

An Expert in Handwriting.

BY HARRY HOW.



It would not be possible within the limits of this paper to enter fully into the methods employed by handwriting experts in "treating" the problems of penmanship which they have been called upon to solve. Handwriting experts are not amongst the many—they are only to be found amongst the fewest of the few. They recognise what may be said to be the creator of their art, lithography—which was accidentally discovered by Johann Aloys Senefelder—for lithography has bred the rare gift which the handwriting expert possesses to-day.

Johann Aloys Senefelder was born at Prague in 1771, and died in 1834. It is a romantic, an historical, story. Wishing to publish musical compositions of his own, he tried various experiments with stereotype plates, and etching on copper and pewter plates, but was far from successful. He tried the Solenhafen stone, etching it similarly to the plates, but his proofs in no way satisfied him. In 1796—he was just twenty-five years of age—his mother asked him to write out a list of the linen given to the laundress. He took up a polished stone, and wrote the list on it with his ink of soap and lampblack, with the intention of copying it on paper when convenient. Finding the writing tenacious to the stone, he etched the uncovered parts with acid, inked the relief portions with a dabber, and taking off a proof found it successful. Thus, lithography in relief was invented. Various improvements followed until the discovery was perfected.

It is admitted by all experts in handwriting that a keen knowledge of lithography is absolutely essential to the true exercise of their peculiar craft. The eye and the hand have been trained to observe and copy all the peculiarities and eccentricities of writers—a training absolutely necessary to one who practises as an expert in handwriting. Mr. Joseph Netherclift, the first recognised expert; his son, Mr. F. G. Netherclift, and Mr. Charles Chabot were all lithographers—as were also Messrs. Mathieson, MacQuarrie, Rae, and the subject of this sketch, Mr. George Smith Inglis.

Mr. Inglis may be signalled out as the first amongst handwriting experts of the present

day. He is an Edinburgh man, and was born in 1831. True, he was a good writer at school, and his writing-master would point out his "p's" and "q's" as a pattern to the class; but, by an accident, he was apprenticed to a lithographer, and there gained a knowledge which to-day is invaluable to him. Although in his sixty-fourth year, his eye is as keen and susceptible, his methods of working as safe and sure, as they were when, on the death of Mr. Charles Chabot, he received the St. Luke's Mystery Case, which Chabot had in hand at the time of his decease.

I have watched Mr. Inglis at work. He will watch a "t" for an hour at a time, and revel in the loop of a "j" for a similar period. He twists it this way and that way, writes out a single word a hundred times—and a hundred times is no figure of expression, but a fact! He picks up his compasses, and compares lengths and breadths of dots and dashes. A comma, a semicolon, a full stop—one might almost say a blot does not escape that little pair of compasses. He positively glories in a note of exclamation; a questionable interrogation is a "sphinx" to him, and he attacks it, to discover its origin, with as much ardour as though he were called upon to decipher the diary which Noah penned in the ark.

Mr. Inglis is not only an expert, he is an enthusiast; and I propose, in this article, to refer to a few of the many remarkable cases which have been brought under his notice.

The individuality of "Junius" has always been the pet theme and study of all experts in handwriting. The handwriting of "Junius" is the great problem of all experts. It has puzzled and perplexed all who have sought to prove the identity of the man who wrote it. The letters of "Junius" consist of a series of political missives signed "Junius," which appeared in *The Public Advertiser*—a London newspaper. The first was published in the issue of January 21, 1769, and the last in that of January 21, 1772. The consternation which these letters created amongst the Ministries of the day is a matter of history, as they not only attacked the public works of the parties concerned, but their private doings also.

Pages upon pages have been written on

the handwriting of "Junius," though possibly—from a popular point of view—the romantic side of the query lies in the set of verses which have been conclusively proved to be in the handwriting of Sir Philip Francis.* Reproduced in these pages are facsimiles of some of the lines written by Sir Francis, addressed to Miss Giles, a lady with whom he danced at the Assembly Rooms at Bath (Fig. 5). Let these, as well as the dates in Fig. 1, be compared with the date on the Junian Letter XVI., in which the writer apparently forgot to disguise his writing or to obliterate it afterwards. This is one clue. The note accompanying the verses was written by Sir Francis in disguised writing (Fig. 4), which may be compared with the corrections on the Junian proof (Fig. 3). This is a second clue. "Junius"—in other words, Sir Philip Francis—was evidently enamoured of the young maiden, for shortly after the ball she received an anonymous letter, couched in the following words:—

5. July. 1769
 30. July. 1769
 29. July. 1769.

FIG. 1.—DATES IN WRITING OF SIR FRANCIS.

Mr. Junius had quoted a passage from the Doctors excellent Commentaries, which directly contradicted the doctrine maintained by the Doctor in the House of Common.

FIG. 3.—CORRECTIONS IN PROOF-SHEET OF A LETTER OF "JUNIUS."

FIG. 2.—DATE ON JUNIAN LETTER XVI.

The enclosed paper, was found this morning by accident. The person who found

FIG. 4.—DISGUISED WRITING OF SIR PHILIP FRANCIS.

In the School of the Graces, by Venus attended,
 Belinda improves every Hour;

FIG. 5.—HANDWRITING OF SIR PHILIP FRANCIS, NOT DISGUISED.

"The inclosed paper, of verses was found this morning by accident. The person who found them, not knowing to whom they belong, is obliged to trust to his own judgement, and takes it for granted that they could only be meant for Miss Giles."

A very charming compliment indeed, and one which, on the surface, might carry with it the conviction that the sender of the note and the writer of the poetry were one and the same. Here are two of the verses:—

In the School of the Graces, by Venus attended,
 Belinda improves every Hour ;

They tell her that Beauty itself may be mended,
 And shew her the Use of her Power.

They directed her Eye, they pointed the Dart,
 And have taught her a dangerous Skill ;
 For whatever She aims at, the Head or the Heart,
 She can wound, if She pleases, or kill,

*Vide "Junius Revealed." By his grandson, H. R. Francis.

if I were present personally to institute
 the same proceedings, I appoint my said brother,
 the sole executor of this my will
 do witness my hand this twentieth
 day of March one thousand eight hundred
 and eighty four
 Thomas Hughes

THE WILL OF THOMAS HUGHES.

I have but briefly alluded to "Junius." To dissect him thoroughly would occupy all the space of many issues of this Magazine; but, as it has ever been the great work of all handwriting experts down to Mr. Inglis, no paper, however small, would be complete without a glance at this penmanship problem.

Mr. Inglis has been associated with many wills of a remarkable character. As to his peculiar abilities in this direction, the words of Mr. Justice Denman at the Swansea Assizes, of July, 1887, might be quoted: "Now, the expert (Mr. Inglis) himself comes, and I must say, after having seen many experts in courts of justice, I think I may compliment that expert on this: he appears to have taken great pains to see whether the thing would hold water or not, and whether he is sound or not. At all events, every observation he has made seems to me to be one which calls your attention to a thing worth observing."

These remarks gathered round the Thomas Hughes Will Case. Here the expert was called to prove that the signature to the will was not a genuine one. He compared the signature with that on his daily time-sheets, one of which the deceased had to sign every morning. Mr. Inglis obtained a sheet which Thomas Hughes had signed on the very day he was supposed to have signed the will, and the expert stated—as did also a brother of the

deceased—that in his estimation it was not a genuine signature. A relation of the testator was desired by the judge to write in his presence. She did so; and the reader can form his own opinion as to who really wrote the signature when he compares the test writing, by the relation, with the signature on the will.

Thomas Hughes

THE "RELATION'S" SIGNATURE.

The Whalley Will Case was a perfect little puzzle—successfully solved by Mr. Inglis. James Whalley, although he died worth something approaching £70,000, was a typical miser, and rented rooms in a cottage at 9s. a week. He was a retired iron-master, and resided with a railway porter at Leominster. While on his death-bed, his landlord wrote a letter in pencil on his behalf to his son at Derby. Mr. Whalley signed his name and the date in ink. His son never received the letter. Mr. Whalley rallied somewhat, and hopes were entertained of his recovery. The son visited him, and the old man showed him the will he had made, and where it would be found amongst his papers in case of his death. The son observed that one of the witnesses was the supervisor of the census papers. Mr. Whalley died on a Saturday morning, at nine o'clock. No telegram was sent to the son until the afternoon, after the last cross-country train had left Derby; consequently he did not arrive at Leominster until the following

7/0/4
 Thomas Hughes

TIME-SHEET OF THOMAS HUGHES, SIGNED SAME DATE AS WILL.

In Witness whereof I have hereto set my hand this twenty first day of March one thousand eight hundred, and eighty one at New York the 11th day of March A.D. 1881
 J. M. Whalley

J. M. Whalley
 March 24/81

day. After the funeral a will was read. The son immediately challenged its genuineness—it was not the one his father had shown him, he said. Finding the will could not be upset, a compromise was made: the deceased's landlord to receive one-third, the son one-third, and the other third to go to another person. However, the fraud was eventually discovered. The

solicitor received certain information, and, on meeting one of the witnesses, quietly asked what they did with the loaf of bread in regard to Mr. Whalley's will.

It was ultimately proved that the envelope containing the genuine will had been steamed, and the will abstracted. The pencil letter was rubbed out with bread, a new and spurious will written above the signature of James Whalley, and the document placed in the envelope, leaving the gum mark of previous fastening. Mr. Inglis examined the will at Somerset House, and detected the groove marks where the pencil marks had been (the landlord, being a railway porter, wrote rather heavily). He was shown the handwriting of a number of persons, and noticing a similarity between two or three of them with the groove-marked words, he was able to prove it to be identical with the landlord's writing. The landlord and one of his accomplices—the third party turned Queen's evidence—are at the present moment partaking of Her Majesty's hospitality, in a building specially erected for gentlemen who need a compulsory holiday, with apartments provided.

A holograph will case also forms an interesting study. It was written in violet ink. There was one word on the eighth line which was blotted and required deciphering. It appeared blurred, the alteration being wiped with used blotting-paper while the ink was wet. The spreading of the ink made a blur which looked like the word "One," but after careful scrutiny the expert believed the word first written was "Five." Mr.

Inglis found the capital F's in three parts of the will would go inside the blurred capital "O" of "One," but he also discovered in the slurred writing part of the "F" outside the "O" at the top left hand. The sloping initiatory line of the "i," and the dot to it are split. This dot agreed with the others in the will in being split. The horizontal line from top of "v" to the "e" are all solid lines, not blurred ones.

Mr. Justice Butt, in giving his decision on this case, proved that he possessed a rare knack in "arguing" a disputed letter. He said it could not be "One," at first, for, if so, there was no necessity to alter it; nor the word "two," for there were not sufficient strokes to make it a "w," and no "o" finishes with a horizontal line at the bottom. It could not be "three," it is too small, and

J. M. WHALLEY WILL—SHOWING THE GROOVE MARKS OF PENCIL-LETTER AND GENUINE SIGNATURE AND DATE.

IS IT ONE OR FIVE? THE BLURRED WORD.

there is no "h"; it could not be "four," there are not sufficient strokes to make that word; it could not be "six," the letters are not of the form of "ix"; neither could it be "seven," the strokes are not sufficient; nor "eight," there being no tail for a "g," or top loop for an "h"; "nine" is a longer word; whilst as for "ten" hundred, that would most likely be written "one thousand."

to having seen the method employed. Fortunately it resulted in a compromise.

Perhaps, however, the most curiously interesting will case with which Mr. Inglis has had to struggle is that known as—"Is the word Twenty or Seventy?" The case was tried in the High Court of Session, Edinburgh, before Lord Kyllachy, in December, 1891. The action was raised by Thomas

McNab, of Gollamd, Middleton Kerse House, Clackmannanshire, against the trustees of his late brother, Alexander McNab, of Techmuiry, and the dispute was whether a certain legacy left to the pursuer was one of £20,000 or £70,000. An examination of the contested word showed that the parties interested could hardly be expected to rest satisfied with anything short of a judicial

interpretation of the intentions of the testator.

The writer has before him folio after folio of test-words of every description, which Mr. Inglis spent many weeks over, in order to arrive at a definite opinion. It would be interesting to all future would-be will makers to reproduce them in their entirety, as a timely warning to write plainly when disposing of their money; but a few will suffice. The disputed word was the third on the last line of page two of the will. The question is:

IS IT ONE OR FIVE? ANALYSIS OF BLURRED WORD.

It must, therefore, have been the word "five." The reader will be able to make these comparisons from the reproduction.

As an example of the lengths to which money-seekers will go, the case of E— is a highly respectable specimen. In this instance the expert considered that Mrs. E— took her husband's hand, holding the pen, and guided it whilst writing the name— Robert E—; her hand over his and with the pen writing the surname in her own style.

THE ROBERT E— CASE. THE GUIDED SIGNATURES.

One can readily see the struggle of the two hands in the two names. The expert's opinion was right, for a few days afterwards the solicitor came joyously to Mr. Inglis's office, and intimated that his statement as to how the signature was written had been corroborated by a later witness, who deposed

What was the latest idea or inception in the mind of the testator when he altered the will? Mr. Inglis made a most remarkable report on this case. He examined the word in dispute under a very powerful microscope. To show the elaborate nature of his researches in matters of this kind, here are

reproduced facsimile results of the examination of the first letter of the word.

*The Furniture therein, in the same manner as Glassful
along with Twenty thousand Pounds all in the
Name of Mrs. M. M. M.*

IS IT TWENTY OR SEVENTY?

Twenty

PROFESSOR GREENFIELD'S ENLARGEMENT.

There is no erasure in or about the word. On the left side of the down-stroke there are four lines, thus:—

1 faint
2 more faint
3 firm
4 firm

and the foot thus firm.

On the right side of the down-stroke there are three lines, thus:—

all of which are firm.

The lowest line on the right side of the down-stroke is carried to the first up-stroke following, and joins it at the bottom, thus:—

The first up-stroke following the supposed capital is inordinately tall, and it touches the top line on right side of down-stroke, thus:—

The second up-stroke following the supposed capital agrees with the average height of the "e, n, y" following, about which there is no dispute. The third up-stroke after the supposed capital is also inordinately tall and finishes with a peculiar twist, thus:—

The remaining letters are "enty." This makes the disputed word to be either

"Twenty"

or "Seventy"

The whole of Mr. Inglis's exhaustive analysis resulted as follows: That there are two faint head-lines which cannot be followed out; that the word was written "twenty," with a small "t" instead of a capital; that the small "t" has been altered to stand for a capital "S;" and that "w" has been altered into "ev," which manipulation destroys the identity of the word as being "twenty," altering it to the word "Seventy," which, in Mr. Inglis's opinion, was the last idea and inception in the mind of the testator.

This was singularly confirmed six months after by Professor Greenfield, of Edinburgh, and a facsimile of his enlargement of the disputed word is shown beneath the portion of the will reproduced here.

To turn from wills. The following tends to show that "habit" is of as great use to the expert when analyzing a case as similarity of style. In penning a letter there is always some peculiar characteristic which the writer cannot easily rid himself or herself of. In this instance a libellous letter was sent to a gentleman against his *fiancée*. A certain lady was suspected and charged with the offence. In

reply she wrote a most indignant denial. This, which was written heavily with a quill pen in a bold, split-dotting style, along with the libellous missive, written in a scratchy style, were the only documents submitted to the expert. Mr. Inglis decided that they were penned by one and the same person—a fact to which the guilty party subsequently confessed. Here comes “habit.” The lady, although she disguised her writing very cleverly, was innocent of the fact that she always

THE “LEFT-HANDED” MISSIVE.

commenced her communications by economically writing close up to the edge of the note-paper, instead of leaving the customary margin usually adopted; furthermore, in each communication omitting the salutation of “My dear,” etc. A small thing, but quite sufficient to bring the offence home.

Mr. Inglis has had many schools through his hands, and nearly in every case young ladies’ establishments. It seems that the green-eyed monster has a veritable stronghold in the immediate vicinity of the desk. Here is one—a part of the letter in question being reproduced.

Miss R—, a young girl at a boarding-school, complained to the lady-principal that she had received abusive anonymous letters, and stated that she thought Miss S—, a fellow-pupil, was the guilty person. The dictation lesson-book of Miss S—, and four letters of Miss R—, were handed over to the expert. After examining the documents he concluded

that Miss R— herself was the author. She was expelled. A fortnight after she admitted having written the disagreeable missives by using her left hand!

The documents submitted to handwriting experts are frequently of a very “weighty” character. At another scholastic establishment for young ladies, the mistress one day discovered a very objectionable word written on the panel of a door. The mistress had the panel cut out and sent to the late Mr. Netherclift. He adopted a clever ruse, in order to lay the finger of guilt on the culprit. The classes were assembled—some sixty girls in all—and a dictation lesson was given, in which all the letters used in the objectionable expression were scattered in various words very freely. A comparison of the dictation-books with the word complained of was made, and the guilty girl pointed out. She was sent away, and her parents, naturally, not being satisfied with the expert’s opinion, Mr. Inglis

THE CLAIMANT’S HANDWRITING. PORTION OF FIRST LETTER TO LADY TICHBORNE.

Hoping my dear sister
 be will make him welcome
 for he is a dear friend of
 mine so good bye Arthur Orton
 7/6
 W/

PORTION OF THE CLAIMANT'S LETTER TO HIS SISTER, SHOWING THE HIEROGLYPHICS.

was consulted. He could only confirm, in every possible way, the idea expressed by the previous expert.

Mr. Inglis executed the facsimiles utilized by Lord Chief Justice Cockburn in the Tichborne trial. The late Lord Cockburn published an edition of his own of his memorable summing-up in this famous case. At the end of the volume are a number of pages of the many facsimiles used [at the trial, in order to show the identity

simple habit—just a matter of continual sharp loops at the beginning of each line.

As to the opinion which judges have of experts in handwriting, the compliment paid by Lord Cockburn to the experts engaged in the Tichborne trial may be quoted here. In summing up, he said: "The evidence of professional witnesses is to be viewed with some degree of distrust, for it is generally with some bias; but within proper limits it is a very valuable assistance in inquiries of

My Dear Mother
 If such be
 my intention to the best of
 my power I must begin soon

PORTION OF THE LAST LETTER OF THE REAL ROGER.

of Arthur Orton's handwriting with that of the assumed Roger, and the difference in style from those of the real Roger. Here is habit again, and the reader is invited to study the examples given here, and to form his own conclusions as to what the one evinced in his penmanship and the other lacked. A very

this kind. The advantage is that habits of handwriting—as shown in minute points which escape common observation, but are quite observable when pointed out—are detected and disclosed by science, skill, and experience. And it is so in the comparison of handwriting by the assistance of experts."

Your affectionate friend
 Arthur Orton
 give my best respects to your
 Mother and tell her I thank
 her kindly for her good wishes
 Good bye
 7/6

PORTION OF THE CLAIMANT'S LETTER TO MISS MARY ANN LODER, SHOWING HIEROGLYPHICS LEARNT IN SPANISH AMERICA.