, attended by mourners with lights. Clavering, the groom of the bed-chamber, refused to sit up with the body, and was dismissed by the King's order.

I have nothing more to tell you, but a trifle, a very trifle. The King of Prussia has totally defeated Marshal Daun.[26] This which would have been prodigious news a month ago, is nothing to-day; it only takes its turn among the questions, "Who is to be groom of the bed-chamber? What is Sir T. Robinson to have?" I have been to Leicester fields to-day; the crowd was immoderate; I don't believe it will continue so. Good night.

XV

Oliver Goldsmith (1728–74), the author of *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) and *The Deserted Village* (1770), was careless, impractical, and improvident, seldom in funds and usually in debt. When money came his way, however, he was generous to both relatives and friends; and this letter shows his whole-hearted liberality towards his brother and sister at a time when he himself was none too rich.

Oliver Goldsmith to Maurice Goldsmith

January, 1770.

Dear Brother, —

I should have answered your letter sooner, but, in truth, I am not fond of thinking of the necessities of those I love, when it is so very little in my power to help them. I am sorry to find you are in every way unprovided for; and what adds to my uneasiness is, that I have received a letter from my sister Johnson, by which I learn that she is pretty much in the same circumstances. As to myself, I believe I think I could get both you and my poor brother-in-law something like that which you desire, but I am determined never to ask for little things, nor exhaust any little interest I may have, until I can help you, him, and myself more effectually. As yet, no opportunity has offered; but I believe you are pretty well convinced that I will not be remiss when it arrives.

The King has lately been pleased to make me professor of Ancient History in the royal academy of painting[27] which he has just established, but there is no salary annexed; and I took it rather as a compliment to the institution than any benefit to myself. Honours to one in my situation are something like ruffles to one that wants a shirt.

You tell me there are fourteen or fifteen pounds left me in the hands of my cousin Lawder, and you ask me what I would have done with them. My dear brother, I would by no means give any directions to my dear worthy relations at Kilmore how to dispose of money which is, properly speaking, more theirs than mine. All that I can say is, that I entirely, and this

letter will serve to witness, give up any right and title to it; and I am sure they will dispose of it to the best advantage. To them I entirely leave it; whether they or you may think the whole necessary to fit you out, or whether our poor sister Johnson may not want the half, I leave entirely to their and your discretion. The kindness of that good couple to our shattered family demands our sincerest gratitude; and, though they have almost forgotten me, yet, if good things at last arrive, I hope one day to return and increase their good-humour by adding to my own.

I have sent my cousin Jenny a miniature picture of myself, as I believe it is the most acceptable present I can offer. I have ordered it to be left for her at George Faulkner's, folded in a letter.

The face you well know is ugly enough, but it is finely painted. I will shortly also send my friends over the Shannon some mezzo-tint prints of myself, and some more of my friends here, such as Burke, Johnson, Reynolds, and Colman.[28] I believe I have written a hundred letters to different friends in your country, and never received an answer to any of them. I do not know how to account for this, or why they are unwilling to keep up for me those regards which I must ever retain for them.

If, then, you have a mind to oblige me, you will write often, whether I answer you or not. Let me particularly have the news of our family and old acquaintances. For instance, you may begin by telling me about the family where you reside, how they spend their time, and whether they ever make mention of me. Tell me about my mother, my brother Hodson and his son, my brother Harry's son and daughter, my sister Johnson,

the family of Ballyoughter, what is become of them, where they live, and how they do. You talked of being my only brother. I don't understand you. Where is Charles? A sheet of paper occasionally filled with the news of this kind would make me very happy, and would keep you nearer my mind. As it is, my dear brother, believe me to be

Yours, most affectionately,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

XVI

William Cowper (1731–1800) is, in the opinion of his editor, Thomas Wright, "the greatest of English letter-writers," and even if we cannot quite give him that high position, he must be ranked among the very first. Cowper's originality, playfulness, delicacy, and shrewdness make his correspondence such delightful reading that it is difficult to know what letters to select as characteristic of the man. The first letter chosen has the advantage of illustrating Cowper's critical opinions, and introduces another view of Dr. Johnson.

William Cowper to the Reverend William Unwin

Oct. 31, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND, —

I wrote my last letter merely to inform you that I had nothing to say; in answer to which you have said nothing. I admire the propriety of your conduct, though I am a loser by it. I will endeavour to say something now, and shall hope for something in return.

I have been well entertained with Johnson's biographies, for which I thank you: with one exception, and that a swingeing one, I think he has acquitted him-

self with his usual good sense and sufficiency. His treatment of Milton is unmerciful to the last degree. A pensioner is not likely to spare a republican; and the Doctor, in order, I suppose, to convince his royal patron of the sincerity of his monarchical principles, has belaboured that great poet's character with the most industrious cruelty. As a man, he has hardly left him the shadow of one good quality. Churlishness in his private life, and a rancorous hatred of everything royal in his public, are the two colours with which he has smeared all the canvas. If he had any virtues, they are not to be found in the Doctor's picture of him; and it is well for Milton, that some sourness in his temper is the only vice with which his memory has been charged; it is evident enough that if his biographer could have discovered more, he would not have spared him. As a poet, he has treated him with severity enough, and has plucked one or two of the most beautiful feathers out of his Muse's wing and trampled them under his great foot. He has passed sentence of condemnation upon "Lycidas,"[29] and has taken occasion, from that charming poem, to expose to ridicule (what is indeed ridiculous enough) the childish prattlement of pastoral compositions, as if "Lycidas" was the prototype and pattern of them all. The liveliness of the description, the sweetness of the numbers, the classical spirit of antiquity that prevails in it, go for nothing. I am convinced, by the way, that he has no ear for poetical numbers, or that it was stopped by prejudice against the harmony of Milton's. Was there ever anything so delightful as the music of the "Paradise Lost"? It is like that of a fine organ; has the fullest and the deepest tones of

majesty, with all the softness and elegance of the Dorian flute. Variety without end and never equalled, unless, perhaps, by Virgil. Yet the Doctor has little or nothing to say upon this copious theme, but talks something about the unfitness of the English language for blank verse, and how apt it is, in the mouth of some readers, to degenerate into declamation. Oh! I could thresh his old jacket, until I made his pension jingle in his pocket.

I could talk a good while longer, but I have no room; our love attends yourself, Mrs. Unwin, and Miss Shuttleworth, not forgetting the two miniature pictures at your elbow. — Yours affectionately,

W. C.

XVII

Cowper's best letters were written to his friends, Mrs. Unwin and Lady Hesketh, with whom he was on delightfully confidential terms. His life was apparently secluded and uneventful, but he succeeded in making even insignificant things interesting to others. In this, perhaps, more than in anything else, lies the genuine charm of his correspondence.

William Cowper to Lady Hesketh

May 29, 1786.

Thou dear, comfortable cousin, whose letters, among all that I receive, have this property peculiarly their own, that I expect them without trembling, and never find anything in them that does not give me pleasure; for which therefore I would take nothing in exchange that the world could give me, save and except that for which I must exchange them soon (and happy shall I be to do so,) your own company. That, indeed, is de-

layed a little too long; to my impatience at least it seems so, who find the spring, backward as it is, too forward, because many of its beauties will have faded before you will have an opportunity to see them. We took our customary walk yesterday in the wilderness at Weston, and saw, with regret, the laburnums, syringas, and guelder-roses, some of them blown, and others just upon the point of blowing, and could not help observing — all these will be gone before Lady Hesketh comes! Still however there will be roses and jasmine, and honey-suckle, and shady walks, and cool alcoves, and you will partake them with us. But I want you to have a share of every thing that is delightful here, and cannot bear that the advance of the season should steal away a single pleasure before you can come to enjoy it.

Every day I think of you, almost all the day long; I will venture to say, that even you were never so expected in your life. I called last week at the Quaker's to see the furniture of your bed, the fame of which had reached me. It is, I assure you, superb, of printed cotton, and the subject classical. Every morning you will open your eyes on Phaeton kneeling to Apollo, and imploring his father to grant him the conduct of his chariot for a day. May your sleep be as sound as your bed will be sumptuous, and your nights at least will be well provided for.

I shall send up the sixth and seventh books of the Iliad[30] shortly, and shall address them to you. You will forward them to the General. I long to show you my workshop, and to see you sitting on the opposite side of the table. We shall be as close packed as two wax figures in an old fashioned picture frame. I am writ-

ing in it now. It is the place in which I fabricate all my verse in summer time. I rose an hour sooner than usual this morning, that I might finish my sheet before breakfast, for I must write this day to the General.

The grass under my windows is all bespangled with dewdrops, and the birds are singing in the apple trees, among the blossoms. Never poet had a more commodious oratory in which to invoke his Muse.

I have made your heart ache too often, my poor dear cousin, with talking about my fits of dejection. Something has happened that has led me to the subject, or I would have mentioned them more sparingly. Do not suppose, or suspect that I treat you with reserve; there is nothing in which I am concerned that you shall not be made acquainted with. But the tale is too long for a letter. I will only add, for your present satisfaction, that the cause is not exterior, that it is not within the reach of human aid, and that yet I have a hope myself, and Mrs. Unwin a strong persuasion of its removal. I am indeed even now, and have been for a considerable time, sensible of a change for the better, and expect, with good reason, a comfortable lift from you. Guess, then, my beloved cousin, with what wishes I look forward to the time of your arrival, from whose coming I promise myself not only pleasure, but peace of mind, — at least an additional share of it. At present it is an uncertain and transient guest with me; but the joy with which I shall see and converse with you at Olney, may perhaps make it an abiding one.

W. C.

XVIII

John Adams (1735–1826), a short time before his inauguration as second President of the United States, writes his wife concerning some interesting matters of domestic economy. The curious form of salutation, "My Dearest Friend," occurs repeatedly in letters of this period between husband and wife.

John Adams to his Wife

PHILADELPHIA, 4 February, 1797.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I hope you will not communicate to anybody the hints I give you about our prospects; but they appear every day worse and worse. House rent at twenty-seven hundred dollars a year, fifteen hundred dollars for a carriage, one thousand for one pair of horses, all the glasses, ornaments, kitchen furniture, the best chairs, settees, plateaus, &c., all to purchase, all the china, delph or wedgewood, glass and crockery of every sort to purchase, and not a farthing probably will the House of Representatives allow, though the Senate have voted a small addition. All the linen besides. I shall not pretend to keep more than one pair of horses for a carriage, and one for a saddle. Secretaries, servants, wood, charities which are demanded as rights, and the million dittoes present such a prospect as is enough to disgust anyone. Yet not one word must we say.

We cannot go back. We must stand our ground as long as we can. Dispose of our places with the help of our friend Dr. Tufts, as well as you can. We are impatient for news, but that is always so at this season. I am tenderly your

J. A.

XIX

In the pathetic letter which follows, Robert Burns (1759–96), the marvelously gifted but unfortunate Scotch poet, applies for a minor position in the excise. He received the desired appointment in 1789; but it only offered a further encouragement to his intemperate habits, and he died, poor and neglected, in 1796.

Robert Burns to the Earl of Glencairn

EDINBURGH: 1787.

MY LORD, —

I know your lordship will disapprove of my ideas in a request I am going to make to you; but I have weighed, long and seriously weighed, my situation, my hopes and turn of mind, and am fully fixed to my scheme if I can possibly effectuate it. I wish to get into the Excise. I am told that your lordship's interest will easily procure me the grant from the Commissioners; and your lordship's patronage and goodness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, embolden me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of home that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters from destruction. There, my lord, you have bound me over to the highest gratitude. My brother's farm is but a wretched lease, but I think he will probably weather out the remaining seven years of it; and after the assistance which I have given and will give him, to keep the family together, I think, by my guess, I shall have rather better than two hundred pounds, and instead of seeking what is almost impossible at present to find, a farm that I can certainly live by, with so small a stock, I

shall lodge this sum in a banking-house, a sacred deposit, excepting only the calls of uncommon distress or necessitous old age.

These, my lord, are my views: I have resolved from the maturest deliberation; and now I am fixed, I shall leave no stone unturned to carry my resolve into execution. Your lordship's patronage is the strength of my hopes; nor have I yet applied to any body else. Indeed my heart sinks within me at the idea of applying to any other of the great who have honoured me with their countenance. I am ill-qualified to dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation, and tremble nearly as much at the thought of the cold promise as the cold denial; but to your lordship I have not only the honour, the comfort, but the pleasure of being

Your lordship's much obliged
And deeply indebted humble servant,
R. B.

XX

Walter Scott (1771–1832), at this date known as the author of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) and *Marmion* (1808), writes this letter of praise to a brother poet, George Crabbe (1754–1832), who had published his *Parish Register* in 1807. Scott's largeness of mind and heart shows itself in this enthusiastic recognition of another's work.

Sir Walter Scott to George Crabbe

ASHESTIEL: October 2, 1809.

DEAR SIR, —

I am just honoured with your letter, which gives me the more sensible pleasure, since it has gratified a wish of more than twenty years' standing. It is, I think, fully that time since I was for great part of a

very snowy winter, the inhabitant of an old house in the country, in a course of poetical study, so very like that of your admirably-painted "Young Lad," that I could hardly help saying "That 's me!" when I was reading the tale to my family. Among the very few books which fell under my hands was a volume or two of Dodsley's *Annual Register*, one of which contained copious extracts from *The Village* and *The Library*,[31] particularly the conclusion of book first of the former, and an extract from the latter, beginning with the description of the old romancers. I committed them most faithfully to my memory, where your verses must have felt themselves very strangely lodged in company with ghost stories, border riding ballads, scraps of old plays, and all the miscellaneous stuff which a strong appetite for reading, with neither means nor discrimination for selection, had assembled in the head of a lad of eighteen. New publications at that time were very rare in Edinburgh, and my means of procuring them very limited; so that, after a long search for the poems which contained these beautiful specimens, and which had afforded me so much delight, I was fain to rest contented with the extracts from the *Register*, which I could repeat at this moment. You may, therefore, guess my sincere delight when I saw your poems at a later period assume the rank in the public consideration which they so well deserve. It was a triumph to my own immature taste to find I had anticipated the applause of the learned and of the critical, and I became very desirous to offer my *gratulor*, among the more important plaudits which you have had from every quarter. I should certainly have availed myself of the freemasonry of authorship (for

our trade may claim to be a mystery as well as Abhorson's), to address to you a copy of a new poetical attempt which I have now upon the anvil, and esteem myself particularly obliged to Mr. Hatchard and to your goodness acting upon his information, for giving me the opportunity of paving the way for such a freedom. I am too proud of the compliments you honour me with, to affect to decline them; and with respect to the comparative view I have of my own labours and yours, I can only assure you that none of my little folks, about the formation of whose taste and principles I may be supposed naturally solicitous, have ever read any of my own poems, while yours have been our regular evening's amusement. My eldest girl begins to read well, and enters as well into the humour as into the sentiment of your admirable descriptions of human life. As for rivalry, I think it has seldom existed among those who know by experience, that there are much better things in the world than literary reputation, and that one of the best of these good things is the regard and friendship of those deservedly and generally esteemed for their worth or their talents. I believe many dilettanti authors do cocker themselves up into a great jealousy of anything that interferes with what they are pleased to call their fame, but I should as soon think of nursing one of my own fingers into a whitlow for my private amusement, as encouraging such a feeling. I am truly sorry to observe you mention bad health. Those who contribute so much to the improvement as well as the delight of society should escape this evil. I hope, however, that one day your state of health may permit you to view this country. I have very few calls to London, but it will

greatly add to the interest of those which may occur, that you will permit me the honour of waiting upon you in my journey, and assuring you, in person, of the early admiration and sincere respect with which I have the honour to be, dear Sir, yours, &c.,

WALTER SCOTT.

XXI

Sydney Smith (1771–1845), the witty and brilliant editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, was a favorite in society and an intellectual leader of his time. As a preacher in London he was exceedingly influential, and his *Plymley Letters* helped to further the movement for Catholic emancipation. The Lady Georgiana Morpeth to whom this letter is addressed was the wife of the Earl of Carlisle, and the mother of a boy whom Smith had tutored in Edinburgh.

Sydney Smith to Lady Georgiana Morpeth

FOSTON, Dec. 1st, 1821.

DEAR LADY GEORGIANA, —

How is Lord Carlisle? Pray do not take it for inattention that I do not call oftener, but it is rather too far to walk, and I hate riding. Next year I shall set up a gig, and then I shall call at Castle Howard twice a day all the year round, like an apothecary. I have just finished Miss Aitkin's *Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth*, a pretty book, which I counsel you to let your daughters read, if they have not read it five years ago. I am in low spirits about the Malton road. I must go over to Malton so often, and it will be so troublesome. All my hay-stacks and corn-ricks are blown away by this wind, two of my maids are married, and the pole of my carriage is

broken! These are the sort of things which render life so difficult.

Yours, dear Lady Georgiana,

SYDNEY SMITH.

XXII

This note from Sydney Smith to a girl friend of his is an example of a type of letter which becomes more common later in the century, notably in the letters of Dickens and of Stevenson.

Sydney Smith to Miss ———

LONDON, July 22d, 1835.

Lucy, Lucy, my dear child, don't tear your frock; tearing frocks is not of itself a proof of genius; but write as your mother writes, act as your mother acts; be frank, loyal, affectionate, simple, honest; and then integrity or laceration of frock is of little import.

And Lucy, dear child, mind your arithmetic. You know, in the first sum of yours I ever saw, there was a mistake. You had carried two (as a cab is licensed to do), and you ought, dear Lucy, to have carried but one. Is this a trifle? What would life be without arithmetic but a scene of horrors?

You are going to Boulogne, the city of debts, peopled by men who never understood arithmetic; by the time you return, I shall probably have received my first paralytic stroke, and shall have lost all recollection of you; therefore I now give you my parting advice. Don't marry anybody who has not a tolerable understanding and a thousand a year, and God bless you, dear child,

SYDNEY SMITH.

XXIII

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), the author of *The Ancient Mariner*, was a poet of marvelous endowment who became a slave to opium and, under the influence of German thinkers, devoted much of his life to philosophical and theological speculation, thus disappointing the hopes of those who knew his splendid imaginative and poetic power. He was a brilliant conversationalist, and numbered among his friends Lamb, Southey, Wordsworth, and other able men of his time, during his later years becoming the center of a group of talented disciples. This letter, written to Godwin, the father-in-law of Shelley and the author of *Political Justice*, illustrates Coleridge's weakness and the vagaries of his intellect.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge to William Godwin

At Mr. Lamb's, 36, Chapel Street,
March 3, 1800.

Dear Godwin, —

The punch, after the wine, made me tipsy last night. This I mention, not that my head aches, or that I felt, after I quitted you, any unpleasantness or titubancy; but because tipsiness has, and has always, one unpleasant effect — that of making me talk very extravagantly; and as, when sober, I talk extravagantly enough for any common tipsiness, it becomes a matter of nicety in discrimination to know when I am or am not affected. An idea starts up in my head, — away I follow through thick and thin, wood and marsh, brake and briar, with all the apparent interest of a man who was defending one of his old and long-established principles. Exactly of this kind was the conversation with which I quitted you. I do not believe it pos-

sible for a human being to have a greater horror of the feelings that usually accompany such principles as I then supposed, or a deeper conviction of their irrationality, than myself; but the whole thinking of my life will not bear me up against the accidental crowd and press of my mind, when it is elevated beyond its natural pitch. We shall talk wiselier with the ladies Tuesday. God bless you, and give your dear little ones a kiss apiece from me. Yours with affectionate esteem,

S. T. Coleridge.

XXIV

Charles Lamb (1775–1834) shows in his correspondence the same oddities, the same charm, and the same picturesque style that appear in his *Essays of Elia*. Like the letters of Byron, Lamb's letters give full expression to the personality of the writer, and in this lies their great merit. The first letter, to Wordsworth, describes Lamb's sensations on retiring from his position as clerk in the India House, a place which he had filled for thirty-three years.

Charles Lamb to William Wordsworth

Colebrook Cottage,
April 6, 1825.

Dear Wordsworth, —

I have been several times meditating a letter to you concerning the good thing which has befallen me, but the thought of poor Monkhouse came across me. He was one that I had exulted in the prospect of congratulating me. He and you were to have been the first participators, for indeed it has been ten weeks since the first motion of it. Here I am then, after thirty-three years' slavery, sitting in my own room at eleven o'clock this finest of all April mornings, a freed man, with 441£

a year for the remainder of my life, live I as long as John Dennis,[32] who outlived his annuity and starved at ninety; 441£ *i.e.*, 450£, with a deduction of 9£ for a provision secured to my sister, she being survivor, the pension guaranteed by Act Georgii Tertii, etc.

I came home FOR EVER on Tuesday in last week. The incomprehensibleness of my condition overwhelmed me. It was like passing from life into eternity. Every year to be as long as three, *i.e.*, to have three times as much real time (time that is my own) in it! I wandered about thinking I was happy, but feeling I was not. But that tumultuousness is passing off, and I begin to understand the nature of the gift. Holydays, even the annual month, were always uneasy joys; their conscious fugitiveness; the craving after making the most of them. Now, when all is holyday, there are no holydays. I can sit at home, in rain or shine, without a restless impulse for walkings. I am daily steadying, and shall soon find it as natural to me to be my own master, as it has been irksome to have had a master. Mary wakes every morning with an obscure feeling that some good has happened to us.

Leigh Hunt[33] and Montgomery[34] after their releasements, describe the shock of their emancipation much as I feel mine. But it hurt their frames. I eat, drink, and sleep as sound as ever. I lay no anxious schemes for going hither and thither, but take things as they occur. Yesterday I excursioned twenty miles; to-day I write a few letters. Pleasuring was for fugitive play-days; mine are fugitive only in the sense that life is fugitive. Freedom and life are co-existent! . . .

C. Lamb.

XXV

Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786–1846), artist and critic, was the friend of many of the prominent literary men of his time, including Wordsworth, Keats, Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, Hunt, and Scott. This letter to Miss Mary Russell Mitford (1787–1855), the author of *Our Village*, is full of interesting gossip about poets whom Haydon actually knew in the flesh.

Benjamin Robert Haydon to Miss Mitford

[1824.]

You are unjust, depend upon it, in your estimate of Byron's poetry, and wrong in your ranking Wordsworth beyond him. There are things in Byron's poetry so exquisite, that fifty or five hundred years hence they will be read, felt, and adored throughout the world. I grant that Wordsworth is very pure and very holy, and very orthodox, and occasionally very elevated, highly poetical, and oftener insufferably obscure, starched, dowdy, anti-human and anti-sympathetic, but he will never be ranked above Byron nor classed with Milton, he will not, indeed. He wants the constructive power, the *lucidus ordo* of the greatest minds, which is as much a proof of the highest order as any other quality. I dislike his selfish Quakerism; his affectation of superior virtue; his utter insensibility to the frailties — the beautiful frailties of passion. I was once walking with him in Pall Mall; we darted into Christie's.[35] A copy of the Transfiguration was at the head of the room, and in the corner a beautiful copy of the Cupid and Psyche [statues] kissing. Cupid is taking her lovely chin, and turning her pouting mouth to

meet his while he archly bends his own down, as if saying, "Pretty dear!" You remember this exquisite group? . . . Catching sight of the Cupid, as he and I were coming out, Wordsworth's face reddened, he showed his teeth, and then said in a loud voice, "The Dev-v-v-vils!" There's a mind! Ought not this exquisite group to have roused his "Shapes of Beauty," and have softened his heart as much as his old grey-mossed rocks, his withered thorn, and his dribbling mountain streams? I am altered about Wordsworth, very much, from finding him a bard too elevated to attend to the music of humanity. No, No! give me Byron, with all his spite, hatred, depravity, dandyism, vanity, frankness, passion, and idleness, to Wordsworth, with all his heartless communion with woods and grass.

When he came back from his tour, I breakfasted with him in Oxford Street. He read *Laodamia*[36] to me, and very finely. He had altered, at the suggestion of his wife, Laodamia's fate (but I cannot refer to it at this moment), because she had shown such weakness as to wish her husband's stay. Mrs. Wordsworth held that Laodamia ought to be punished, and punished she was. I will refer to it. Here it is—

> She whom a trance of passion thus removed,
> As she departed, not without the crime
> Of lovers, who, in reason's spite have loved,
> Was doomed to wander in a joyless clime
> Apart from happy ghosts, that gather flowers
> Of blissful quiet in Elysian bowers.

I have it in his own hand. This is different from the first edition. And as he repeated it with self-approbation of his own heroic feelings for banishing a

wife because she felt a pang at her husband going to hell again, his own wife sat crouched by the fire-place and chanted every line to the echo, apparently congratulating herself at being above the mortal frailty of loving her William.

You should make allowance for Byron's not liking Keats. He could not. Keats's poetry was an immortal stretch beyond the mortal intensity of his own. An intense egotism, as it were, was the leading exciter of Byron's genius. He could feel nothing for fauns or satyrs, or gods, or characters *past*, unless the association of them were excited by some positive natural scene where they had actually died, written, or fought. All his poetry was the result of a deep feeling roused by what passed before his eyes. Keats was a stretch beyond this. Byron could not enter into it any more than he could Shakespeare. He was too frank to conceal his thoughts. If he really admired Keats he would have said so (I am afraid I am as obscure here as Wordsworth). So, in his controversy with Bowles;[37] Byron really thought Pope the greater poet. He pretended that a man who versified the actual vices or follies was a greater, and more moral poet than he who invented a plot, invented characters which by their action on each other produced a catastrophe from which a moral was inferred. This at once showed the reach of his genius.

XXVI

No English letter-writer is more easy, more spontaneous, and more varied than Lord Byron (1788–1824). In his correspondence with his friends he reveals himself frankly and fully, without pretense or artificiality, and with a vivac-

ity that is delightful. The formal letter in the manner of the essay, used by Pope, Swift, and Lady Montagu, and not altogether abandoned by Walpole and Cowper, has, in Byron's letters, been replaced by a new literary form, the virtue of which lies chiefly in its flexibility, its gossipy tone, and its autobiographical interest. The first letter, to Thomas Moore, the Irish poet and Byron's biographer, shows the jocular spirit in which the nobleman announced his approaching marriage to Miss Milbanke, a marriage which proved to be the most unfortunate step in Byron's life.

Lord Byron to Thomas Moore

NEWSTEAD ABBEY, Sept. 20, 1814.

"Here 's to her who long
Hath waked the poet's sigh!
The girl who gave to song
What gold could never buy."

MY DEAR MOORE,—

I am going to be married — that is, I am accepted, and one usually hopes the rest will follow. My mother of the Gracchi (that *are* to be), *you* think too straitlaced for me, although the paragon of only children, and invested with "golden opinions of all sorts of men," and full of "most blest conditions" as Desdemona herself. Miss Milbanke is the lady, and I have her father's invitation to proceed there in my elect capacity, — which, however, I cannot do till I have settled some business in London, and got a blue coat.

She is said to be an heiress, but of that I really know nothing certainly, and shall not enquire. But I do know, that she has talents and excellent qualities; and you will not deny her judgment, after having refused six suitors and taken me.

Now, if you have anything to say against this, pray

do; my mind's made up, positively fixed, determined, and therefore I will listen to reason, because now it can do no harm. Things may occur to break it off, but I will hope not. In the mean time, I tell you (a *secret*, by the by, — at least, till I know she wishes it to be public) that I have proposed and am accepted. You need not be in a hurry to wish me joy, for one may n't be married for months. I am going to town to-morrow: but expect to be here, on my way there, within a fortnight.

If this had not happened, I should have gone to Italy. In my way down, perhaps, you will meet me at Nottingham, and come over with me here. I need not say that nothing will give me greater pleasure. I must, of course, reform thoroughly; and, seriously, if I can contribute to her happiness, I shall secure my own. She is so good a person, that — that — in short, I wish I was a better. Ever, etc.

XXVII

Much of Byron's correspondence with his publisher, John Murray, is of exceptional interest, for it is filled, not only with business details, but also with the poet's views and experiences. This letter was written when Byron, at the height of his power, was working on *Don Juan*, the poem in which he finally attained maturity in thought and style.

Lord Byron to John Murray

VENICE, April 6, 1819.

DEAR SIR, —

The Second Canto of *Don Juan* was sent, on Saturday last, by post, in 4 packets, two of 4, and two of three sheets each, containing in all two hundred and seventeen stanzas, octave measure. But I will permit

no curtailments, except those mentioned about Castlereagh and the two *Bobs*[38] in the Introduction. You sha'n't make *Canticles* of my Cantos. The poem will please, if it is lively; if it is stupid, it will fail; but I will have none of your damned cutting and slashing. If you please, you may publish *anonymously;* it will perhaps be better; but I will battle my way against them all, like a Porcupine.

So you and Mr. Foscolo,[39] etc., want me to undertake what you call a "great work?" an Epic poem, I suppose, or some such pyramid. I'll try no such thing; I hate tasks. And then "seven or eight years!" God send us all well this day three months, let alone years. If one's years can't be better employed than in sweating poesy, a man had better be a ditcher. And works, too! — is *Childe Harold*[40] nothing? You have so many "*divine*" poems, is it nothing to have written a *Human* one? without any of your worn-out machinery. Why, man, I could have spun the thoughts of the four cantos of that poem into twenty, had I wanted to book-make, and its passion into as many modern tragedies. Since you want *length*, you shall have enough of *Juan*, for I'll make 50 cantos.

And Foscolo, too! Why does *he* not do something more than the *Letters of Ortis*, and a tragedy, and pamphlets? He has good fifteen years more at his command than I have: what has he done all that time?— proved his Genius, doubtless, but not fixed its fame, nor done his utmost.

Besides, I mean to write my best work in *Italian*, and it will take me nine years more thoroughly to master the language; and then if my fancy exist, and I exist too, I will try what I *can* do *really*. As to the

Estimation of the English which you talk of, let them calculate what it is worth, before they insult me with their insolent condescension.

I have not written for their pleasure. If they are pleased, it is that they choose to be so; I have never flattered their opinions, nor their pride; nor will I. Neither will I make "Ladies books" *al dilettar le femme e la plebe.*[41] I have written from the fullness of my mind, from passion, from impulse, from many motives, but not for their "sweet voices."

I know the precise worth of popular applause, for few Scribblers have had more of it; and if I chose to swerve into their paths, I could retain it, or resume it, or increase it. But I neither love ye, nor fear ye; and though I buy with ye and sell with ye, and talk with ye, I will neither eat with ye, drink with ye, nor pray with ye. They made me, without my search, a species of popular Idol; they, without reason or judgement, beyond the caprice of their good pleasure, threw down the Image from its pedestal; it was not broken with the fall, and they would, it seems, again replace it — but they shall not.

You ask about my health; about the beginning of the year I was in a state of great exhaustion, attended by such debility of Stomach that nothing remained upon it; and I was obliged to reform my "way of life," which was conducting me from the "yellow leaf"[42] to the Ground, with all deliberate speed. I am better in health and morals, and very much yours ever, Bn.

P.S. — Tell Mrs. Leigh I have never had "my Sashes," and I want some tooth-powder, the red, by all or any means.

XXVIII

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), settled with his wife and family in Italy, writes to encourage John Keats to visit him, offering to receive his brother poet as his guest. Shelley at this time had already published his two great poems, *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci*, besides many of his wonderful lyrics.

Percy Bysshe Shelley to John Keats

PISA, 27 July, 1820.

MY DEAR KEATS, —

I hear with great pain the dangerous accident you have undergone, and Mr. Gisborne, who gives me the account of it, adds that you continue to wear a consumptive appearance. This consumption is particularly fond of people who write such good verses as you have done, and with the assistance of an English winter it can often indulge its selection. I do not think that young and amiable poets are bound to gratify its taste; they have entered into no bond with the muses to that effect. But seriously (for I am joking on what I am very anxious about) I think you would do well to pass the winter in Italy and avoid so tremendous an accident, and if you think it as necessary as I do, so long as you continue to find Pisa or its neighbourhood agreeable to you, Mrs. Shelley unites with myself in urging the request that you would take up your residence with us. You might come by sea to Leghorn (France is not worth seeing, and the sea is particularly good for weak lungs), which is within a few miles of us. You ought, at all events, to see Italy, and your health which I suggest as a motive, may be an excuse

to you. I spare declamation about the statues, and paintings, and ruins, and what is a greater piece of forbearance, about the mountains and streams and fields, the colours of the sky, and the sky itself.

I have lately read your *Endymion* [43] again, and even with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains, though treasures poured forth with indistinct profusion. This people in general will not endure, and that is the cause of the comparatively few copies which have been sold. I feel persuaded that you are capable of the greatest things, so you but will. I always tell Ollier to send you copies of my books. *Prometheus Unbound* I imagine you will receive nearly at the same time with this letter. *The Cenci* I hope you have already received — it was studiously composed in a different style.

"Behold the *good* how far! but far above the *great*."

In poetry I have sought to avoid system and mannerism. I wish those who excel me in genius would pursue the same plan.

Whether you remain in England, or journey to Italy, believe that you carry with you my anxious wishes for your health, happiness and success wherever you are, or whatever you undertake, and that I am,

Yours sincerely,

P. B. Shelley.

XXIX

The response of John Keats (1795–1821) to Shelley's invitation is somewhat indefinite; as a matter of fact, although Keats finally succeeded in reaching Italy, he never arrived in Pisa, but died of consumption at Rome very

shortly after settling in that city. His tragic death moved Shelley to compose his immortal elegy, *Adonais*.

John Keats to Percy Bysshe Shelley

HAMPSTEAD, August, 1820.

MY DEAR SHELLEY, —

I am very much gratified that you, in a foreign country, and with a mind almost over-occupied, should write to me in the strain of the letter beside me. If I do not take advantage of your invitation, it will be prevented by a circumstance I have very much to heart to prophesy. There is no doubt that an English winter would put an end to me, and do so in a lingering hateful manner. Therefore, I must either voyage or journey to Italy, as a soldier marches up to a battery. My nerves at present are the worst part of me, yet they feel soothed that, come what extreme may, I shall not be destined to remain in one spot long enough to take a hatred of any four particular bedposts. I am glad you take any pleasure in my poor poem, which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about reputation. I received a copy of *The Cenci*, as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of — the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits nowadays is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon; he must have "self-concentration" — selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought

of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never set with your wings furled for six months together. And is this not extraordinary talk for the writer of *Endymion*, whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards? I am picked up and sorted to a pip. My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk. I am in expectation of *Prometheus* every day. Could I have my wish effected, you would have it still in manuscript, or be now putting an end to the second act. I remember you advising me not to publish my first blights on Hampstead Heath. I am returning advice upon your hands. Most of the poems in the volume I send you, have been written above two years, and would never have been published but for hope of gain; so you see I am inclined enough to take your advice now. I must express once more my deep sense of your kindness, adding my sincere thanks and respects for Mrs. Shelley. In the hope of soon seeing you, I remain most sincerely yours,

JOHN KEATS.

XXX

While in Italy, Shelley carried on a most entertaining correspondence with Thomas Love Peacock (1785–1866), the author of several whimsical, but exceedingly witty novels. Many of the letters contain intimate details describing the members of the so-called Pisan circle of literary people; in the one printed here, something is said of Lord Byron and the manner of his life in Italy.

Percy Bysshe Shelley to Thomas Love Peacock

RAVENNA, August, 1821.

MY DEAR PEACOCK, —

I received your last letter just as I was setting off from the Bagni on a visit to Lord Byron at this place.

Many thanks for all your kind attention to my accursed affairs. I am happy to tell you that my income is satisfactorily arranged, although Horace Smith having received it, and being still on his slow journey through France, I cannot send you, as I wished to have done, the amount of my debt immediately, but must defer it till I see him or till my September quarter, which is now very near. — I am very much obliged to you for your way of talking about it — but of course, if I cannot do you any good, I will not permit you to be a sufferer by me. —

I have sent you by the Gisbornes a copy of the *Elegy on Keats*. The subject, I know, will not please you; but the composition of the poetry, and the taste in which it is written, I do not think bad. You and the enlightened public will judge. Lord Byron is in excellent tone both of health and spirits. He has got rid of all those melancholy and degrading habits which he indulged at Venice. He lives with one woman, a lady of rank here, to whom he is attached, and who is attached to him, and is in every respect an altered man. He has written three more cantos of *Don Juan*. I have yet only heard the fifth, and I think that every word of it is pregnant with immortality. I have not seen his late plays, except *Marino Faliero*,[44] which is very well, but not so transcendently fine as the *Don Juan*. Lord Byron gets up at *two*. I get up, quite contrary to my usual custom, but one must sleep or die, like Southey's sea-snake in *Kehama*,[45] at 12. After breakfast we sit talking till six. From six till eight we gallop through the pine forests which divide Ravenna from the sea ; we then come home and dine, and sit up gossiping until six in the morning. I don't

suppose this will kill me in a week or fortnight, but I shall not try it longer. Lord B's establishment consists, besides servants, of ten horses, eight enormous dogs, three monkeys, five cats, an eagle, a crow, and a falcon; and all these, except the horses, walk about the house, which every now and then resounds with their unarbitrated quarrels, as if they were the masters of it. Lord B. thinks you wrote a pamphlet signed "John Bull"; he says he knew it by the style resembling *Melincourt*,[46] of which he is a great admirer. I read it, and assured him that it could not possibly be yours. I write nothing, and probably shall write no more. It offends me to see my name classed among those who have no name. If I cannot be something better, I had rather be nothing, and the accursed cause to the downfall of which I dedicate what powers I may have had — flourishes like a cedar and covers England with its boughs. My motive was never the insane desire of fame; and if I should continue an author, I feel that I should desire it. This cup is justly given to one only of an age; indeed, participation would make it worthless: and unfortunate they who seek it and find it not.

I congratulate you — I hope I ought to do so — on your expected stranger. He is introduced into a rough world. My regards to Hogg, and Coulson if you see him. Ever most faithfully yours,

P. B. S.

After I have sealed my letter, I find that my enumeration of the animals in this Circean[47] Palace was defective, and that in a material point. I have just met on the grand staircase five peacocks, two guinea hens, and an Egyptian crane. I wonder who all these

animals were before they were changed into these shapes.

XXXI

Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), the author of *Sartor Resartus*, *Heroes and Hero Worship*, *The French Revolution*, etc., although somewhat irascible and crotchety by nature, had at bottom a sturdy manhood which shows itself in this letter to Benjamin Disraeli, who, as Prime Minister, had offered him the choice of the Grand Cross of the Bath or a baronetcy and a pension. The spirit of Carlyle's reply is not unlike that of Johnson's *Letter to Chesterfield* (page 21) ; but it must be remembered that Johnson, unlike Carlyle, did actually accept a pension from the king.

Thomas Carlyle to Benjamin Disraeli

5, Cheyne Row, Chelsea,
December 29, 1874.

Sir, —

Yesterday, to my great surprise, I had the honour to receive your letter containing a magnificent proposal for my benefit, which will be memorable to me for the rest of my life. Allow me to say that the letter, both in purport and expression, is worthy to be called magnanimous and noble, that it is without example in my poor history; and I think it is unexampled, too, in the history of governing persons towards men of letters at the present, as at any time; and that I will carefully preserve it as one of the things precious to memory and heart. A real treasure or benefit, independent of all results from it.

This said to yourself and reposited with many feelings in my own grateful mind, I have only to add that your splendid and generous proposals for my practical behoof, must not any of them take effect;

that titles of honour are, in all degrees of them, out of keeping with the tenour of my own poor existence hitherto in this epoch of the world, and would be an encumbrance, not a furtherance to me; that as to money, it has, after long years of rigorous and frugal, but also (thank God, and those who are gone before me) not degrading poverty, become in this latter time amply abundant, even superabundant; so that royal or other bounty would be more than thrown away in my case; and in brief, that except the feeling of your fine and noble conduct on this occasion, which is a real and permanent possession, there cannot anything be done that would not now be a sorrow rather than a pleasure.

With thanks more than usually sincere,
I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obliged and obedient servant,
T. CARLYLE.

XXXII

Thomas Hood (1799–1845), poet and wit, struggled during most of his short life with disease and misfortune, but his courage never failed him and his letters, many of them written in times of depression, are filled with kindliness and humor. An example of his playfulness is this letter to May Elliot, a little girl favorite of his. It should be compared with Sydney Smith's letter to Lucy (page 41), which is equally witty but has less of the true comic spirit.

Thomas Hood to May

17, ELM TREE ROAD, ST. JOHN'S WOOD,
Monday, April, 1844.

MY DEAR MAY, —

I promised you a letter, and here it is. I was sure to remember it; for you are as hard to forget, as you

are soft to roll down a hill with. What fun it was! only so prickly, I thought I had a porcupine in one pocket, and a hedgehog in the other. The next time, before we kiss the earth, we will have its face shaved well. Did you ever go to Greenwich Fair? I should like to go there with you, for I get no rolling at St. John's Wood. Tom and Fanny only like roll and butter, and as for Mrs. Hood, she is for rolling in money.

Tell Dunnie that Tom has set his trap in the balcony and has caught a cold, and tell Jeanie that Fanny has set her foot in the garden, but it has not come up yet. Oh, how I wish it was the season when "March winds and April showers bring forth *May* flowers!" for then of course you would give me another pretty little nosegay. Besides it is frosty and foggy weather, which I do not like. The other night, when I came from Stratford, the cold shriveled me up so, that when I got home, I thought I was my own child!

However, I hope we shall all have a merry Christmas; I mean to come in my most ticklesome waistcoat, and to laugh till I grow fat, or at least streaky. Fanny is to be allowed a glass of wine, Tom's mouth is to have a *hole* holiday, and Mrs. Hood is to sit up for supper! There will be doings! And then such good things to eat; but, pray, pray, pray, mind they don't boil the baby by a mistake for a *plump* pudding, instead of a plum one.

Give my love to everybody, from yourself down to Willy, with which and a kiss, I remain, up hill and down dale,

Your affectionate lover,

THOMAS HOOD.

XXXIII

Sir Robert Peel, the English Premier, had arranged that Hood's pension of one hundred pounds should be transferred to Mrs. Hood, and the poet writes, almost on his deathbed, to thank him. His indomitable cheerfulness appears in the closing pun, which proved to be practically his last.

Thomas Hood to Sir Robert Peel

1845.

Dear Sir, —

We are not to meet in the flesh. Given over by my physicians and myself, I am only kept alive by frequent instalments of mulled port wine. In this extremity I feel a comfort, for which I cannot refrain from again thanking you, with all the sincerity of a dying man, — and, at the same time, bidding you a respectful farewell.

Thank God my mind is composed and my reason undisturbed, but my race as an author is run. My physical debility finds no tonic virtue in a steel pen, otherwise I would have written one more paper — a forewarning one — against an evil, or the danger of it, arising from a literary movement in which I have had some share, a one-sided humanity, opposite to that Catholic Shaksperian sympathy, which felt with King as well as Peasant, and duly estimated the mortal temptations of both stations. Certain classes at the poles of society are already too far asunder; it should be the duty of our writers to draw them nearer by kindly attraction, not to aggravate the existing repulsion, and place a wider moral gulf between Rich and Poor, with Hate on the one side and Fear on the other. But I am

too weak for this task, the last I had set myself; it is death that stops my pen, you see, and not the pension.

God bless you, sir, and prosper all your measures for the benefit of my beloved country.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your most grateful and obedient servant,
THOS. HOOD.

XXXIV

In the following letter, Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–59), then a comparatively unknown young man, writes of a visit to the eminent wit and divine, Sydney Smith (page 40).

Thomas Macaulay to his Father

BRADFORD: July 26, 1826.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

On Saturday I went to Sydney Smith's. His parish lies three or four miles out of any frequented road. He is, however, most pleasantly situated. "Fifteen years ago," said he to me as I alighted at the gate of his shrubbery, "I was taken up in Piccadilly and set down here. There was no house, and no garden; nothing but a bare field." One service this eccentric divine has certainly rendered to the Church. He has built the very neatest, most commodious, and most appropriate rectory that I ever saw. All its decorations are in a peculiarly clerical style, grave, simple, and gothic. The bedchambers are excellent, and excellently fitted up; the sitting-rooms handsome; and the grounds sufficiently pretty. Tindal and Parke (not the judge of course), two of the best lawyers, best scholars, and best men in England, were there. We passed an ex-

tremely pleasant evening, had a very good dinner, and many amusing anecdotes.

After breakfast the next morning I walked to church with Sydney Smith. The edifice is not at all in keeping with the rectory. It is a miserable little hovel with a wooden belfry. It was, however, well filled, and with decent people, who seemed to take very much to their pastor. I understand that he is a very respectable apothecary; and most liberal of his skill, his medicine, his soup, and his wine, among the sick. He preached a very queer sermon — the former half too familiar and the latter half too florid, but not without some ingenuity of thought and expression.

Sydney Smith brought me to York on Monday morning, in time for the stage-coach which runs to Skipton. We parted with many assurances of good-will. I have really taken a great liking to him. He is full of wit, humor, and shrewdness. He is not one of those show-talkers who reserve all their good things for special occasions. It seems to be his greatest luxury to keep his wife and daughter laughing two or three hours every day. His notions of law, government, and trade are surprisingly clear and just. His misfortune is to have chosen a profession at once above him and below him. Zeal would have made him a prodigy; formality and bigotry would have made him a bishop; but he could neither rise to the duties of his order, nor stoop to its degradations.

He praised my articles in the Edinburgh Review[48] with a warmth which I am willing to believe sincere, because he qualified his compliments with several very sensible cautions. My great danger, he said, was that of taking a tone of too much asperity and contempt

in controversy. I believe that he is right, and I shall try to mend.

Ever affectionately yours,
T. B. M.

XXXV

Jane Welsh Carlyle (1801–66), wife of Thomas Carlyle, carried on a copious correspondence with many friends and relatives. This letter, written from Chelsea, where she and her husband had their home for many years, gives an idea of some of their domestic difficulties.

Jane Welsh Carlyle to Mrs. Welsh

5 Cheyne Walk,
February 23, 1842.

I am continuing to mend. If I could only get a good sleep, I should be quite recovered; but, alas! we are gone to the devil again in the sleeping apartment. That dreadful woman next door, instead of putting away the cock which was so pathetically appealed against, has produced another. The servant has ceased to take charge of them. They are stuffed with ever so many hens into a small hencoop every night, and left out of doors the night long. Of course they are not comfortable, and of course they crow and screech not only from daylight, but from midnight, and so near that it goes through one's head every time like a sword. The night before last they woke me every quarter of an hour, but I slept some in the intervals; for they had not succeeded in arousing *him* above. But last night they had him up at three. He went to bed again, and got some sleep after, the "horrors" not recommencing their efforts until five; but I, lis-

tening every minute for a new screech that would send him down a second time and prepare such wretchedness for the day, could sleep no more.

What is to be done, God knows! If this goes on, he will soon be in Bedlam; and I too, for anything I see to the contrary: and how to hinder it from going on? The last note we sent the cruel woman would not open. I send for the maid and she will not come. I would give them guineas for quiet, but they prefer tormenting us. In the *law* there is no resource in such cases. They may keep beasts wild in their back yard if they choose to do so. Carlyle swears he will shoot them, and orders me to borrow Mazzini's gun. Shoot them with all my heart if the consequences were merely having to go to a police officer and pay the damage. But the woman would only be irritated thereby in getting fifty instead of two. If there is to be any shooting, however, I will do it myself. It will sound better my shooting them on principle than his doing it in a passion.

This despicable nuisance is not at all unlikely to drive us out of the house after all, just when he had reconciled himself to stay in it. How one is vexed with little things in this life! The great evils one triumphs over bravely, but the little eat away one's heart.

XXXVI

A rugged nobility and somber earnestness lend distinction to this tragic letter from John Sterling (1806–44), the essayist, to his friend and biographer, Carlyle. It should be compared with Hood's letter to Peel (page 61), also written on a deathbed and at very nearly the same time.

John Sterling to Thomas Carlyle

August 10, 1844.

My dear Carlyle,—

For the first time for many months it seems possible to send you a few words; merely, however, for remembrance and farewell. On higher matters there is nothing to say. I tread the common road into the great darkness, without any thought of fear and with very much of hope. Certainty, indeed, I have none. With regard to You and Me I cannot begin to write, having nothing for it but to keep shut the lids of those secrets with all the iron weights that are in my power. Towards me it is still more true than towards England that no man has been and done like you. Heaven bless you! If I can lend a hand when there, that will not be wanting. It is all very strange, but not a hundredth part so sad as it seems to the standers-by. Your wife knows my mind towards her, and will believe it without asservation.

Yours to the last,

John Sterling.

XXXVII

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–92), the "Quaker Poet," became, after the publication of *Snow-Bound* in 1866, a popular public character. In this letter to Lucy Larcom, his sister's dearest friend, he complains good-naturedly of newspaper gossip.

John Greenleaf Whittier to Lucy Larcom

Amesbury, 10th mo., 30, 1876.

No, I am not going to Newburyport. It is passing droll to see how the newspapers dispose of me this

season. First, I am domiciled at Peabody; next, I was buying a residence in Portland; then I was dwelling in my cottage at the Shoals, secluded from everybody; then I am spending the summer at Martha's Vineyard as the guest of Dr. *Somebody* whom I never heard of; and now it seems I am in Newburyport! Was there ever such a Wandering Jew? A fellow in New York, the son of a United States Senator, wrote me not long ago that as he understood I was well off and had a summer cottage on the Isles of Shoals, he wished me to let him have $200, as he was very hardly pressed for money! I wish I could go to sleep and wake up and find myself in the West Indies or Lower California. My cousins, the Cartlands, are located at Newburyport. They have bought and fitted up the house at the corner of High Street and Broad, where they will be glad to see thee.

XXXVIII

The letters of Abraham Lincoln (1809–65), like his speeches, have, at their best, a dignity, simplicity, and directness that stamp them as masterpieces. The specimen printed here, sent in reply to a critical and somewhat impatient attack on the government policy printed in the New York *Tribune*, is a spirited defense and explanation of the President's attitude towards the great public questions then at issue.

Abraham Lincoln to Horace Greeley

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON,
August 22, 1862.

HON. HORACE GREELEY:

DEAR SIR, — I have just read yours of the 19th, addressed to myself through the New York *Tribune*.

If there be in it any statements or assumptions of fact which I may know to be erroneous, I do not, now and here, controvert them. If there be in it any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not, now and here, argue against them. If there be perceptible in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend whose heart I have always supposed to be right.

As to the policy I "seem to be pursuing," as you say, I have not meant to leave anyone in doubt.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be the "Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and it is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe that doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views.

I have stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed wish that all men everywhere could be free.

Yours,

A. LINCOLN.

XXXIX

Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809–94), the genial author of the *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* and of numerous poems, was ordinarily a poor correspondent. This letter, however, written while he was traveling in Canada, has much of the quiet humor which appears in his essays.

Oliver Wendell Holmes to James T. Fields

MONTREAL, October 23, 1867.

DEAR MR. FIELDS, —

. . . I am as comfortable here as can be, but I have earned my money, for I have had a full share of my old trouble. Last night was better, and to-day I 'm going about the town. Miss Frothingham sent me a basket of black Hamburg grapes to-day, which were very grateful after the hotel tea and coffee and other 'pothecary's stuff.

Don't talk to me about taverns! There is just one genuine, clean, decent, palatable thing occasionally to be had in them, — namely, a boiled egg. The soups *taste* pretty good sometimes, but their sources are involved in a darker mystery than that of the Nile. Omelets taste as if they had been carried in the waiter's hat or fried in an old boot. I ordered scrambled eggs one day. It must be that they had been scrambled for by *somebody*, but who — who in the possession of a sound reason

could have scrambled for what I had set before me under that name? Butter! I am thinking just now of those excellent little pellets I have so often seen at your table, and wondering why the taverns *always* keep it until it is old. Fool that I am! As if the taverns did not know that if it was good it would be eaten, which is not what they want. Then the waiters with their napkins — what don't they do with those napkins! Mention any one thing of which you think you can say with truth, "*That* they do not do." . . .

I have a really fine parlor, but every time I enter it I perceive that

"Still sad 'odor' of humanity" [49]

which clings to it from my predecessor. Mr. Hogan got home yesterday, I believe. I saw him for the first time to-day. He was civil — they all are civil. I have no fault to find except with taverns here and pretty much everywhere.

Every six months a tavern should burn to the ground, with all its traps, its "properties," its beds and pots and kettles, and start afresh from its ashes like John Phoenix-Squibob!

No: give me home, or a home like mine, where all is clean and sweet, where coffee has pre-existed in the berry, and tea has still faint recollections of the pig-tails that dangled about the plant from which it was picked, where butter has not the prevailing character which Pope assigned to Denham, where soup could look you in the face if it had "eyes" (which it has not), and where the comely Anne or the gracious Margaret takes the place of those napkin-bearing animals.

Enough! But I have been forlorn and ailing and fastidious — but I am feeling a little better, and can talk about it. I had some ugly nights, I tell you; but I am writing in good spirits, as you see. . . .

P.S. Made a pretty good dinner, after all; but better a hash at home than a roast with strangers.

XL

Edward FitzGerald (1809–83), the translator of Calderón and Omar Khayyám, is, with Byron and Stevenson, one of the three great letter-writers of the nineteenth century. His correspondence is easy, entertaining, and original, and, as his acquaintance was a wide one, what he has to say is of exceptional interest. His familiar letters are, therefore, models of their kind.

Edward FitzGerald to John Allen

MANCHESTER, May 23, 1835.

DEAR ALLEN, —

I think that the fatal two months have elapsed, by which a letter shall become due to me from you. Ask Mrs. Allen if this is not so. Mind, I don't speak this upbraidingly, because I know that you did n't know where I was. I will tell you all about this by degrees. In the first place I staid at Mirehouse till the beginning of May, and then, going homeward, spent a week at Ambleside, which, perhaps you don't know, is on the shores of Winandermere. It was very pleasant there: though it was to be wished that the weather had been a little better. I have scarce done anything since I saw you but abuse the weather: but these four last days have made amends for all: and are, I hope, the beginning of summer at last. Alfred Tenny-

son staid with me at Ambleside: Spedding [50] was forced to go home, till the last two days of my stay there. I will say no more of Tennyson than that the more I have seen of him, the more cause I have to think him great. His little humours and grumpinesses were so droll, that I was always laughing: and was often put in mind (strange to say) of my little unknown friend, Undine — I must however say, further, that I felt what Charles Lamb describes, a sense of depression at times from the overshadowing of a so much more lofty intellect than my own: this (though it may seem vain to say so) I never experienced before, though I have often been with much greater intellects: but I could not be mistaken in the universality of his mind; and perhaps I have received some benefit in the now more distinct consciousness of my dwarfishness. I think that you should keep all this to yourself, my dear Allen: I mean, that it is only to you that I would write so freely about myself. You know most of my secrets, and I am not afraid of entrusting even my vanities to so true a man.

Pray, do not forget to say how the Freestone party are. My heart jumped to them, when I read in a guide book at Ambleside, that from Scawfell (a mountain in Westmoreland) you could see Snowdon. Perhaps you will not see the chain of ideas: but I suppose there was one, else I don't know how it was that I tumbled, as it were, from the very summit of Scawfell, upon the threshold of Freestone. The mind soon traverses Wales. I have not been reading very much — (as if you ever expected that I did!) — but I mean, not very much for me — some Dante, by the aid of a Dictionary: and some Milton — and some Words-

worth — and some Selections from Jeremy Taylor,[51] Barrow,[52] etc., compiled by Basil Montagu — of course you know the book: it is published by Pickering. I do not think that it is very well done: but it has served to delight, and, I think, to instruct me much. Do you know South?[53] He must be very great, I think. It seems to me that our old Divines will hereafter be considered our Classics — (in Prose, I mean) — I am not aware that any other nations have such books. A single selection from Jeremy Taylor is fine: but it requires a skilful hand to put many detached bits from him together: but a common editor only picks out the flowery metaphorical morsels: and so rather cloys: and gives quite a rather wrong estimate of the Author, to those who had no previous acquaintance with him: for, rich as Taylor's illustrations, and grotesque as his images are, no one keeps a grander proportion: he never huddles illustration upon the matter so as to overlay it, nor crowds images too thick together: which these Selections might make one unacquainted with him to suppose. This is always the fault of Selections: but Taylor is particularly liable to injury on this score. What a man he is! He has such a knowledge of the nature of man, and such powers of expressing its properties, that I sometimes feel as if he had had some exact counterpart of my own individual character under his eye, when he lays open the depths of the heart, or traces some sin to its root. The eye of his portrait expresses this keen intuition: and I think I should less like to have stood with a lie on my tongue before him than before any other I know of.

I beg you to give my best remembrances to your

lady, who may be always sure that in all I wish of well for you, she is included: so that I take less care to make mention of her separately.

XLI

This extract from a letter to Charles Eliot Norton (1817–1909), the American translator of Dante, presents an intimate picture of Carlyle, together with some suggestive comment on American writers.

Edward FitzGerald to Charles Eliot Norton

LITTLE GRANGE, WOODBRIDGE,
Jan. 23, '76.

MY DEAR SIR, —

I suppose you may see one of the Carlyle Medallions: and you can judge better of the Likeness than I, who have not been to Chelsea, and hardly out of Suffolk, these fifteen years or more. I dare say it is like him: but his Profile is not his best phase. In two notes dictated by him since that Business he has not adverted to it: I think he must be a little ashamed of it, though it would not do to say so in return, I suppose. And yet I think he might have declined the Honours of a Life of "Heroism." I have no doubt he would have played a Brave Man's Part if called on; but, meanwhile, he has only sat pretty comfortably at Chelsea, scolding all the world for not being Heroic, and not always very precise in telling them how. He has, however, been so far heroic, as to be always independent, whether of Wealth, Rank, and Coteries of all sorts: nay, apt to fly in the face of some who courted him. I suppose he is changed, or subdued, at eighty: but up to the last ten years he

seemed to me just the same as when I first knew him five and thirty years ago. What a Fortune he might have made by showing himself about as a Lecturer, as Thackeray and Dickens did; I don't mean they did it for Vanity: but to make money: and that to spend generously. Carlyle did indeed lecture near forty years ago before he was a Lion to be shown, and when he had but few Readers. I heard his "Heroes" [54] which now seems to me one of his best Books. He looked very handsome then, with his black hair, fine Eyes, and a sort of crucified Expression.

I know of course (in Books) several of those you name in your Letter: Longfellow, whom I may say I love, and so (I see) can't call him *Mister:* and Emerson whom I admire, for I don't feel that I know the Philosopher so well as the Poet: and Mr. Lowell's "Among my Books" is among mine. I also have always much liked, I think rather loved, O. W. Holmes. I scarce know why I could never take to that man of true Genius, Hawthorne. There is a little of my Confession of Faith about your Countrymen, and I should say mine, if I were not more Irish than English.

XLII

This affectionate note of farewell from William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–63), the novelist, to his old friend FitzGerald shows the large-heartedness which made the writer a universal favorite. The solemnity of it all, however, seems a little ludicrous to-day, when we remember that the "great voyage" was one merely across the Atlantic to the United States.

William Makepeace Thackeray to Edward FitzGerald

October 27, 1852.

My dearest old Friend,—

I must n't go away without shaking your hand, and saying Farewell and God Bless you. If anything happens to me, you by these presents must get ready the Book of Ballads which you like, and which I had not time to prepare before embarking on this voyage. And I should like my daughters to remember that you are the best and oldest friend their Father ever had, and that you would act as such: as my literary executor and so forth. My Books would yield a something as copyrights: and, should anything occur, I have commissioned friends in good place to get a pension for my poor little wife. — Does not this sound gloomily? Well: who knows what Fate is in store: and I feel not at all downcast, but very grave and solemn just at the brink of a great voyage.

I shall send you a copy of Esmond[55] to-morrow or so which you shall yawn over when you are inclined. But the great comfort I have in thinking about my dear old boy is that recollection of our youth when we loved each other as I do now while I write Farewell.

Laurence has done a capital head of me ordered by Smith the Publisher: and I have ordered a copy and Lord Ashburton another. If Smith gives me this one, I shall send the copy to you. I care for you as you know, and always like to think that I am fondly and affectionately yours,

W. M. T.

I sail from Liverpool on Saturday morning by the Canada for Boston.

XLIII

Much of the early correspondence of Charles Dickens (1812–70) is rich in that exuberance of animal spirits and that broad merriment which found inimitable expression in the *Pickwick Papers* (1837–39). At the time of this letter, Dickens, just returned from America, had completed *Martin Chuzzlewit*, which contained some caustic satire on American vulgarity and provincialism. Mr. Felton was but one of many readers whom this unnecessary attack had displeased.

Charles Dickens to Mr. Felton

BROADSTAIRS, KENT,
September 1, 1843.

MY DEAR FELTON, —

If I ever thought it in the nature of things that you and I could ever agree on paper, touching a certain Chuzzlewitian question whereupon Forster tells me you have remarks to make, I should immediately walk into the same, tooth and nail. But as I don't, I won't. Contenting myself with the prediction, that one of these years and days, you will write or say to me: "My dear Dickens, you were right, though rough, and did a world of good, though you got most thoroughly hated for it." To which I shall reply: "My dear Felton, I looked a long way off and not immediately under my nose." — At which sentiment you will laugh, and I shall laugh; and then (for I foresee this will all happen in my land) we shall call for another pot of porter and two or three dozens of oysters.

Now, don't you in your own heart and soul quarrel with me for this long silence?

Not half so much as I quarrel with myself, I know;

but if you could read half the letters I write you in imagination, you would swear by me for the best of correspondents. The truth is, that when I have done my morning's work, down goes my pen, and from that minute I feel it a positive impossibility to take it up again, until imaginary butchers and bakers wave me to my desk. The post-office is my rock ahead. My average number of letters that *must* be written every day is, at the least, a dozen. And you could no more know what I was writing to you spiritually, from the perusal of the bodily thirteenth, than you could tell from my hat what was going on in my head, or could hear my heart on the surface of my flannel waistcoat.

This is a little fishing place; intensely quiet; built on a cliff, whereon — in the center of a tiny semi-circular bay — our house stands; the sea rolling and dashing under the windows. Seven miles out are the Goodwin Sands (you've heard of the Goodwin Sands?) whence floating lights perpetually wink after dark, as if they were carrying on intrigues with the servants. Also there is a big lighthouse called the North Foreland on a hill behind the village, a severe parsonic light, which reproves the young and giddy floaters, and stares grimly out upon the sea. Under the cliff are rare good sands, where all the children assemble every morning and throw up impossible fortifications, which the sea throws down again at high water. Old gentlemen and ancient ladies look all day through telescopes and never see anything. In a bay-window in a one-pair sits, from nine o'clock until one, a gentleman with rather long hair and no neck-cloth, who writes and grins as if he thought he were very funny indeed. His name is Boz.[56] At one he disap-

pears, and presently emerges from a bathing-machine, and may be seen — a kind of salmon-coloured porpoise — splashing about in the ocean. After that he may be seen in another bay-window on the ground floor, eating a strong lunch; after that, walking a dozen miles or so, or lying on his back in the sand reading a book. Nobody bothers him unless they know he is disposed to be talked to; and I am told he is very comfortable indeed. He 's as brown as a berry, and they *do* say is a small fortune to the innkeeper who sells beer and cold punch. But this is mere rumour. Sometimes he goes up to London (eighty miles, or so, away), and then I 'm told there is a sound in Lincoln's Inn Fields at night, as men laughing, together with a clinking of knives and forks and wine glasses.

I often dream that I am in America again; but, strange to say, I never dream of you. I am always endeavouring to get home in disguise, and have a dreary sense of distance. Apropos of dreams, is it not a strange thing if writers of fiction never dream of their own creations; recollecting, I suppose, even in their dreams, that they have no real existence? I never dream of any of my own characters, and I feel it so impossible that I would wager Scott never did of his, real as they are. I had a good piece of absurdity in my head a night or two ago. I dreamed that somebody was dead. I don't know who, but it 's not to the purpose. It was a private gentleman, or a particular friend; and I was greatly overcome when the news was broken to me (very delicately) by a gentleman in a cocked hat, top boots, and a sheet. Nothing else. "Good God!" I said, "is he dead?" "He is as dead, sir," rejoined the gentleman, "as a door-nail. But

we all must die, Mr. Dickens, sooner or later, my dear sir." "Ah!" I said, "Yes, to be sure. Very true. But what did he die of?" The gentleman burst into a flood of tears, and said in a voice broken by emotion: "He christened his youngest child, Sir, with a toasting fork." I never in my life was so affected as at his having fallen a victim to this complaint. It carried a conviction to my mind that he never could have recovered. I knew it was the most interesting and fatal malady in the world; and I wrung the gentleman's hand in a convulsion of respectful admiration, for I felt that this explanation did equal honour to his head and heart.

XLIV

Robert Browning (1812–1889), one of the great poets of his century, married in 1846 Elizabeth Barrett (1806–1861), already a poetess of distinction. Mrs. Browning being in delicate health, the two took up their residence in Italy, where, in Florence, after fifteen years of happy married life, she died. This letter, written by Browning to his friend, Miss Euphrasia Haworth, describes Mrs. Browning's last hours. "Peni" or "Pen" was their son.

Robert Browning to Miss Euphrasia Haworth

FLORENCE: July 20, 1861.

MY DEAR FRIEND, —

I well know you feel as you say, for her once and for me now. Isa Blagden, perfect in all kindness to me, will have told you something perhaps — and one day I shall see you and be able to tell you myself as much as I can. The main comfort is that she suffered very little pain, none beside that ordinarily attending the simple attacks of cold and cough she was subject

to — had no presentiment of the result whatever, and was consequently spared the misery of knowing she was about to leave us; she was smilingly assuring me she was "better," "quite comfortable — if I would but come to bed," to within a few minutes of the last. I think I foreboded evil at Rome, certainly from the beginning of the week's illness — but when I reasoned about it, there was no justifying fear — she said on the last evening "it is merely the old attack, not so severe a one as that of two years ago — there is no doubt I shall soon recover," and I talked over plans for the summer, and next year. I sent the servants away and her maid to bed — so little reason for disquietude did there seem. Through the night she slept heavily, and brokenly — that was the bad sign — but then she would sit up, take her medicine, say unrepeatable things to me and sleep again. At four o'clock there were symptoms that alarmed me, I called the maid and sent for the doctor. She smiled as I proposed to bathe her feet, "Well, you *are* determined to make an exaggerated case of it!" Then came what my heart will keep till I see her again and longer — the most perfect expression of her love to me within my whole knowledge of her. Always smilingly, happily, and with a face like a girl's — and in a few minutes she died in my arms; her head on my cheek. These incidents so sustain me that I tell them to her beloved ones as their right: there was no lingering, nor acute pain, nor consciousness of separation, but God took her to himself as you would lift a sleeping child from the dark, uneasy bed into your arms and the light. Thank God. Annunziata thought by her earnest ways with me, happy and smiling as they were, that she must have been aware of

our parting's approach — but she was quite conscious, had words at command, and yet did not even speak of Peni, who was in the next room. Her last word was when I asked "How do you feel?" — "Beautiful." You know I have her dearest wishes and interests to attend to *at once* — her child to care for, educate, establish properly; and my own life to fulfil as properly, — all just as she would require were she here. I shall leave Italy altogether for years — go to London for a few days' talk with Arabel — then go to my father and begin to try leisurely what will be best for Peni — but no more "housekeeping" for me, even with my family. I shall grow, still, I hope — but my root is taken and remains.

I know you always loved her, and me too in my degree. I shall always be grateful to those who loved her, and that, I repeat, you did.

She was, and is, lamented with extraordinary demonstrations, if one consider it. The Italians seem to have understood her by an instinct. I have received strange kindness from everybody. Pen is very well — very dear and good, anxious to comfort me as he calls it. He can't know his loss yet. After years, his will be worse than mine — he will want what he never had — that is, for the time when he could be helped by her wisdom, and genius and piety — I *have* had everything, and shall not forget.

God bless you, dear friend. I believe I shall set out in a week. Isa goes with me — dear, true heart. You, too, would do what you could for us were you here and your assistance needful. A letter from you came a day or two before the end — she made me enquire about the Frescobaldi Palace for you, — Isa

wrote you in consequence. I shall be heard of at 151, rue de Grenelle, St. Germain.

Faithfully and affectionately yours,

ROBERT BROWNING.

XLV

Charlotte Brontë (1816–55), who was to become known later as the author of *Jane Eyre* (1847), had, while still a girl, sent some of her verses to Robert Southey (1774–1843), the poet and critic, asking for his comment and advice. He replied, attempting to dissuade her from further writing, and said, among other things: "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be." This letter is her answer.

Charlotte Brontë to Robert Southey

March 16, 1837.

SIR, —

I cannot rest till I have answered your letter, even though by addressing you a second time I should appear a little intrusive; but I must thank you for the kind and wise advice you have condescended to give me. I had not ventured to hope for such a reply; so considerate in its tone, so noble in its spirit. I must suppress what I feel, or you will think me foolishly enthusiastic.

At the first perusal of your letter, I felt only shame and regret that I had ever ventured to trouble you with my crude rhapsody; I felt a painful heat rise to my face when I thought of the quires of paper I had covered with what once gave me so much delight, but which now was only a source of confusion; but after I had thought a little and read it again and again, the

prospect seemed to clear. You do not forbid me to write; you do not say that what I write is utterly destitute of merit. You only warn me against the folly of neglecting real duties for the sake of imaginative pleasures; of writing for the love of fame; for the selfish excitement of emulation. You kindly allow me to write poetry for its own sake, provided I leave undone nothing which I ought to do, in order to pursue that single, absorbing, exquisite gratification. I am afraid, Sir, you think me very foolish. I know the first letter I wrote to you was all senseless trash from beginning to end; but I am not altogether the idle dreaming being it would seem to denote. My father is a clergyman of limited, though competent income, and I am the eldest of his children. He expended quite as much in my education as he could afford in justice to the rest. I thought it therefore my duty, when I left school, to become a governess. In that capacity I find enough to occupy my thoughts all day long, and my head and hands too, without having a moment's time for one dream of the imagination. In the evenings, I confess, I do think, but I never trouble any one else with my thoughts. I carefully avoid any appearance of pre-occupation and eccentricity, which might lead those I live amongst to suspect the nature of my pursuits. Following my father's advice — who from my childhood has counselled me, just in the wise and friendly tone of your letter — I have endeavoured not only attentively to observe all the duties a woman ought to fulfil, but to feel deeply interested in them. I don't always succeed, for sometimes when I'm teaching or sewing, I would rather be reading or writing; but I try to deny myself; and my father's approbation

amply rewarded me for the privation. Once more allow me to thank you with sincere gratitude. I trust I shall never more feel ambitious to see my name in print; if the wish should rise, I 'll look at Southey's letter, and suppress it. It is honour enough for me that I have written to him, and received an answer. That letter is consecrated ; no one shall ever see it, but papa and my brother and sisters. Again I thank you. This incident, I suppose, will be renewed no more; if I live to be an old woman, I shall remember it thirty years hence as a bright dream. The signature which you suspected of being fictitious is my real name. Again, therefore, I must sign myself,

C. Brontë.

P.S. Pray, sir, excuse me for writing to you a second time ; I could not help writing, partly to tell you how thankful I am for your kindness, and partly to let you know that your advice shall not be wasted ; however sorrowfully and reluctantly it may at first be followed.

C. B.

XLVI

Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar (1816–95), Attorney-General of the United States under President Grant, was a versatile and entertaining correspondent. This letter was written after his retirement to private life.

Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar to John M. Forbes

Concord, May 10, 1892.

My dear Mr. Forbes,—

I was much interested in the plan for keeping old fellows alive, by keeping them at work, which you were so kind as to send me. But the old codger I have

to tote about is so infernally lazy, that I have often thought the best thing for me to do would be to discharge him from my service entirely.

Still, though I have a great contempt for him, he has been with me so long and knows my ways so well, that when with difficulty I have got him up and dressed every morning, I conclude that I will let him loaf round one day more, and have his smoke and read the papers; though I know he is not worth his keep, and is a great deal more bother than use to me or anybody. The plan you suggest has its merits, no doubt, and I believe has been tried on cab-horses with varying success. But on the other hand, taking it easy may suit some cases as well as the whip-and-spur treatment, though I always felt my conscience relieved by applying the latter. Blessed is he who has done his day's work well, and can enjoy the evening shade and coolness without scheming or worry.

Faithfully yours,

E. R. Hoar.

XLVII

Henry David Thoreau (1817–62), the naturalist and author of *Walden*, had sent to Horace Greeley an essay on Carlyle, asking him to dispose of it. The publisher to whom Greeley sold the article did not send payment for over a year; but finally Greeley secured the money by a sight draft, and turned it over to Thoreau.

Henry David Thoreau to Horace Greeley

Concord, May 19, 1848.

My Friend Greeley, —

I have to-day received from you fifty dollars. It is five years that I have been maintaining myself en-

tirely by manual labor, — not getting a cent from any other quarter or employment. Now this toil has occupied so few days, — perhaps a single month, spring and fall each, — that I must have had more leisure than any of my brethren for study and literature. I have done rude work of all kinds. From July, 1845, to September, 1847, I lived by myself in the forest,[57] in a fairly good cabin, plastered and warmly covered, which I built myself. There I earned all I needed and kept to my own affairs. During that time my weekly outlay was but seven-and-twenty cents; and I had an abundance of all sorts. Unless the human race perspire more than I do, there is no occasion to live by the sweat of their brow. If men cannot get on without money (the smallest amount will suffice), the truest method of earning it is by working as a laborer at one dollar per day. You are least dependent so; I speak as an expert, having used several kinds of labor.

Why should the scholar make a constant complaint that his fate is specially hard? We are too often told of "the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties," — how poets depend on patrons and starve in garrets, or at last go mad and die. Let us hear the other side of the story. Why should not the scholar, if he is really wiser than the multitude, do coarse work now and then? Why not let his greater wisdom enable him to do without things? If you say the wise man is unlucky, how could you distinguish him from the foolishly unfortunate?

My friend, how can I thank you for your kindness? Perhaps there is a better way, — I will convince you that it is felt and appreciated. Here have I been sitting idle, as it were, while you have been busy in my

cause, and have done so much for me. I wish you had had a better subject; but good deeds are no less good because their object is unworthy.

XLVIII

John Ruskin (1819–1900), the English essayist and art critic, met the American scholar, Charles Eliot Norton, for the first time in 1855, and from that date until 1887 the two maintained a regular correspondence. This letter, written during the Civil War, expresses Ruskin's irritation at that conflict and tells something of his pessimistic moods.

John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton

DENMARK HILL, 6 January, '62.

DEAR NORTON, —

At home again at last, after six months' rest. I have two letters of yours unanswered. But after six months of doing nothing I feel wholly incapable of ever doing anything more, so I can't answer them. Only, so many thanks, for being nice and writing them. Thanks for "Atlantic." Lowell is delicious in the bits. "The coppers ain't all tails,"[58] and such like; but I can't make out how it bears on the business — that 's laziness too, I suppose. Also, for said business itself, I am too lazy to care anything about it, unless I hear there 's some chance of you or Lowell or Emerson's being shot, in which case I should remonstrate. For the rest, if people want to fight, my opinion is that fighting will be good for them, and I suppose when they 're tired, they 'll stop. They 've no Titians nor anything worth thinking about, to spoil — and the rest is all one to *me*.

I 've been in Switzerland from the 20th September

to day after Christmas. Got home on last day of year. It 's quite absurd to go to Switzerland in the summer. Mid-November is the time. I 've seen a good deal — but nothing ever to come near it. The long, low light — the floating frost cloud — the divine calm and melancholy — and the mountains all opal below and pearl above. There 's no talking about it, nor giving you any idea of it. The day before Christmas was a clear frost in dead-calm sunlight. All the pines of Pilate covered with hoar-frost — level golden sunbeams — purple shadows — and a mountain of virgin silver.

I 've been drawing — painting — a little ; with some self-approval. I 'm tired of benevolence and eloquence and everything that 's proper, and I 'm going to cultivate myself and nobody else, and see what will come of that. I 'm beginning to learn a little Latin and Greek for the first time in my life, and find that Horace and I are quite of a mind about things in general. I never hurry nor worry ; I don't speak to anybody about anything ; if anybody talks to me, I go into the next room. I sometimes find the days very long, and the nights longer ; then I try to think it is at the worst better than being dead ; and so long as I can keep clear of toothache, I think I shall do pretty well.

Now this is quite an abnormally long and studied epistle, for me, so mind you make the most of it — and give my love to your Mother and Sisters, and believe me

Ever affectionately yours,

J. Ruskin.

XLIX

James Russell Lowell (1819–91), while still a boy and unknown to the literary world, had printed his Harvard Class Poem, in which, with more warmth than discretion, he made a rather bitter attack on Emerson. Hearing that his verses had met with some criticism on the ground of good taste, Lowell sent at once the following letter to the Concord essayist and poet.

James Russell Lowell to Ralph Waldo Emerson

CAMBRIDGE, Sept. 1st, 1838.

DEAR SIR, —

In my class poem are a few lines about your "address." My friends have expressed surprise that after I had enjoyed your hospitality and spoken so highly of you in private, I should have been so "ungrateful" as ever to have written anything of the kind. Could I have ever dreamed that a man's private character should interfere with his public relations, I had never blotted paper so illy. But I really thought that I was doing rightly, for I consider it as virtual a lie to hold one's tongue as to speak an untruth. I should have written the same of my own brother. Now, sir, I trouble you with this letter because I think you a man who would think nowise the worse of me for holding up my head and speaking the truth at any sacrifice. That I could wilfully malign a man whose salt I had eaten, and whose little child I had danced on my knee,— he must be a small man who would believe so small a thing of his fellow.

But this word "ingratitude" is a very harsh and grating word, and one which I hope would never be

laid to my charge since I stood at my mother's knee and learnt the first very alphabet, as it were, of goodness. I hope that if you have leisure, sir, you will answer this letter and put me at rest. I hope you will *acquit* me (for I do not still think there is aught to *forgive* or *pardon*, and I trust *you* will not after reading this letter) of all uncharitableness.

Of course no one can feel it as strongly as I do, for since my friends have hinted at this "ingratitude" I have felt a great deal, and scarcely dare to look at the Tennyson you lent me without expecting some of the devils on the cover to make faces at me.

I hope you will find time to answer this and that I may still enjoy your friendship and be able to take you by the hand and look you in the face, as honest man should to honest man.

I remain yours with respect,

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

P.S. I have sent with this a copy of my "poem" — if it be not too tiresome, you would perhaps think better of me, if you were to read it *through*. I am not silly enough to suppose that this can be of any importance to you (if, indeed, you ever heard of the passage I refer to), but it is of very great importance to me.

J. R. L.

L

Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903), an American scholar whose fame rests chiefly on his *Hans Breitmann Ballads* and his studies of gypsy lore and life, was a man of wide interests and rich humor, as the following letter shows.

Charles Godfrey Leland to Miss Mary A. Owen

HOTEL VICTORIA, FLORENCE,
Feb. 3, 1895.

Many thanks for the letter, which is indeed a letter worth reading, which few are in these days when so few people write anything but notes or rubbish. Be sure of one thing, that yours are always read with a relish. For it is marvellously true that as tools are never wanting to an artist, there is always abundance to make a letter with to those who know how to write. There is always something to "right about" — or to turn round to and see! *Dapprimo*,[59] I thank you for the jokes from the newspapers. They are very good, but I observe that since I was in America, the real old extravaganza, the wild eccentric outburst, is disappearing from country papers. No editor bursts now on his readers all at once with the awful question, "If ink stands, why does n't it walk?" Nor have I heard for years of the old-fashioned sequences, when one man began with a verse of poetry and every small newspaper reprinted it, adding a parody. Thus they began with Ann Tiquity and then added Ann Gelic and Ann O' Dyne — till they had finished the Anns. Emerson's *Brahma*[60] elicited hundreds of parodies, till he actually suppressed it.

Then there were the wild outbursts of poems such as —

> I seen her out a-walking
> In her *habit de la rue*,
> But 't aint no use a-talking —
> But she 's pumpkins and a few.

There was something Indian-like, aboriginal, and wild in the American fun of 40 years ago (*vide* Albert

Pike's[61] *Arkansas Gentleman* and the *Harp of a Thousand Strings*) which has no parallel now. My own "beautiful poem" on a girl who had her underskirt made out of a coffee bag was republished a thousand times, — we were wilder in those days, and more eccentric. All of these which you send me are very good, but they might all have been made in England. They are *mild*. Ere long there will be no *America*.

I have often thought of collecting and publishing all the eccentric poems I could get — such as *Uncle Sam*, "*By the bank of a murmuring stream*," etc., but — nobody would care for them now. Other times, other tastes. —

My forthcoming *Florentine Legends* will be nice, but I have got far better ones since I made it. The *Breitmann* I really think is fairly good — perhaps it will sell well. I have not much hope for *Songs of the Sea* and *Lays of the Land* by Sea G. Lay-land — yet there are three or four good ballads in it. But what I await, with gasping hope, is *Flaxius*, which is in Watt's hands. I have not yet heard that he has found a publisher. It is my great work and as mad as a hatter.

LI

Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836–1907) writes to thank his friend, W. D. Howells, for a delightful visit at his home. This note, simple, informal, and graceful, should be compared with the solid sonorous letters of the early eighteenth century.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich to William Dean Howells

PONKAPOG, MASS., Dec. 13, 1875.

DEAR HOWELLS, —

We had so charming a visit at your house that I have about made up my mind to reside with you per-

manently. I am tired of writing. I would like to settle down in just such a comfortable home as yours, with a man who can work regularly four or five hours a day, thereby relieving one of all painful apprehensions in respect to clothes and pocket-money. I am easy to get along with. I have few unreasonable wants and never complain when they are constantly supplied. I think I could depend on you.

Ever yours,

T. B. A.

P.S. I should want to bring my two mothers, my two boys (I seem to have everything in twos), my wife, and her sister.

LII

In this letter, Aldrich, writing to a sympathetic friend, Mr. George E. Woodberry, the living poet and critic, airs some original and positive literary opinions.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich to George E. Woodberry

PONKAPOG, MASS., June 12, 1899.

DEAR WOODBERRY, —

Don't ever go away from home on a ten months' absence without leaving somebody behind to answer your letters for you. I have been swamped, and am only just getting my head out of my correspondence. I found my private affairs in a tangle, too, and not easy to straighten out. But the slug's in the bud, and God's in the sky, and the world is all O.K., as Browning incidentally remarks. Apropos of Browning, I've been reading his letters to "Ba" and "Ba's" letters to him,[62] and think it a shameful thing that they should be printed. All that ponderous love-

making — a queer mixture of Greek roots and middle-age stickiness ("Ba" was forty years old) — is very tedious. Here and there is a fine passage, and one is amused by the way the lovers patronize everybody they don't despise. But as a whole the book takes away from Browning's dignity. A man — even the greatest — cannot stand being photographed in his pajahmas. Thank God, we are spared Shakespeare's letters to Anne Hathaway! Doubtless he wrote her some sappy notes. He did everything that ever man did.

We are gradually breaking up here, preparatory to moving to The Crags, which has been closed these three summers. I shall go there without any literary plans, unless I carry out my idea of turning *The Eve of St. Agnes*[63] into Kiplingese. Would n't it be delicious! —

> St. Hagnes Heve! 'ow bloomin' chill it was!
> The Howl, for all his hulster, was acold.
> The 'are limped tremblin' through the blarsted grass,
> Etc., etc.

I think it might make Keats popular again — poor Keats, who did n't know any better than to write pure English. The dear boy was n't "up" to writing "Gawd" instead of God.

In no haste, as ever,

T. B. A.

P.S. I met Browning on three occasions. He was very cordial to me in a man-of-the-world fashion. I did not greatly care for him personally. Good head, long body, short legs. Seated, he looked like a giant; standing, he just missed being a dwarf. He talked well, but not so well as Lowell. —

LIII

It is not improbable that Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) will be remembered as long for his letters as for *Treasure Island* and *Virginibus Puerisque*. Despite an occasional touch of too conscious artistry, most of his correspondence, with its frankness, its gracefulness, and its intimate charm, is of high literary value. This letter is a fragment of unconventional autobiography.

Robert Louis Stevenson to Sidney Colvin

608 Bush Street, San Francisco,
(January 10, 1880)

My dear Colvin, —

This is a circular letter to tell my estate fully. You have no right to it, being the worst of correspondents; but I wish to efface the impression of my last, so to you it goes.

Any time between eight and half-past nine in the morning, a slender gentleman in an ulster, with a volume buttoned into the breast of it, may be observed leaving No. 608 Bush and descending Powell with an active step. The gentleman is R. L. S.; the volume relates to Benjamin Franklin, on whom he meditates one of his charming essays. He descends Powell, crosses Market, and descends in Sixth on a branch of the original Pine Street Coffee House, no less; I believe he would be capable of going to the original itself, if he could only find it. In the branch he seats himself at a table covered with waxcloth, and a pampered menial, of High-Dutch extraction and, indeed, as yet only partially extracted, lays before him a cup of coffee, a roll, and a pat of butter, all, to quote

the deity, very good. A while ago, and R. L. S. used to find the supply of butter insufficient; but he has now learned the art to exactitude, and butter and roll expire at the same moment. For this refection, he pays ten cents, or fivepence sterling.

Half an hour later, the inhabitants of Bush Street observe the same slender gentleman armed, like George Washington, with his little hatchet, splitting kindling, and breaking coal for his fire. He does this quasi-publicly upon the window-sill; but this is not to be attributed to any love of notoriety though he is indeed vain of his prowess with the hatchet (which he persists in calling an axe) and daily surprised at the perpetuation of his fingers. The reason is this: that the sill is a strong, supporting beam, and that blows of the same emphasis in other parts of his room might knock the entire shanty into hell. Thenceforth, for from three to four hours, he is engaged darkly with an inkbottle. Yet he is not blacking his boots, for the only pair that he possesses are innocent of lustre and wear the natural hue of the material turned up with caked and venerable slush. The youngest child of his landlady remarks several times a day, as this strange occupant enters or quits the house, "Dere's de author." Can it be that this bright-haired innocent has found the true clue to the mystery? The being in question is, at least, poor enough to belong to that honorable craft.

His next appearance is at the restaurant of one Donadieu, in Bush Street, between Dupont and Kearney, where a copious meal, half a bottle of wine, coffee and brandy may be procured for the sum of four bits, *alias* fifty cents, £0, 2*s*. 2*d*. sterling. The wine is put down in a whole bottleful, and it is strange and pain-

ful to observe the greed with which the gentleman in question seeks to secure the last drop of his allotted half, and the scrupulousness with which he seeks to avoid taking the first drop of the other. This is partly explained by the fact that if he were to go over the mark — bang would go a tenpence. He is again armed with a book, but his best friends will learn with pain that he seems at this hour to have deserted the more serious studies of the morning. When last observed, he was studying with apparent zest the exploits of one Rocambole by the late Vicomte Ponson du Terrail. This work, originally of prodigious dimensions, he had cut into liths or thicknesses apparently for convenience of carriage.

Then the being walks, where it is not certain. But by about half-past four a light beams from the windows of 608 Bush, and he may be observed sometimes engaged in correspondence, sometimes again plunged in the mysterious rites of the forenoon. About six he returns to the Branch Original, where he once more imbrues himself to the worth of fivepence in coffee and roll. The evening is devoted to writing and reading, and by eleven or half-past darkness closes over this weird and truculent existence.

As for coin, you see I don't spend much, only you and Henley both seem to think my work rather bosh nowadays, and I do want to make as much as I was making, that is £200; if I can do that, I can swim: last year, with my ill-health I touched only £109, that would not do, I could not fight it through on that; but on £200, as I say, I am good for the world, and can even in this quiet way save a little, and that I must do. The worst is my health; it is suspected that

I had an ague chill yesterday; I shall know by to-morrow, and you know if I am to be laid down with ague the game is pretty well lost. But I don't know; I managed to write a good deal down in Monterey, when I was pretty sickly most of the time, and, by God, I'll try, ague and all. I have to ask you frankly, when you write, to give me any good news you can, and chat a little, but *just in the meantime*, give me no bad. If I could get *Thoreau*, *Emigrant*, and *Vendetta*[64] all finished and out of my hand, I should feel like a man who had made half a year's income in a half year; but until the two last are *finished*, you see, they don't fairly count.

I am afraid I bore you sadly with this perpetual talk about my affairs; I will try and stow it; but you see it touches me nearly.

Ever yours,

R. L. S.

LIV

Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1906), the brilliant writer on Oriental subjects, had a romantic career as journalist and teacher, most of his later life being spent in Japan, of which country he became a naturalized subject. The vivid imaginative power and highly colored style of his essays appear also in his letters, of which at least three large volumes have been published. The outburst printed here is entirely characteristic of the man.

Lafcadio Hearn to Joseph Tunison

New York, 1889.

Dear Joe,—

By the time this reaches you I shall have disappeared.

The moment I get into all this beastly machinery

called "New York," I get caught in some belt and whirled around madly in all directions until I have no sense left. This city drives me crazy, or, if you prefer, crazier; and I have no peace of mind or rest of body till I get out of it. Nobody can find anybody, nothing seems to be anywhere, everything seems to be mathematics and geometry and enigmatics and riddles and confusion worse confounded: architecture and mechanics run mad. One has to live by intuition and move by steam. I think an earthquake might produce some improvement. The so-called improvements in civilization have apparently resulted in making it impossible to see, hear, or find anything out. You are improving yourselves out of the natural world. I want to get back among the monkeys and the parrots, under a violet sky among green peaks and an eternally violet and lukewarm sea, — where clothing is superfluous and reading too much of an exertion, — where everybody sleeps 14 hours out of the 24. This is frightful, nightmarish, devilish! Civilization is a hideous thing. Blessed is savagery! Surely a palm 200 feet high is a finer thing in the natural order than seventy times seven New Yorks. I came in by one door as you went out at the other. Now there are cubic miles of cut granite and iron fury between us. I shall at once find a hackman to take me away. I am sorry not to see you — but since you live in hell what can I do? I will try to find you again this summer.

Best affection,

L. H.

LV

Hearn's delightful fund of humor, comparatively rare in his essays, finds frequent expression in his intimate letters to friends.

Lafcadio Hearn to Mitchell McDonald

Tokyo, July, 1898.

Dear McDonald, —

We ran over somebody last night — and the train therefore waited in mourning upon the track during a decorous period. We did not see Tokyo till after eleven considerably. But the waiting was not unpleasant. Frogs sang as if nothing had happened, and the breeze from the sea faintly moved through the cars; — and I meditated about the sorrows and the joys of life by turns, and smoked, and thanked the gods for many things, — including the existence of yourself and Dr. Hall. I was not unfortunate enough to see what had been killed, — or the consequences to friends and acquaintances; and feeling there was no more pain for that person, I smoked in peace — though not without a prayer to the gods to pardon my want of seriousness.

Altogether I felt extremely happy, in spite of the delay. The day had been so glorious, — especially subsequent to the removal of a small h—l, containing several myriads of lost souls, from the left side of my lower jaw.

Reaching home, I used some of that absolutely wonderful medicine. It was a great and grateful surprise. (I am not trying to say much about the kindness of the gift — that would be no use.) After having used

it, for the first time, I made a tactile investigation without fear, and found —

What do you think?

Guess!

Well, I found that — *the wrong one had been pulled*, — No. 3 instead of No. 2.

I don't say that No. 3 did n't deserve its fate. But it had never been openly aggressive. It had struggled to perform its duties under disadvantageous circumstances: its character had been modest and shrinking. No. 2 had been, on the contrary, Mt. Vesuvius, the last great Japanese earthquake, the tidal wave of '96, and the seventh chamber of the Inferno, all in mathematical combination. It — Mt. Vesuvius, etc. — is still with me, and although to-day astonished into quiescence, is far from being extinct. The medicine keeps it still for the time. You will see that I have been destined to experience strange adventures.

Hope I may be able to see you again *soon*, — 4th, if possible. Love to you and all kind wishes to everybody.

LAFCADIO.

LVI

A recently published volume of selected letters of William Vaughn Moody (1869–1910), the American poet whose early death has been so much lamented, shows him to have been a versatile and vivacious correspondent, worthy to be ranked with the best modern letter-writers. The specimen quoted here is rich in original touches, and is full of individuality.

William Vaughn Moody to Daniel Gregory Mason

CHICAGO, Feb. 16, 1896.

DEAR DAN, —

I have just heard from your sister-in-law of your enforced furlough. I am not going to help you curse your luck, knowing your native capabilities in that direction to be perfectly adequate, but my Methodist training urges me to give you an epistolary hand-grasp, the purport of which is "*Keep your sand.*" I could say other things, not utterly pharisaical. I could say what I have often said to myself, — with a rather reedy tremolo perhaps, but swelling sometimes into a respectable diapason: "The dark cellar ripens the wine." And meanwhile, after one's eyes get used to the dirty light, and one's feet to the mildew, a cellar has its compensations. I have found beetles of the most interesting proclivities, mice altogether comradely and persuadable, and forgotten potatoes that sprouted toward the crack of sunshine with a wan maiden grace not seen above. I don't want to pose as resourceful, but I have seen what I have seen.

The metaphor is however happily inexact in your case, with Milton to retire to and Cambridge humming melodiously on the horizon. If you can only throttle your Daemon, or make him forego his leonine admonition, "Accomplish," and roar you as any sucking dove the sweet vocable "Be," — you ought to live. I have got mine trained to that, pardee! and his voice grows not untunable. I pick up shreds of comfort out of this or that one of God's ash-barrels.

Yesterday I was skating on a patch of ice in the park, and under a poverty-stricken sky flying a piti-

ful rag of sunset. Some little muckers were guying a slim raw-boned Irish girl of fifteen, who circled and darted under their banter with complete unconcern. She was in the fledgling stage, all legs and arms, tall and adorably awkward, with a huge hat full of rusty feathers, thin skirts tucked up above spindling ankles, and a gay aplomb and swing in the body that was ravishing. We caught hands in midflight, and skated for an hour, almost alone and quite silent, while the rag of sunset rotted to pieces. I have had few sensations in life that I would exchange for the warmth of her hand through the ragged glove, and the pathetic curve of the half-formed breast where the back of my wrist touched her body. I came away mystically shaken and elate. It is thus the angels converse. She was something absolutely authentic, new, and inexpressible, something which only nature could mix for the heart's intoxication, a compound of ragamuffin, pal, mistress, nun, sister, harlequin, outcast, and bird of God, — with something else bafflingly suffused, something ridiculous and frail and savage and tender. With a world offering such rencontres, such aery strifes and adventures, who would not live a thousand years stone dumb? I would, for one — until my mood changes and I come to think on the shut lid and granite lip of him who has done with sunsets and skating, and has turned away his face from all manner of Irish. I am supported by a conviction that at an auction on the steps of the great white Throne, I shall bring more in the first mood than the second — by several harps and a stray dulcimer.

I thoroughly envy you your stay at Milton — wrist, Daemon, and all. You must send me a lengthy ac-

count of the state of things in Cambridge. . . . If the wrist forbids writing, employ a typewriter of the most fashionable tint — I will pay all expenses and stand the breakage. I stipulate that you shall avoid blondes however; they are fragile.

WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY.

LVII

Charles W. Eliot (1834–), President Emeritus of Harvard College, educator and publicist of international reputation, writes in answer to a question as to his part in initiating and developing the study of English in American schools and colleges. More than any one else, he is responsible for placing English in its proper position as a major study in the curriculum of our educational institutions.

Charles W. Eliot to ———

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,
February 4, 1913.

MY DEAR SIR: —

In writing a history of college entrance requirements in English, I think you would do well to adhere closely to the announcements made in the college catalogues, such as those you quote in your letter of February third. Of course those announcements were generally the product of preceding discussions in college faculties, or of the opinions of some college executive, or executive board.

As to the Harvard requirements, you are right in thinking that I brought the subject to the attention of the Harvard Faculty in 1869–70, and procured the appointment of Mr. John Richard Dennett as Assistant Professor of Rhetoric. He served from 1869 to

1872 ; and was followed in 1872 by Adams Sherman Hill, with the same title; but in 1876 Mr. Hill succeeded Professor Francis James Child as Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, taking charge of the English Composition in the College, while Professor Child was advanced to good work in literature. Professor Dennett was an advocate of requirements in English, and assisted in the adoption of the first Harvard requirements ; but it was Professor Adams Sherman Hill who had more to do than anybody else with the shaping of the Harvard requirements for ten years.

As to the motives which determined the Harvard requirements during the '70s and '80s, they were chiefly the hope of improving the teaching of English in the secondary schools, and the belief that college instruction in English, language and literature, could be much advanced if the elements thereof had been mastered before the boys came to college. It has turned out that college instruction in English has been greatly improved and enlarged ; but to this day the instruction in English in the secondary schools leaves much to be desired, or rather, many young men arrive at the portals of the colleges without having acquired the elements of correct speech and writing. On the whole, however, the introduction of English into college requirements for admission has worked well both for the colleges and the schools, and the beneficial influence is still at work.

Sincerely yours,

CHARLES W. ELIOT.

LVIII

Dr. Henry van Dyke, the well-known essayist and poet, writes to congratulate his friend, Mr. Madison Cawein, on the appearance of a new and brilliant volume of verse.

Henry van Dyke to Madison Cawein

GRAND HOTEL ALPINA, GSTAAD.

MY DEAR MADISON CAWEIN, —

Some procrastinating imp must have slipped into my fountain pen, to make me put off for so long a time the warm and hearty thanks which I have owed you since you sent me your *New Poems*. The other little volume by your young admirer had some pretty touches and sweet notes in it, — but here comes the master-lyrist and the disciple fades. This new book of yours is extraordinarily rich in music and colour. It is in these bits of pure song and absolute picture that I think you at your best. You have often words so vivid that they seem to convey an actual form, colour, movement, to the page: and you have sometimes cadences so delicately melodious that they seem to carry music with them. Next to this I put your elfin fancy, — for example as it plays in "Witchery." In this volume your lyrics "with a story to tell" are very different in tone. There is a strong contrast between the Italian Renaissance of "That Night when I came to the Grange," and the pure Kentucky of "The Old Gate made of Pickets," and the *anywhere* of "Tramps." But each one has its own kind of imaginative passion. You tend to the intense in your poetry, — always, — and sometimes I think you agitate Nature a little too much with piercing adjectives and violent

verbs. She has her wild moods, her fantastic hours, and these you render wonderfully. But most of the time she is as simple as a milk-maid and as great as the Venus of Melos, — sure of herself, inexhaustible, a little lazy, and full of intimate and tranquil charm. I don't mean to say that you fail to see or to express this; but now and then you yield to the temptation to make her scream, — you "stab" the haws with a sunbeam, — or you give the innocent grasshopper a dagger, — or you make the poor bat very, very drunk. This is naughty, Madison, naughty, naughty! But I'll forgive you all these agitating escapades when you can write such a couplet as,

> "While from a curved and azure jar
> She poured the white moon and a star."

The sonnet sequence at the end of the book *Mutatis Mutandis* is full of curious strength. You have done well to use the double rhyme, the feminine ending, to mark the change of manner with the change of form. This is not like any of your other work, but it is very interesting, picturesque, and mordant. Sometimes I think the next famous poetry will be satire, and sometimes I think satire can never be great poetry.

But I congratulate you warmly on the book, — you have never made a better, — and I thank you for writing it and sending it to me.

Gertrude gives glowing accounts of your doings at Annisquam. Evidently you have all had a hilarious, resplendent, and expansive time. I shall write to her soon to narrate our placid experiences among the eternal hills of snow. Meantime our ship is getting

ready, for we sail on La Savoie, on the 4th of September, for home, — and it 's glad we 'll be to get there.

Yours ever,

HENRY VAN DYKE.

August 23, 1909.

LIX

This is an admirable example of the best type of modern business letter: courteous, lucid, and very much to the point.

Hart, Schaffner & Marx to The John R. Jones Company

CHICAGO, January 23, 1913.

GENTLEMEN: —

It is our impression that you make very little use of newspaper space. We may be wrong in that idea, but you ask for so few electrotypes and we see so few papers, that we think you are not great believers in newspaper space.

Examples make the best arguments, and we are therefore mailing some newspapers showing the use of space by merchants in every corner of the country. We believe the general conditions under which you operate are not different from theirs.

The fact that you asked the other day for a personal letter indicates that you believe in that form of publicity. There is none better, providing you link it with newspaper copy. Advertising experts everywhere agree that newspaper advertising, even where the medium is only fairly efficient, is the best means of getting trade.

In the old days, the merchant depended on his per-

sonality, his acquaintances, for trade. You know how times have changed, how people read the newspapers, how men depend on publicity, how they look in the daily paper not only for general news, but news of "where to buy."

When the spring season opens up, we are going to take the liberty of sending you some fine, new, attractive newspaper illustrations, together with some copy particularly suited to your people. We hope you will permit us to do this, and that you will be willing to give us some information about your trade, your newspapers, and the things you want to feature specially. We shall be glad to have your ideas on the subject. It is only because we think you can sell more goods under this plan that we mention it.

Yours truly,

HART, SCHAFFNER & MARX.

LX

This letter gives a happy and graceful touch to what, at bottom, is a simple matter of business.

Houghton Mifflin Company to Honorable Woodrow Wilson

December 18th, 1912.

To His Excellency, Woodrow Wilson,
Governor of New Jersey,
Princeton, N.J.

DEAR MR. WILSON, —

It is with reluctance that we add to the burden of your correspondence. There is, however, a matter concerning which we very much wish to have your authorization.

We are extremely desirous of publishing upon the fourth of March next, in our series of Riverside Press special limited editions, an edition of some four or five hundred copies of the first three papers in your "Mere Literature," — to wit, "Mere Literature," "The Author Himself," and "The Author and His Friends." These three essays, taken by themselves, present, we believe, with persuasiveness and authority a point of view that is in the deepest sense of the word timely.

We enclose a list of the books that have already appeared in the series, which will perhaps give you some notion of its scope and aim. It is not with us primarily a commercial undertaking, but in a large measure a labor of love in which we strive to give a perfect bookish embodiment to the things in literature that are of quality and distinction.

Henry James has somewhere a phrase to the effect that Lowell's diplomatic success was the *revanche* of letters. May we say that a similar feeling is entertained, we think, by men of letters everywhere in regard to the result of the last presidential election. This gives, we think, a peculiar fitness to the publication that we are proposing.

Believe us,

Faithfully yours,

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY.

NOTES

PAGE

4 1. **Rampired**: fortified with a rampart.

4 2. Sir Philip Sidney's mother was Mary, sister of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who was Queen Elizabeth's favorite.

5 3. **Labes generis**: a degenerate of your race.

7 4. Pope's translation of the *Iliad* was completed in 1720, and his *Odyssey* in 1725.

7 5. **Harley, Earl of Oxford** (1661–1724), was made Lord High Treasurer in 1712, under Queen Anne, but lost his office at the accession of George I. He and Swift were on intimate terms.

8 6. A reference to **Timon,** the Greek misanthropist, and the chief character in the Shakespearean play, *Timon of Athens.*

9 7. **Mr. Bays,** a satiric representation of John Dryden (1631–1700), was the principal figure in a burlesque comedy, *The Rehearsal* (1682), written by the Duke of Buckingham and others.

9 8. "It is not given to every one to have a nose."

9 9. **Horace** (65 B.C.–8 B.C.) was a Latin author famous for his Odes, Satires, and Epistles. Many familiar quotations are taken from his works.

11 10. **Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke** (1678–1751), after a rapid rise to political power, planned, in 1714, to restore the Stuart family to the throne. After the accession of George I, he was impeached and his name was erased from the roll of peers. He was, however, pardoned in 1723, and his estates were restored in 1725. He returned to his country home at Dawley, near Uxbridge, where he frequently entertained Pope and Swift. His philosophy had a great influence on Pope, who made it the basis of his *Essay on Man.*

11 11. **Lepidus, Mark Antony,** and **Octavius** (afterwards the Emperor Augustus) formed, in B.C. 43, a triumvirate for the division of the Roman world.

12 12. The **Dunciad,** Pope's brilliant but scurrilous satiric attack on the poetasters of his time, was published first in 1728.

12 13. **John Arbuthnot** (1667–1735), physician and author, was distinguished by Pope in his witty *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.*

18 14. The **Literæ Humaniores** were the classical languages, Latin and Greek.

19 15. **Operam et oleum**: labor and oil.

PAGE

19 16. **Port Royal:** a lay community established in Paris in 1633, celebrated because of the famous scholars who frequented it and because of the educational books edited by them for its school.

21 17. " The conqueror of the conqueror of the world."

24 18. This is a reference to **Lord Bute,** a favorite of the Queen, hated because he was a Scotchman. He became Minister in 1762.

24 19. **Lord George Sackville** (1716–85), later known as **Lord George Germain,** a favorite of George III, was generally despised because of his cowardice as a general.

24 20. **George III,** born in 1738, became king in 1760 on the death of his grandfather, George II.

25 21. **The Duke of Newcastle** (1692–1768), a prominent statesman who held the position of Secretary of State from 1722 to 1752, was, at this time, joint head of the Government with William Pitt.

25 22. **Le Médecin malgré lui:** a reference to Molière's famous play. A literal translation is " The Physician beside Himself."

25 23. The burial of George II, who had died on October 25, 1760.

25 24. The funeral took place, like all royal ceremonies of the kind, in Westminster Abbey.

26 25. **The Duke of Cumberland,** the second son of George II and therefore the uncle of George III, was an unsuccessful general, who had earned the nickname of the " Bloody Butcher."

27 26. **Marshal Daun** (1705–66), leader of the armies of France and Austria against Frederick the Great, after several brilliant victories was overwhelmed in 1760, and lost prestige as a commander.

28 27. Of this Royal Academy, established in 1770, Sir Joshua Reynolds was made the first President.

29 28. **George Colman** (1732–94), was a minor dramatist of the period.

31 29. Johnson had assailed Milton in his *Life of Milton,* included in his well-known *Lives of the Poets.*

33 30. Cowper's blank-verse translation of Homer was published in 1791.

38 31. Of Crabbe's earlier poems, **The Village** appeared in 1783 and **The Library** in 1781.

44 32. **John Dennis** (1657–1734), a savage critic of the Queen Anne period, died considerably before the age of ninety.

44 33. **James Henry Leigh Hunt** (1784–1859), a poet and journalist, was sentenced in 1811 to two years' imprisonment for libel on the Prince Regent.

44 34. **James Montgomery** (1771–1854), a minor poet, was imprisoned in 1796 for some obnoxious political articles printed in a paper of which he was the editor.

PAGE

45 35. **Christie's** was, and is still, a famous London auction-room.

46 36. Wordsworth's **Laodamia,** one of his few poems on classical subjects, was published in 1815.

47 37. **Samuel Lisle Bowles** (1762–1850), a clergyman who had edited the works of Pope, carried on with Byron a prolonged controversy, in which Byron defended the character and poetry of his favorite English poet.

50 38. This refers to a savage attack on Robert Southey and Robert, Viscount Castlereagh, in the Introduction to *Don Juan.*

50 39. **Ugo Foscolo** (1778–1827), an Italian patriot and author, had taken refuge in England in 1816.

50 40. Byron's **Childe Harold** had appeared in four cantos, the first two in 1812, the second in 1816, and the third in 1817.

51 41. " To please women and the crowd."

51 42. An allusion to *Macbeth's* "the sear, the yellow leaf."

53 43. Keats's **Endymion** had appeared in 1818.

56 44. Byron's **Marino Faliero** (1819) was a tragedy dealing with a remarkable incident in Venetian history.

56 45. Southey's **Curse of Kehama,** an epic poem, had appeared in 1810.

57 46. **Melincourt** (1818) was one of Peacock's characteristic novels.

57 47. **Circean palace:** an allusion to the enchantress Circe, visited by Odysseus on his voyage home from Troy. She had the power of turning men into swine.

63 48. Macaulay had begun his connection with the *Edinburgh Review,* which had been founded by Sydney Smith and others in 1802, by contributing in 1825 his famous *Essay on Milton.*

70 49. A parody of Wordsworth's "still sad music of humanity," in his *Tintern Abbey.*

72 50. **James Spedding** (1808–81), an essayist and miscellaneous writer, is remembered chiefly for his elaborate edition of the works of Sir Francis Bacon.

73 51. **Jeremy Taylor** (1613–67) was an eloquent and impassioned preacher, who published many controversial tracts.

73 52. **Isaac Barrow** (1630–77) was an eminent scholar and divine.

73 53. **Robert South** (1634–1716) was, like Taylor and Barrow, a prominent clergyman, and one of the wittiest of English sermonizers.

75 54. Carlyle's **Heroes and Hero-Worship** was given first as a series of lectures in 1837, and published in 1841.

76 55. Thackeray's **Henry Esmond,** an historical novel of the age of Queen Anne, was published in 1852.

78 56. Dickens's first volume had been called *Sketches by Boz* (1836), and he accepted the nickname as his own.

PAGE

87 **57.** Thoreau's cabin was located on Walden Pond, near Concord, Massachusetts.

88 **58.** This is a reference to Lowell's second collection of *Biglow Papers*, published in the *Atlantic* during 1862.

92 **59. Dapprimo**: first of all.

92 **60.** Emerson's **Brahma** is a short poem of some obscurity of meaning, beginning,

> "If the red slayer think he slays,
> Or if the slain think he is slain."

93 **61. Albert Pike** (1809–91) was an American poet, born in Boston, who imitated Coleridge and Keats.

94 **62.** The Browning love-letters were first printed in 1889.

95 **63.** Keats's **Eve of St. Agnes** appeared in 1820.

99 **64.** These titles refer to essays on which Stevenson was then working.

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