

WRITING FOR THE PRESS.

WE are continually in receipt of a large number of letters intended by the writers for publication, which are of so little real interest to readers in general, that we refrain from the waste of the valuable space that they would make in our correspondence columns. These letters are pleasant and friendly, full of kind words to all connected with the Magazine, and for this we are truly grateful and appreciative, but at the same time they contain no special items of interest or help to us, for hours of either work or recreation.

In this connection we cannot resist the impulse of giving to you the letter of an English writer upon this question of "writing for the press."

Do n't say that not being a writer for the press myself I cannot give you any advice on the subject. Do n't you know that bachelors' wives and old maids' children are always the best managed wives and children in the world, and that "lookers-on see the best of the game"—see the mistakes and false moves which lead to the failure of the beaten player? From the standpoint of the looker-on—the reader—I offer to you one or two simple hints on writing for the press.

"I do like," said Frances Ridley Havergal, "writing which is both *natural* and *sharp*." But what kind is some of the writing given by the press to its readers? "Natural?" A girl in a story book says of her rival; "She's as false as her teeth!" Some writers are like that girl's rival. How refreshing it is to meet with writing which, like the quality of mercy, "is not strained," and seems to drop like the gentle dew from the writer's mind, *via* the inky pen. Much of what we read is so plainly unnatural that it would be a relief to meet some such instance of human frailty as a mistake in spelling or grammar, or reversing words or letters, such as calling a butterfly a "flutterby."

Artemus Ward said, "Sweetness is tiresome, variety is pleasing." I have a correspondent whose letters are a refreshment to me; there is such a breezy, unfettered originality about his orthography. He always spells cow with a large K. Now, that is just as good as to spell it with a small one—it is better; it gives the imagination a broader

field, wider scope; it suggests to the mind a grand, impressive, new kind of cow.

But to go back to Miss Havergal's musical description of what writing for the press ought to be—"natural and sharp." I have said my little say on the "natural" side. What about "sharp?" Much of what comes to us from the press is not sharp, unless sharp and blunt have exchanged meanings since I went to school. The pen may be mightier than the sword, but neither is of much use unless it is sharp. Whether sharpness can be acquired is a question I will not attempt to answer. Perhaps it cannot. Perhaps it is a birth-gift bestowed by some fairy godmother on a few favored individuals. Some one has said that sharpness does not depend on diet, as the donkey eats thistles, but still remains the dullest of animals. Mark Twain tells how he once got a letter saying that fish as food is said to add to the brain-power of the eater, and asking how much fish per day should be eaten in order to become a successful author. Mark answered that he thought, judging from the letter, that a small whale per day would do to begin with.

Oh, let me advise you and beseech you not to write for the press unless you possess that most valuable and most beautiful of personal gifts—common sense. The press is the means of spreading a great amount of nonsense. Do n't you know the old rhyme?

"A pen, though of truest use,
Is often cause of mighty bothers;
Plucked from the pinions of one goose,
It spreads the opinions of others."

When you set about writing *choose a subject you know something of*. Ignorance may be bliss, but it is one of those forms of bliss better kept to one's self. An editor who receives a manuscript on a subject of which the writer knows little or nothing, may well send it back without, instead of with, "thanks." Try to express your ideas in such a way that the reader *can understand your meaning*.

Avoid long words, but do not make your life a burden to yourself by trying to express all thoughts of your heart in monosyllables. Call a spade a spade, certainly, if you have to mention a spade; but when you write of nobler things than spades, you must draw on

the glorious wealth of words in our well-dowered language. A limited dictionary will give words enough for limited thoughts. "Not what we make, but what we save, makes us rich. Not what we read, but what we remember, makes us wise." What I have written is enough for you to remember for the present, is it not?"

H. S.

Now we fear that in coinciding with this

writer's opinion, we shall be considered more *sharp* than it is *natural* to us to be, and so we must needs add a P. S. to explain that we by no means intend this as a *personal* reflection upon any of our kind correspondents, but only as an amusing hint to all who handle the pen, ourselves amongst the number. We can assure you that no offence is intended to anybody by our indorsement of the pungent sayings of "H. S."

LOUIS SEIZE CABINET.

"AN Admiring Reader" writes: Can you tell me how to make use of an old and somewhat worn wash-stand, the style which comes with the cottage sets of furniture, doors below, back with small brackets? Would like to convert it into a sort of cabinet.

You can turn your stand into a *Louis*



LOUIS SEIZE CABINET.

Seize Cabinet if you desire, in the following way: Remove the back, which is doubtless screwed to the stand. Sand paper the surface well until all the roughness is removed, and then decorate with lincrusta walton [as shown in the accompanying cut], a medallion in the center of each door panel, and strips

of border down each side, and across the top, with a narrow beading carried around all the edges of door panels. Afterwards you can stain the whole in imitation of cherry, mahogany, or a still prettier way is to ebonize and gild to imitate "gilded ebony." In order to do this, it is necessary to gild first all portions of the lincrusta in high relief, and when dry, paint with coach black, which can be had at any carriage shop. Take only a small portion at a time, and while the paint is still wet, rub off the parts which have been gilded, with a soft rag slightly moistened with turpentine, which will bring out the portions in relief. Proceed in this manner until the whole is covered with the black, and the gilt uncovered. When dry, finish with a coat of varnish to give a higher glaze.

Medallions of lincrusta, both oval and square, as shown in our illustration, with border design and beading, can be had at a reasonable cost of most large establishments dealing in wall paper hangings. To apply the lincrusta, make a good stiff paste, composed of one-third glue and two-thirds flour, which should be kept hot either by a gas or oil stove while in use. Paste the different pieces in the ordinary way — laying on the paste rather thickly — apply to the article, and rub down and outwards with a good stiff brush (an ordinary scrubbing brush is good).

In cold weather, the lincrusta should be put in a warm place before using, which makes it soft and pliable.