

Haggard, and pale, and worn,
 With the superscription of shame and scorn ;
 Young, yet so old by the lamp's dismal light.
 Stitching through all the long day and hot night,
 While shadows like monsters fantastic fall
 Upon the bare floor and across the wall.
 With ruined heart and soul,
 To whom happy youth, and pleasure, and love,
 In ever so scanty a dole,
 The hope below and the hope above,
 Came never, are all unknown ; instead,
 Curses and squalor, and madness for bread !
 Stitching, with feverish blood-shot eyes,
 At a pearl-woven lustrous robe which lies
 Like a ray of moonlight pure and cool,
 Tinging the brow of some noisome pool :
 In the reeking garret. The woman sits
 Among her fellows, while round them flits
 Death, with his minister, fell Disease,
 The only angel for such as these !

Lo, the Judge at the door
 Waits with a recompense searching and sore
 For contented ignorance, wealth abused,
 Work undone, and talents disused !
 O ye daughters that are at ease !
 At *your* hands He will require
 The unsaved souls of such as these,
 That serve for Satan's hire.
 Go forth and help them, while ye may,
 Up from the pit to the light of day ;
 Give of your time, your wealth, your youth,
 To teach your wretched sisters the Truth.
 Better than dress, or than flattery,
 A whispered blessing from these shall be ;
 Better than beauty, or wealth or power,
 The prayers of such in your dying hour ;
 Better than all the world hath given,
 The sweet "Well done !" as ye enter heaven.

SHIRLEY WYNNE.

 ON THE ENDINGS OF LETTERS.


HAT the end crowns the work is a true saying, and nowhere is its truth more apparent than in the matter of ending a letter. The most bald, disjointed epistle is sometimes raised from the low level of the commonplace by a felicitous and smooth-flowing termination, while, on the

other hand, a really admirable piece of epistolary composition may be mulcted in half its effect if the writer ends up with a "I must now conclude, as the post is going out."

Apropos of this particular termination, we may remark that we ourselves should be disposed to warn our readers against ever saying anything about "now concluding."

In all letters of form or courtesy, they should strive so to frame their communications that their signatures should constitute the closing words of the final sentence, and this final sentence be intimately connected with the body of the letter.

The following instances, taken at random from some of the best letters extant in the English language, will exemplify our meaning.

Samuel Johnson, in that famous letter to Lord Chesterfield in which he so indignantly denies that he is under any obligation to the noble lord, ends thus:—

"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,
 "SAMUEL JOHNSON."

Walter Savage Landor, in an irate letter to Lord Normanby, concludes thus:—

"We are both of us old men, my lord, and are verging on decrepitude and imbecility, else my note might be more energetic. I am not unobservant of distinctions. You by the favour of a minister are Marquis of Normanby, I by the grace of God am,

"WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR."

Then again, Pope, writing to Mrs. Arabella Fermor about his poem the "Rape of the Lock," winds up thus:—

"If this poem had as many graces as there are in your person or in your mind, yet I could never hope it should pass through the world half so uncensured as you have done. But let its fortunes be what it will, mine is happy enough to have given me this occasion of assuring you that I am, with the truest esteem, madam, your most obedient, humble Servant,

"A. POPE."

Turn also to that remarkable specimen of irony, the letter sent to Oliver Cromwell by the author of "Killing no Murder." The whole of this curious epistle is devoted to pointing out the various benefits which will accrue to the nation on Cromwell's death, and it closes thus:—

"That your Highness may be speedily in this security is the universal wish of your grateful country ; this is the desire and prayer of the good and of the bad, and, it may be, is the only thing wherein all sects and factions do agree in their devotion, and it is our only common prayer. But among all that put in their request and supplication for your Highness's speedy deliverance from all earthly troubles, none is more assiduous nor more fervent than he that, with the rest of the nation, hath the honour to be (may it please your Highness) your Highness's present slave and vassal,

"THE AUTHOR OF 'KILLING NO MURDER.'"

In every one of the above instances the letter runs on naturally to its conclusion, and the impression is given that the writer has finished saying all that he wants to say.

Now, in writing to strangers, whether in the spirit of friendliness or of anger, this is just the sort of impression we wish to convey. In letters, therefore, to persons with whom we are not intimate we should aim

at endings of this sort. When, however, we are writing to near friends, and our letter may be one of an interminable series, we can be far more careless about the way in which we end it. We may break off as abruptly as we please, passing from the most stirring narrative of public events to a simple good-bye, good night, farewell, &c. This is what Horace Walpole constantly does in his correspondence with Sir Horace Mann.

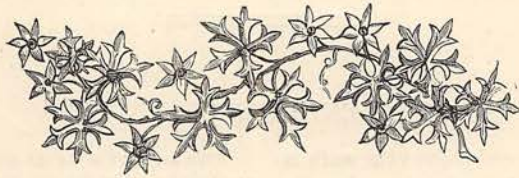
"Old Marlborough (Sarah, Dowager Duchess) is dying—but who can tell? Last year she had lain a great while ill without speaking; her physician said, 'She must be blistered or she will die.' She called out, 'I won't be blistered, and I won't die!' If she takes the same resolution now, I don't believe she will. Adieu, my dear child; I have but room to say, yours ever,

"HORACE WALPOLE."

It will be seen that we have drawn the above instances from the correspondence of a past age, but we have done so because it is among bygone genera-

tions that we look for the greatest excellence in the art of epistolary composition. At the same time, we must caution our readers against a slavish imitation of such models. For instance, it is now extremely old-fashioned to sign yourself, in an ordinary letter, "Yours obediently," or "Your obedient servant." When you are addressing strangers, even though they be superior to yourself in social position, "Yours faithfully" is the correct thing to put; while, should you be corresponding with some one with whom you are slightly acquainted, "Yours sincerely" or "Yours truly" will be most appropriate. Should you wish to infuse a shade more warmth into your ending, this can be effected by a transposition of the adverb and pronoun you employ, "Very sincerely yours" being a degree more genial, because less hackneyed, than "Yours very sincerely."

A. H. B.



WITNESS MY HAND.

A FENSHIRE STORY.

By the Author of "Lady Gwendolen's Tryst."

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

ERLSTON HALL.

"Let this great maxim be my virtue's guide."

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU.



Y DO NOT suppose any stranger would love Erlston Hall as I do, but the most indifferent would, I think, admit its picturesque and venerable beauty. It was built of stone—a rarity in the Fens—and stood upon what, by contrast with the surrounding level, was called high ground. The difference to the uninitiated eye

was not great, but we considered that the park had a perceptible slope from the house to the lodge, and were intensely proud of the elms and oaks that grew, if they did not flourish, in it. Time had softened the stone to a lovely grey, thick ivy clung to buttress

and chimney, gable and mullioned window, and lichen and moss tinted the time-worn walls.

The entrance-hall was low and large, panelled in dark oak, and lit by lancet-shaped windows of stained glass. One side of it was almost taken up by a huge fireplace, where in winter a fire of corresponding size threw a warm light on the rare mosaics of the floor, and in summer evergreens and beau-pots made the great bare space a bower of greenery. The staircase was of oak, black with age and curiously carved, but still more curiously worm-eaten; at least, the innumerable holes the soft tiny creatures had drilled in that hard wood always seemed to me the greater marvel of the two.

One room led out of another at Erlston in the most eccentric fashion. I know not which was the pleasantest—the cream-tinted drawing-room, gay with painted panels, where flowers bloomed and butterflies disported themselves through all the changes of the year; or the dining-room, with the great window stretching all along one side, and that the south one; or the library, bright with the morning sun; or Grace's little boudoir, brighter still with the pretty trifles that girls gather round them, and made indescribably sweet to me by the frequent presence of Grace Erlston's saint-like face. I use the word