tury fashion of viewing the matter! But it leaves out of sight the real gist of the question, the moral effects of a noble or ignoble deed, not only upon a man's own nature, but upon his country, and upon mankind generally. You cannot take a step in life—even you, in your little girlish life, Dessie,—without helping to raise or lower the moral level of mankind in your generation. But such a deed as that of Leonidas leaves its stamp, not only on the then generation, but through ages following."

"But, uncle——"

"You are not the first person to mistake shallow views of things for common-sense," he said, smiling. "Think more and talk less, Dessie, for a few years, and you will learn to appreciate better."

Dessie greatly disapproved of all this. She counted herself an original talker, well worth listening to. "Anybody can appreciate," she said flippantly. "It isn't *my* way to feel bound to admire what all the rest of the world admires."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Fitzroy; "I must differ from you, Dessie. 'Anybody' can certainly *not* appreciate. Anybody can criticise, if you will. A little mind can criticise as sharply as a great one, but only a great mind can fully appreciate."

"Appreciate the Iliad!" said Dessie.

"Precisely so," her uncle answered, looking her in the face. "A whipper-snapper of a schoolboy may criticise the Iliad—to his own satisfaction. But a cultivated and enlarged mind is needed to appreciate its beauties. Mind, I do not say that all small minds necessarily criticise. Some are willing to admire. Admiration, however, does not always mean appreciation. To *appreciate* a person or a thing, you must have power to take his or its measure, to gauge his or its depths."

"Well, it isn't my way," said Dessie, dashing headlong into self-defence, after her usual fashion,—"it isn't my way to think a thing beautiful merely because everybody else says it is beautiful. Most people do, I know; but *I* can't. Everybody at home is in despair about me, because I can't be made to run in a groove like the rest of the world, and because I must have my own particular opinions and likings. Mamma's one aim in life is to turn me out exactly like everybody else, but she never will be able."

"I was not aware before that "everybody else" was formed after precisely the same pattern," said Mr. Fitzroy dryly, handing her some cake.

"Not exactly, I suppose; but most people do and think things in a particular way, merely because other people do and think the same. Now, I can't. It is the fashion to admire the Iliad; but I can't say I admire it, merely because others do. It is the fashion to make Leonidas into a hero; but I can't profess to consider him so, merely because others do. It is the fashion to be fussy and fine-ladyish; but I can't make myself so, merely because it is the fashion. I can't help being unlike the common run of insipid young ladies. I must be free to follow my bent, and to develop into my natural shape," pursued Dessie, quite unconscious of the egotistical nature of her observations. She was so accustomed to talk thus at home, receiving tacit encouragement from her father, that she had no idea how strangely the remarks would sound in ears unused to the same. Mrs. Fitzroy became grave, and Bertie gave vent to an ironical "Hear! hear!" which Decima was too much absorbed to notice.

"I should be the last to advise you to profess to admire what you do not really admire," said Mr. Fitzroy, at the first pause for breath. "Want of power to appreciate may be regretted, but need not be concealed. Always be honest, whatever else you are."

This was not at all the impression which Dessie had desired to convey. She started off again in an eager and prolonged exposition of her own character and opinions, to which Mr. Fitzroy listened with exemplary patience, and at the close of which he lifted his eyebrows. That was all. Dessie suddenly had a sensation of being extinguished. Those expressive eyebrows spoke more plainly than words could have done. Mrs. Fitzroy looked unmistakably bored. Emmeline wore an expression of gentle pity. Bertie and Allie were laughing, and Miss Bruce's frightened blue eyes were actually studying Decima all over from head to foot.

Dessie woke to the fact that she had made a grand mistake, and had only succeeded in lowering herself in the eyes of these new relatives, before whom she so greatly desired to shine. Yes, she did desire it; there could be no doubt about the matter. Dessie counted herself sublimely indifferent to other people's opinions; but the danger of forfeiting the good opinion of her uncle and aunt showed her how much she really did care about it.

The dead pause following her own observations was quite dreadful. How long would it last? What should be said next? Dessie was not given to blushing, but she blushed now, and her colour rose higher and higher.

The silence was at length broken by Mrs. Fitzroy, in a matter-of-fact manner—

"Do you know German, Dessie?"

"Not much," Dessie answered, in a voice so subdued that her London friends would hardly have recognised her.

"Not conversationally, I suppose?"

"No, aunt Laura."

"And French?"

"O yes! I know French."

"I am glad to hear it. Miss Bruce will expect you to talk French with your cousins all lesson-time."

"Miss Bruce!" Dessie fixed her eyes upon the timid young lady in amazement. Who and what was Miss Bruce to indulge in any such expectation?

"It is the rule of the schoolroom," said Mrs. Fitzroy. "We intended to relax the rule for a short time, if you were unpractised in French conversation, but I am glad to find that the relaxation will not be necessary."

"I couldn't talk French all day," said Dessie, staring fixedly still at Miss Bruce, and causing a renewed shy droop of the young lady's eyelids. "I should not like it at all. I don't know French well enough either—not so well as *that*. I know some French, of course." Then, with renewed astonishment—"Miss Bruce!" she repeated, and paused. "Miss Bruce!"

"You will be Miss Bruce's pupil, Dessie, with Emmie and Allie."

Miss Bruce, the governess! Dessie sat lost in bewilderment. Her first distinct sensation was of gratification in the thought of learning from so soft and pliable a teacher. No question now about gaining her own way in the schoolroom. Dessie secretly congratulated herself.

"I thought Emmie and Allie had masters," she broke out, bluntly.

"For German and music. You will have the same, my dear, not because Miss Bruce could not undertake those lessons as well, but she is not strong, and I am glad to spare her fatigue."

"No English person can teach German like a native," said Miss Bruce, in her deprecating manner.

"No; perhaps not. But some say your German is like that of a native," Mrs. Fitzroy answered, smiling.

"Aunt Laura, I can't possibly talk French all day. I couldn't do it," said Dessie.

"How about the Parisian governess?" asked Mr. Fitzroy.

"Mademoiselle St. Roque? Oh, I made her talk English to me generally. I used to read French stories with her, but that is different. I could not talk French for hours. I should hate the feeling of being tied."

"I am not sure that the said feeling would be in the end hurtful," said Mr. Fitzroy.

"But I couldn't do it, uncle. I should forget every minute. I always have so much to say," expostulated Dessie. "I couldn't possibly."

"You must ask Miss Bruce's indulgence," said Mrs. Fitzroy, amused, "Her will is law in the schoolroom." Decima did not believe this assertion. "If Miss Bruce is willing to give you a few days' grace——"

"It is all a matter of practice," said Miss Bruce.

"But one couldn't have any fun talking French. It would be horrible," said Dessie.

"Time enough for fun out of school hours," said Mr. Fitzroy.

(*To be continued.*)

THE INJURY INFLICTED BY BAD WRITING.

By Ruth Lamb.

"That is something like an address! Clear as print. Every letter easy to read, and plenty of good black ink used in writing it. What trouble we should be saved if everybody would write as plainly, and use plenty of ink!"

The above remark was once made to me by the postmaster of a large provincial town, as he looked admiringly at the address of a letter which had just been put in his hands to be registered.

"It is not particularly pretty writing," I said, "but it is certainly plain enough, and there has been no saving of ink or waste either."

"Well, I call it a thoroughly handsome address. I suppose the object of writing anything is that it may be read, and any person with ordinary eyesight could read that at arm's length. You have no idea how the labour of letter-sorters is increased for want of a little ink. Those poor, scratchy styles of writing, which look as though they had been done with the point of a needle dipped in coloured water, cause us a world of trouble, and are very trying to the sight. How I wish I could induce everybody to write a plain hand, and use plenty of ink in addressing their letters!"

"But everybody cannot write well and clearly," I said.

"Most people could do much better if they would take a little trouble. It is the educated people, who write many letters, that are far more careless than the unaccustomed scribes who rarely send or receive one. To these last a letter is an affair of great moment, and its writer is generally laboriously particular in the formation of the characters, lest a mistake should be made, and the object of so much painstaking fail to reach its destination. Such a scribe may blunder, but it will generally be in the spelling of a proper name, the use of capital letters, and so on. The educated person, the much-pressed man of business, or the fine lady who thinks she puts *character* into her writing by indulging in turns and flourishes, are the individuals who cause us more labour than those who can only just shape the letters. Busy people will not take time to finish their words. They write two of the letters, perhaps, with fair distinctness, and finish with a curve and a flourish, which are supposed to do duty for all the rest, however numerous they may be. I think there is a real unkindness, as well as selfishness, in wilfully illegible writing!"

"Those are hard terms," said I. "Carelessness is a sufficiently common fault, but surely you will not brand all the large army of scribblers with such dreadful terms."

"What is carelessness but another word for selfishness? If to save ourselves a very little extra time and trouble we cause others to expend a great deal of both in consequence, is not that selfish? And by thus wasting the time and energies of others, do we not become responsible for this waste, as also for having done badly what we might have done well—done as we are commanded, 'with our might'?"

I could not but feel the truth of these words. Surely our carelessness, by which others suffer, is a manifestation both of selfishness and unkindness, though I fear we rarely look upon the lesser items in our daily work as involving such serious responsibility The postmaster's words set me thinking. Before my mind's eye came a series of signatures which had puzzled us at home on various occasions. Signatures of bankers, clergymen, notably of railway clerks, who had signed receipts for parcels, and others too numerous to mention, not one of which we could have deciphered had we not known the name of the person who perpetrated the irritating hieroglyphic.

I was once told by a literary gentleman who had the duty of sending replies privately, as well as answering correspondents in the pages of a popular periodical, that after spending a great deal of time in trying to read the addresses which headed the letters of many fair, and even titled writers, he was often compelled to cut out the address itself, and paste it on the envelope.

"In despair of reading these scrawls myself, I gave the Post-office officials a chance. They do wonderful things," he said; "and I cannot afford the time."

On another occasion the editor of a widely-circulated serial said to me:—"Would-be contributors do not know how often their illegible writing destroys even the chance of acceptance for their literary offerings. I have sometimes laboured through a few pages of a really promising MS., and then a glance at the clock has shown me that I must give it up. What ought to be easily read in an hour would cost a day's incessant work, to say nothing of the annoyance one cannot but feel at the waste of time. Besides, having only one pair of eyes, which are supposed to last for the term of my natural life, with the help of spectacles, I cannot afford to wear them out in trying to decipher other people's bad writing."

Girls appear to manifest a greater degree of anxiety about their writing than boys do, if the correspondence columns in their several papers are any guide. I have just picked up two numbers of each paper—the first that came to hand—and I find that whilst there are twenty-two opinions given about the writing of as many girl correspondents, there is not one in the columns of the *Boy's Own*. Whether the boys are indifferent about the matter, or whether they consider their own friends are capable of criticising their writing, without troubling *their* special editor about it, I cannot say. But in these two numbers there are no replies about boy-caligraphy to set against the twenty-two which girls have received in answer to their inquiries in a couple of numbers.

I could mention the names of three very distinguished church dignitaries who have been unenviably notorious for their bad writing. One of these sent a letter home, in which he gave some very special instructions about domestic matters. His wife was most anxious to carry them out, but unfortunately she could not read them. The letter was passed from hand to hand, but without satisfactory results.

At last it was decided to cut out the illegible passage and return it to the writer, for the purpose of being transcribed. The reverend wit had forgotten what he had written about, and could not read the extract from his own letter. So he sent it back again, with a note to the effect that he must decline to read anything from his own hand twenty-four hours after the ink was dry.

Another great man who has just been called to "rest from his labours," was written to, a short time before his death, respecting a recently-delivered sermon. He replied promptly, but his gratified correspondent, who had scarcely expected such immediate attention, could not decipher a single sentence of the valued epistle. He at length applied for aid to the postal officials in one of the largest offices out of London.

The gentleman in whose hand the letter was placed told me the story himself. He said that after spending an immense amount of time and patience upon it, he at last succeeded in deciphering three-fourths of it; wearied out and unable to spare more time, he said, "I then gave it up, and sent it into the office, where the clerks did the rest amongst them." A postscript stated that the writer would have sent the sermon itself, but feared that his correspondent would not be able to read it.

I am afraid few people think of the labour bestowed in the various post-offices in order to distribute the world's correspondence and get it safely into the millions of hands stretched out to receive it. No wonder if portions go astray. The real wonder is that the blunders made are infinitesimal when compared with the other side, and that people get their letters in spite of the writers, rather than through any painstaking on their part.

I would advise all letter-writers, and especially young ones, to make a practice of carefully reading over each address before posting. This would also save an immense amount of trouble, and greatly reduce the number of delayed epistles, as well as the annoyance experienced by those who are looking for them in vain.

I will give an instance of such delay caused by not observing this precaution. A lady had sent an order for a length of silk to a well-known London establishment. By the same post, but in another envelope, she forwarded a post-office order to pay for her purchase. The latter did not arrive, though the silk was sent off, and in the parcel the lady received an invoice only. She wrote to ask why the bill was not receipted, and was told that the money had not arrived.

Inquiries were made, the number of the post-office order obtained, and a letter written to the head establishment hence such orders are hunted up; when, lo! another letter came from the silk mercer with a receipted account. The money had reached him safely, but some days late. The envelope in which it had been enclosed was also sent, and then the lady found that she was alone to blame for all the trouble and delay. She had addressed the letter, Mr. ——, 11A, Oxford-street, *Manchester*, instead of London. It had been offered to a Mr. ———, a silk mercer, in Oxford-street, Manchester, and refused by him, and then somebody had suggested "Try London." This was done, and the letter got into the proper hands.

All the annoyance, trouble, and loss of time would have been avoided had the writer carefully read over the address before posting her letter.

As a sample of a post-office puzzle, take the following, which was shown to me a few weeks since, by the gentleman who had solved it—

Mr. ———, 11 Zoom, Manchester.

I was asked what I could make of it. The first letter which followed the figure 11 looked very much like a y, and I read as such, and guessed that the address had some reference to a large township—Hulme, often pronounced "Yulme." But then, that would not be any guide as to the street, and I was fain to confess that I was beaten.

"Oh!" said the gentleman, "when you once realise that the letter you take for a "y" is "z," the solution becomes easy. Uneducated people often call "eleven" 'leven,' and the writer has done so mentally. What it means is, 'Mr. ——, Levenshulme, Manchester.'"

This was an amusing, but not an intentional, misdirection of the letter; the writer doubtless meant to be correct, having gone by sound only.

But whilst the many anecdotes which are related about the results of the bad writing of educated people may be laughable enough, this does not alter the fact that it involves a display of very objectionable qualities. For it is wrong to do badly what by a little painstaking we might do well. It is selfish and unkind to spare ourselves the expenditure of a little time and trouble at a cost of much to other people, and it is absolutely a mark of rudeness to send an illegible scrawl to a person whose friendship we profess to value, when in many cases we should be ashamed to do the same thing to a stranger.

So, dear girls, I am heartily glad to see that you are solicitous about your handwriting. At the same time, I am very sorry that you do not ask your friends' opinion, instead of so often troubling the editor of your "Own Paper" to give you his.