

on my shoes and stockings before that individual, I thought perhaps you might have objections to doing so."

"And so would you, ma'am," laughed Angela. "If not, why did you drop down in such a fine hurry when you remembered, just now, that you hadn't got them on?"

"Thought it looked graceful," was the cool answer. "But come along. Let's get back to the beach while we can. This neighbourhood is evidently not as desirable a dressing-room as I had hoped. Besides, I have for some time past been fascinated by that rocky point yonder, and I must see what view it hides from us on the other side."

"The very thing I also have been wishing immensely," exclaimed Dolly.

"Then, my dear, why did you not say so?"

"Because you seemed to be so in love—"

"So in what?" suddenly interrupted Miss Crofton.

"So in love with playing mermaid," continued Dorothy, quietly, but with her brown eyes very round with surprise at the unexpected interruption.

"O-oh, ye-es," slowly; then with a short laugh, "but I'm out of love with it now. Come along."

With that injunction to her companions, she sprang from her slippery perch on to an equally slippery stepping-stone with as much ease as though she were jumping from a spring-board on to a sanded floor, and had her feet once more clad in their obnoxious coverings before her more timid and less agile friends had even reached the shore. Very soon, however, they were all once more shod, and were running races towards that jutting-out portion of the cliff which had excited their curiosity.

Angela was the first to round the point. Kathleen had lingered to give Dorothy instruction in throwing stones so as to make them skim and bound on the water. But the lessons were quite wasted on poor Dolly. Making "ducks and drakes" was an art quite beyond her powers. Kathleen threw beauties. Three, four, and even five rebounds rewarded her skill.

"You really ought to have been a boy instead of a girl, Kathy," said Dorothy, half laughing, half surprised, at her friend's interest in her present amusement. "You really ought."

"Faix thin, isn't it meself that's always wishing I was that same!"

"And why? So that you might spend your days in throwing stones and whistling?" asked Angela.

"Ay, me darlint, an' it's you that have been the clever one to hit the right nail on the head. But come along. What did you find the other side of the corner? Biddy Malone's pig, or what?"

"Well, something like a pig in a poke, I believe you will say, when you see," was the answer that still further aroused her companions' curiosity. But as they could coax nothing more definite out of her, they did the next best thing

by hurrying on to make discoveries for themselves.

"What a horrid shame!" cried Kathleen, as, pulling Dolly with her, she bounded round the point in eager anticipation of some hitherto unseemly and romantic view.

There was no view at all!

There was a lofty cave, and that was all, the opposite side of which stood forward nearly into the water, even now at low tide.

"Never mind," said Dorothy, quickly recovering from the first shock of disappointment. "Let us go on, and see what the next turn will show us."

The next turn was as unsatisfying as the first, indeed more so, for the curve inwards was far shallower, and opened upwards almost perpendicularly to the top of the rocks. They went on, and



"WHAT WILL INTEREST HER MOST?"

then they could go no further, for they had advanced to within a few yards of a bold, rocky headland that was already washed by breakers. Meantime this third curve was beautiful enough in itself to make amends for their disappointments. It was a perfect seaside bower, with a floor of firm white sand, and curving walls and roof that shone as if they had been inlaid with silver. A literal treasure trove of shells lay like a *parqueterie* border round the sides, and soon all three girls were engaged in an eager collection of beauties or curiosities. Lunch followed.

"And it is not at all a bad lunch, either," exclaimed Kathleen, at the same time surreptitiously burying in the sand the greater part of a jam tart which she had insisted upon having, in spite of its uninviting appearance and Dolly's remonstrances, but of which she found the first mouthful a good deal more than enough.

Having disposed of the undesirable

dainty, she repeated her remark, further adding, "that she did not mind accepting another egg and salted sandwich, if Do-o'hy had it to bestow."

"What! After the tartlet?" asked Angela, "I thought you said that was to be 'a topper.'"

"And I just did then. But I find it a topper and a half, me dear. And so—and so—well now I'll condescend to a downer to take the taste out!"

"And that," said Dorothy, handing her friend the desired eatables, and then shaking out her basket, "that finishes up our—"

"Victuals," interrupted Kathleen. "I know that's an English word, for I learned it of an Englishman on board the steamer the other day, coming over. He said he never had much of a turn for no victuals aboard a boat. There! have I not remembered that well?"

"Perfectly. I wonder whether you have such a memory for pretty things as you have for ugly ones."

"I am afraid not, Dolly ashore. Pretty things never seem to my mind to have any edges for one's memory to catch hold of. They are all polish and smoothness, and my brain slips off them like water off a duck's back. And, talking of water, do you see that it has actually begun to rain again. I did think we were going to have one fine day. Well, well, we must be trudging homewards, or we shall have you laid up with a cold, Molly, my darling."

"Oh, no, this little light rain won't hurt me," answered Dorothy, unfortunately. "I am quite strong again now, and I do want to try to find another shell like that greenish one of Angie's."

"Besides," said Angela, "the rain has only just begun, and it looks much more like a passing shower than anything else. If we go on amusing ourselves here a while longer, we shall most likely have our walk home in sunshine again."

Kathleen looked doubtful. She looked at the clouds and she looked at Dorothy and her sister. But they both wished to linger. Kathleen was not yet seventeen, and pleasure is pleasanter than prudence. They remained in the cave.

(To be continued.)

THE ART OF LETTER-WRITING.

ON sitting down to write a letter the first thing you should do is to ask yourself—"How shall I best please the individual to whom I write? What will interest her most? How may I relieve her of any feeling of anxiety?" Put these questions to yourself, and use your common sense; and be sure your letter will gratify the receiver. The writing of one with such an end in view occupies time well-spent; and you will have carried out faithfully the second grand principle—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

First of all, you should never lay aside your dictionary till your spelling difficulties are all mastered. Our language is very arbitrary, and there is no absolute rule as regards the

dropping or retention of the middle "e" of words that end with "able," and those also that end with "ment"; and in the doubling of "t's," "r's," "l's," and "p's." If you have a letter to write, no matter to whom, look out every word rather than spell incorrectly; the trouble taken will impress it on your memory.

As regards the writing itself, remember that it is a vulgar, ill-bred thing to do to form your letters incorrectly; it is not only an evidence of bad taste and awkwardness, but it is an act of discourtesy to the person addressed. It seems as though you thought that any scrawl would be sufficiently good, and you put your friend to inconvenience when giving the trouble of deciphering your unsightly hieroglyphics. It cannot be polite to give needless trouble; and thus, in sending an ill-written and ill-spelt letter, you have broken that great "law of kindness," which is the very foundation of all "good breeding." Do not let a silly feeling of vanity induce you to make "pot hooks and hangers" after your own eccentric fancy, nor elaborate flourishes, which only occupy needless space and spoil the style of your writing. When you can copy the copper-plate pattern given in your copy-books with perfect facility, then take some good running hand that you admire, and imitate what you please in that, to modify a little the copy-book style which you have acquired.

Having accomplished the difficulties of spelling and of caligraphy, you should practise the writing of ordinary notes, such as those of invitation or acceptance of evening entertainments. Turn the sentences and say the same thing in every possible variety of way; but take care to complete your sentences, leave nothing elliptical nor equivocal. Avoid all abbreviations, such as "I'm," "yr," "wd," and so forth, it is a kind of impertinent familiarity; a free-and-easy style that is by no means ladylike, nor even respectful.

You may very naturally ask why I pronounce abbreviations to be vulgar. I may explain the reason by comparing the off-hand style of representing a word of half-a-dozen letters by two, to the recognition of an acquaintance by a short nod of the head, instead of a polite bow. Suppose yourself ushered into a drawing-room, and instead of a graceful inclination, imagine yourself giving a short nod to the assembled guests, in return to their courteous salutations. How unseemly it would be, I scarcely need to say, and the same rule that forbids the one breach of politeness, forbids the others. Why? Because it is an impertinent familiarity which, uninvited, you force upon other. To be guilty of this, is to lower yourself, and detract from that respectful regard which you might all win; more than this—it is offensive to others.

But there are few rules that admit of no exceptions, and while abbreviations are ill-bred in a private letter, they are quite admissible in trade correspondence. "Time is money," and neither familiarity, nor discourtesy is understood by short signs and diminished words, written at the utmost speed; in these days when steam carriages cannot convey our business messages sufficiently fast, and telegraphs and telephones are brought into requisition.

Avoid slang expressions in writing as much as in speaking. Try to write sound grammatical English, if you cannot attain to a still higher and more elegant style. There is an evidence of a want of self-respect in writing or speaking in a careless, slip-slop, anyhow manner. Do not end your sentences with little pronouns, nor ever confound the imperfect tense with the past participle, and make no mistakes about the subjunctive mood.

I am not going to give you a lesson in

grammar; you have one at home, and need only to study it with attention, to understand the allusions to it which I have made, and to know as much about it as I can tell you.

Having mastered the first three difficulties in the way of letter-writing—difficulties which you are disposed to weigh far too lightly—the subject matter of your letter, and the mode of address is next to be considered.

Punctuation is little understood by ordinary letter-writers, and it occasions much difficulty to the reader. Besides, the meaning of a sentence may be completely altered, or, at least, mystified, by placing a stop in the wrong place. Always place commas before and after a parenthesis, and never forget your full stops. If the "i" needed not a dot, and the "t" a cross, you would not have been taught to add them. In any case, your business is to make your writing as legible as possible, so as to save all trouble to the reader.

And now I will suppose that, prepared at all points so far, you are waiting, pen in hand, to commence an epistle. Collect your thoughts for a moment. If not a little note, the date must be written at the top of the page, and your present address in full, which latter must never be omitted in any letter, as former letters may be mislaid and the address forgotten, and so the omission on your part may give trouble and delay an answer. Should a journey or sickness be in question, you should give the hour, as well as the day—for good news at a certain time of the day might give hope of permanent recovery, and show some crisis to be past; and if you have just arrived from a journey, those you have left behind will like to know all such little particulars. Remember that nothing is insignificant to those who care for you, and nothing should be too troublesome for you to do to reward their interest and affection. Do not make your letter like a washerwoman's list, or a grocer's bill by writing the year with a long stroke, and the last two figures only, nor substitute a mere numeral for the name of the current month. This is a very vulgar style—write it in full.

The superscription being now completed, we begin with the first part of your letter. Consider to whom you are writing; if to one of your own immediate family—father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, or grand-parents, never omit the word "my," whether it be followed only with "dear" or any term of a more demonstrative character; it is due to the near tie of blood, and it would be in extremely bad taste to omit it. Consider, if you have just left home, what news will be most welcome, *i.e.*, that of your safe arrival, a little account of the journey, of your reception, of how your hosts are, and whom you have met, how you are lodged, and what plans, if any, have been formed for your business-arrangements or for your entertainment. Let your writing be clear, let the size of your hand be suited to the reader for whom it is designed. If an old person (as for a child), it should be larger than for anyone else; otherwise let it rather be small and round, than large and scrawled. I have seen many hands that would cover the whole length of a line with two words, they should be very significant and contain very good news indeed to be worth so much valuable space! It is so disappointing to those who care for the news you could send, to see an empty sheet of paper; which, had the writer been more thoughtfully kind, and willing to take a little trouble to please, might have given so much satisfaction to a whole family party.

The second part of your letter should be devoted to inquiries and expressions of interest about those you have left behind. Were any of them ailing in health? Were any other-

wise in anxiety or distress? Had any one of them engaged in any work or enterprise? Is there anything which you might do for them in your absence? Make your inquiries, express your sympathy, offer your services, or give your advice, if seemly so to do. Let them see that you are not wholly absorbed with your own amusements and personal interests, that you do not send them any sort of an epistle, just because you had to write, and evidently grudged the miserable pittance of news, and of time you squeezed out of your ample leisure to write. Alas! how often has a letter of this sorry description given a pang, untold to any sympathizing ear, to one who perhaps provided the means of every pleasure which the thankless writer enjoyed!

Lastly, tell, so far as you may be able, when you hope to write next, where the answer is to be addressed, and give any messages that your hosts may wish to convey through you. Remember to send loves and kind remembrances to each and all, but do not "lump" either of your parents in the "all" to whom you may send them. They should always have a distinct and separate recognition, and, as a rule, personal mention is always more appreciated by every one, because more kind, than that made in mere general and collective terms. In signing your name, or pet name, if writing to any of the near relatives before enumerated, be careful never to omit the mention of your own relationship to the person you address; *i.e.*, "Your affectionate daughter—sister—niece." Never sign yourself "Yours affectionately," for this would be unseemly and a making light, as it were, of your ties of near and dear relationship to them. You will observe how, throughout the whole of the rules which I have prescribed for you, that every one of them, and the whole composition of the letter suggested, is based on that golden "law of kindness" which I told you was the very foundation of all good breeding.

And now, suppose that, instead of writing the first letter yourself, you have one to answer. Observe whether any questions have been asked, and begin by answering them all, at once. Never forget to do so. There is also another fault into which some letter-writers fall—instead of giving any news, they merely recapitulate the scraps of information received in the letter they are answering.

For example, they say, "It must be very pleasant to you to have your aunt with you; and what a surprise such and such an event must have been! No doubt you feel glad that so-and-so," &c., "and your plan of doing so-and-so will doubtless prove a good one," and so on, through a most uninteresting and truly aggravating letter, winding up with repetitions, just as it began. Some notice of news received and sympathy expressed, as the case may be, is a very good thing, but not to the exclusion of news.

In directing a letter, if to a visitor in the house of another person, never fail to add the owner's name to the address. Thus:—

Miss B—,
Care of John K—, Esq.,
Warrendale,
&c., &c.

And observe, also, do not abbreviate the words "Care of" to "c/o," for this is altogether in commercial style and very unladylike.

And now I leave my rules and illustrations for the earnest and kindly consideration of my readers, begging them never to fall into the grave error of imagining that anything is but a trifle, and beneath their consideration, for

"Grains of sand the mountains make,
And atoms infinity."

S. F. A. CAULFIELD.