

英文社交尺牘

THE HANDBOOK OF
SOCIAL
CORRESPONDENCE

THE HANDBOOK OF SOCIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Notes, Letters, and Announcements

for

Various Occasions

BY

SARAH AUGUSTA TAINTOR

AND

KATE M. MONRO

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THE HANDBOOK OF
SOCIAL CORRESPONDENCE

PREFACE

Every year numbers of excellent books on letter writing come from the press. These, for the most part, discuss business letters with comparatively little attention to social letter writing. This book, on the other hand, presents social correspondence and social forms entirely.

Besides personal letters and notes, announcements issued by clubs, colleges, and other organizations, as well as resolutions and memorials, have been included with the hope that these might serve as models.

Because many letter writers desire more or less definite examples to follow, according to librarians who furnish the public with such information, the authors have gathered together in convenient form and arrangement, invitations, acceptances, regrets, and notes of condolence, appreciation, and congratulation, with the hope that these may prove helpful to many seeking such material.

Acknowledgments are gratefully made to the following universities, colleges, and schools for announcements and invitations:

The American University, The University of British Columbia, University of California, The University of Chicago, Columbia University, Harvard University, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, Northwestern University, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, University of Rochester, and Yale University.

Amherst College, Dartmouth College, Hastings College, Mount Holyoke College, New Jersey College for Women,

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Blair Academy, The Knox School, Staunton Military Academy, Worcester Academy, and The Edith McIntosh School of Music.

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American Association of University Women, Rhode Island State Federation of Women's Clubs, The Town Hall Club, and the Larchmont Yacht Club.

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The Broadway Tabernacle, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, and St. Bartholomew's Church of New York City.

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The authors have consulted the following books to verify questions of disputed usage: *The Gracious Hostess*, by Della Thompson Lutes; *Standard Etiquette*, by Anna Steese Richardson; *Etiquette*, by Emily Post; *The Cyclopaedia of Social Usage*, by Helen L. Roberts; *Titles and Forms of Address: A Guide to Their Correct Use*, published by A. & C. Black,

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Ltd.; *Debrett's Peerage, Baronetage, Knightage, and Companionage; Get It Right!* by John B. Opdycke; and *Social Washington* by Anne Squire.

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CHAPTER I

THE ART OF LETTER WRITING

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THE ART OF LETTER WRITING

If one should ask what type of writing is most often done by people today, he would undoubtedly be told some form of social correspondence. Occasions arise constantly when the writing of a social note assumes an importance, sometimes even greater than that of the long letter to absent friends.

Letter writing has often been called a lost art, apparently for the reason that the modern world does not spend so much time in filling reams of paper as did, for instance, the great letter writers of the eighteenth century, sometimes called the "letter-writingest" of ages.

We know now that it really never has been a lost art, despite what critics of the present and devotees of the glories of the past have said. Just as interesting and graphic letters as those held up as models of the epistolary art have been written since that time and are written now. We have only to read in the biographies of men and women of the late nineteenth century and in the published volumes of letters of our own time, to find some affording as much pleasure and interest as those of the past masters of the art. Sometimes they entertain us more, for they are nearer to us.

Of course, we shall always find in the letters of Mme. de Sévigné, the most brilliant letter writer of the court of Louis XIV, a charm and grace distinctly hers and that of her time. We are immensely amused in reading Jane Carlyle and laugh at her keen wit and entertaining comments. We feel there will never be another Charles Lamb whose unique letters

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reveal his own interesting personality, as well as his unmatched skill as a letter writer.

Yet, even in these days of telephone, radio, and air mail, when communication is unbelievably swift, letter writing is far from being a lost art. To be sure, the mails carry many insignificant letters, just as the stagecoaches did of old. But they also carry letters and notes to friends and family worthy "to be passed around" because of their sheer interest and individual charm.

Letters of the present are not often published owing to their personal nature or the reticence of the writers. We have all received letters, however, that called forth our praise and made us exclaim, "What a good letter this is! How charmingly it is written!" or, "What a perfect note! I wish I could write like that!"

Today there seems to be a desire to write gracefully and entertainingly to our friends, and even to spend more time in writing to our family when we are away from them. Whether it is the long letter or the short note, it must express the best that is in us, and conform to the canons of good taste and correctness.

This is a social age, an age when everyone at some time or other entertains or is entertained. In Washington, matters of government are often discussed at dinners; in the great cities, problems of finance, welfare, and education are talked over at luncheons; in the smaller cities, towns, and villages, women chat socially over the tea table. With the gradual return of better economic conditions, sociability is increasing and social affairs are numerous. Probably the time is not far off when every community will have a "social season" of its own. Because of the increasing social life with the many opportunities for entertainment and hospitality, everyone should know how to write the social letter and the social note befitting the occasion.

Letters make and keep friendships; they bring to our doors invitations, acceptances, and regrets; they carry congratula-

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tions and greetings; they express our appreciation for gifts and favors; they make our apologies; they state announcements; they bear sympathy where it is most needed. Indeed, there is hardly an occasion when we do not gratefully turn to the letter as a means of expressing our feelings, opinions, and decisions.

Social letter writing may be a delightful pastime. Many find it so today, for it offers an opportunity to say pleasantly what we wish to do, or what we think or feel. It is an agreeable way of spending our leisure time. We chat on paper with friends far and near, or we listen to them as they talk to us.

William Cowper, whose letters were called "divine chit-chat," declared, "A letter may be written on anything or nothing, just as anything or nothing may chance to occur." We realize how true this is when we read from the white page of a friend's note a fancy, spun whimsically or gracefully with no other intention than to please.

Henry James said that the best letters seemed to him the most delightful of all written things if they possessed real charm. That quality in letter writing, we may say, resembles the charm described by Maggie in *What Every Woman Knows*:

Charm—oh, it's a sort of bloom on a woman. If you have it, you don't need to have anything else; and if you don't have it, it doesn't matter much what else you have.

So it is with letters and notes. What makes them delightful and appealing is not always the message, highly pleasing and acceptable as it may be. It is often the manner and the style in which that message is written.

John Hay once praised William Dean Howells, who was an incomparable writer of graceful notes, for his "impossibly happy way of saying everything." How fine it would be if our notes revealed that same "impossibly happy" manner of expression!

The social note, as well as the friendly letter, has a person-

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ality of its own, and should be written in accordance with the dictates of good taste and correct English. To be able to write interesting social notes and letters is an accomplishment earnestly to be desired.

CHAPTER II

THE LETTER PICTURE

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CORRECT STATIONERY

Today, fortunately, stationery of good quality and attractive appearance is generally used. In this country it is so inexpensive, so extensively advertised, and so widely sold, that one naturally buys it. A few suggestions, however, may not be amiss.

Ruled lines, gilt edges, glaring ornamentation are always objectionable. Unusual shapes, vivid colors, and striking monograms may be allowable for youthful correspondents, but white, gray, or cream-colored paper with or without monogram or address is generally preferred by women of taste, while men, as a rule, use white or gray paper with or without the address.

For formal correspondence heavy white paper is correct and only the first page is written upon. Engraved cards are used for many types of invitations such as At Homes, Teas, Dinners, and Dances. Answers to formal invitations must be written by hand on note paper and should follow the spacing of the invitation and cover only the first page of the paper.

Informal or semiformal invitations to Bridges, Teas, or Informal Dances are often written on visiting cards. Answers, of course, if required, should be written on note paper.

METHODS OF PAGING NOTES AND LETTERS

The paging of notes and letters may vary. Informal notes and letters usually follow the paging as in a book; they may

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be written on pages one and four, with the inside pages turned sideways and used as one; or they may be written on pages one and three and sideways on two and four. For a four-page note or long letter the correspondent will probably appreciate the writer's using the paging as in a book. Searching for the next page is always an exasperation to a reader. As one naturally turns a letter as he would a book, that seems the logical way to write it. If, however, the letter covers only two pages, then writing on one and four, or one and three, may give the best appearance.

For a three-page letter many writers prefer to use pages one, three, and crosswise on two, instead of following the sequence of pages.

FOLDING THE LETTER

Folding the paper should be carefully done so that the edges shall come together neatly. In folding a page in half, the first page should be on the inside with the address facing the flap of the envelope.

What a different impression the carelessly written note makes from the one penned on good paper, with attention to details of paging and folding, to correct form in placement of letter parts, to writing that makes for an attractive letter picture!

FORMS FOR SOCIAL NOTES AND LETTERS

In social notes, as well as in business letters, the letter picture should be carefully planned. A margin, like a frame for a picture, should surround the letter on its four sides. This margin will depend on the length of the letter and on the size of the paper.

FORMS FOR HEADINGS

At the upper right-hand corner may be placed the inside address and the date. Indented form with closed or open