Ames' Guide to Self Instruction in Practical and Artistic Penmanship.

DANIEL T. AMES, Author and Publisher, 205 Broadway, New York.

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MATERIALS ADAPTED TO FINE ARTISTIC PEN WORK.

Use a fine quality of Bristol Board, or Whatman's hot-pressed drawing paper, and a fine quality of *black* India-ink, freshly ground from a stick, in a tray containing rain-water. Ink of any desired shade may thus be made. If work is intended for reproduction by any of the photographic processes, the ink must be ground until jet black, and then the pencil guide-lines must be removed with a soft gum or sponge rubber, so as to remove as little of the ink as possible. Hard rubber will not only remove much of the ink, but will tear up the fibre of the paper, and thus break or make ragged the delicate hair lines, which will, therefore, fail of a good result when photo-engraved. It should be specially noted that all lines to reproduce must be clear, continuous and black; if so, no matter how fine, they will answer the purpose.

PENS.

For script writing, use Gillott's "303," or Spencerian Artistic No. 14. For fine drawing or tinting, use the "303," or Crow Quill. For flourishing, use Spencerian No. 1, or Ames's Penman's Favorite. For lettering, especially Old English, German and Church text, the Sonnecken Pen, both broad and double pointed, may be used to advantage.

To those who may be unable to procure these articles, or are uncertain respecting their quality, we will forward them by mail from this office, as follows:

Extra fine three-ply Bristol Board, 22x28, per board,	$0.50	Spencerian Artistic, per gross,	$1.25
Per ½ dozen, by express,	2.00	" No. 1,	1.25
India Ink, per stick,	1.00	Ames's Penman's Favorite,	1.00
Crow Quill Pens, per dozen,	0.75	Sonnecken broad-pointed, per set of 5 Pens,	0.25
Gillott's "303," per gross,	1.25	Double-pointed, per set of 3 Pens,	0.20

HINTS ON DESIGNS, &c.

Whatever the purpose of any work, much of its success depends upon the skill and artistic effect of the design.

No amount of work, however carefully and skillfully performed, can produce a good or satisfactory result from a design awkward or inappropriate.

After selecting the paper or material upon which the work is to be executed, fasten it with thumb-tacks or glue to a drawing board; then draw with a pencil border and centre lines; then sketch lightly with a pencil the design, having care to give due prominence to the several parts according to their importance in the work, with a proper intermingling of lights and shades.

When designs are to be copied there are numerous methods for making transfers.

The most common is by means of thin transparent paper or cloth, which is placed over the design to be copied and traced over with a pencil, after which the opposite side of the tracing is penciled over with a soft black pencil; then the tracing is placed upon the paper to which the transfer is to be made, when the lines upon the tracing are retraced with a pencil or any smooth-pointed instrument which will give a distinct outline upon the paper underneath.

Transfer or blackened paper is often placed under the tracing before retracing it, instead of penciling its reverse side, which is objectionable from the liability of blackening or soiling the paper upon which the drawing is to be made.

Of course, this method can be used only where the desired reproduction is the same size as the original. If it is to be enlarged or diminished, other methods must be sought.

This may be accomplished by marking the copy to be transferred into squares, and the paper upon which the reproduction is to be made into corresponding squares, enlarged or diminished according to the change desired from the size of the original copy.

The same change is accomplished very readily by the use of proportional dividers, with which every draughtsman should be provided, or by use of the pantograph.

the feet level on the floor. Place the right arm parallel to the edge of the desk, resting on the muscles just forward of the elbow, and rest the hand on the nails of the third and fourth fingers, not permitting the wrist to touch the paper. Let the hands be at right angles to each other, and rest on the book, keeping the book parallel to the side of the desk.

FRONT POSITION.

RIGHT POSITION.

This position is advocated as furnishing the best support for the hand and arm while writing, and, we think, not without justice in school or classrooms, where the desk is often sloping and narrow.

FRONT POSITION.—In this the same relative position of hand, pen and paper should be maintained as described in the former one. In commercial colleges and writing academies, where more spacious desks or tables are used than in the common schoolroom, this position is permissible, and is frequently adopted.

LEFT PO'N.

LEFT POSITION.—In this position the left side is presented to the desk, and the same relative positions maintained as in the right and front. This position is advocated on the ground of its relieving the right arm from being burdened with any support of the body while writing, and thus giving a more free, rapid, and less tiresome action to the hand and arm. This argument has considerable force where the forearm or muscular movement is practiced.

RIGHT OBLIQUE POSITION.

It is also the most convenient, if not a necessity, in the counting-room, where numerous and large books are required to remain in a position at right angles with the desk, and also in the execution of large drawings or specimens of penmanship which necessarily, or most conveniently, occupy positions directly in front of the artist.

Another position at the desk, sometimes advocated by authors and teachers, is the right oblique, which is a position between the front and side.

RIGHT OBLIQUE POSITION.—In our opinion, which of these positions is to be adopted is not of such vital importance as that the proper relative

Practical Writing.

GOOD, EASY HANDWRITING is of the utmost importance to all classes of persons. No other one attainment assists an equal number of young ladies and gentlemen to positions of profit and advancement, or affords more satisfaction as an accomplishment; and we believe it to be an acquirement within the reach of all persons having common sense and one good hand.

POSITION.

First in importance to the pupil in writing is a CORRECT POSITION. As in logic an error in the premises must lead to false conclusions, so a bad position, while learning to write, must lead to failure. It is only when in a correct position that the pen, even in the hand of its skillful master, is capable of producing the smooth, graceful line, shade and curve so essential to good writing; if such is the fact when in a master's hand, how doubly so it is in the undisciplined and struggling hand of the learner!

It is also important that a proper position be maintained at the table or desk, as well as the relative positions of the pen, hand, paper, desk and body.

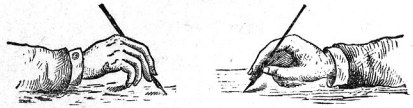
Each of three positions at the desk have more or less advocates, and each, in our opinion, is commendable according to the circumstances of the writer. We give each position, with the reasons urged in their favor.

RIGHT POSITION.—Turn the right side near to the desk, but not in contact with it. Keep the body erect,

position of pen, hand and paper should be maintained, and that the arm should be perfectly free from the weight of the body while writing.

POSITION OF PEN AND ARM.—Take the *pen* between the first and second fingers and thumb, letting it cross the forefinger just forward of the knuckle, and the second finger at the root of the nail, three-fourths of an inch from the pen's point. Bring the point squarely to the paper, and let the tip of the holder point toward the right shoulder.

The *thumb* should be bent outward at the first joint,



POSITION OF PEN AND ARM.

and touch the holder opposite the first joint of the forefinger.

The *first and second fingers* should touch each other as far as the first joint of the first finger; the *third and fourth* must be slightly curved and separate from the others at the middle joint, and rest upon the paper at the tips of the nails. The *wrist* must always be elevated a little above the desk. This position of the pen is, undoubtedly, the best for all writers using the finger movement, as it admits of the greatest freedom and facility of action of the fingers; but among writers using the muscular movement, where less depends upon the action of the fingers, it is common, and we think well, to allow the holder to fall back and below the knuckle joint; it is more easily held, and from its forming a more acute angle with the paper, moves more readily and smoothly over its surface.

MOVEMENTS.

Finger Movement is the combined action of the first and second fingers and thumb.

Forearm Movement is the action of the forearm sliding the hand on the nails of the third and fourth fingers.

Combined Movement is that which is most used in *business penmanship*. It is a union of the forearm with the finger movement, and possesses great advantage over the other movements in the greater rapidity and ease with which it is employed.

Wholearm Movement is the action of the wholearm from the shoulder with the elbow slightly raised, and the hand sliding on the nails of the third and fourth fingers; and is used with facility in striking capital letters and in off-hand flourishing.

MEDIEVAL (Modified.)

ABCDEFGHIJKL

MNOPQRSTUVW

* XYZ *

not to practice than to do so carelessly; one might as well seek to win a race by occasionally taking a turn in the opposite direction.

Good or well-constructed writing is no more essential than that it should be executed with facility and ease; yet a learner should never fall into the mistaken idea that he is to give special attention to speed before having acquired, by deliberate study and practice, correct forms and proportions in writing—first, accuracy; then, speed. Rapid and thoughtless practice is worse than useless. The mind must be educated before the hand. The hand and pen are only the servants of the mind, and as such can never surpass the mind's conception and power to guide and direct in any performance.

If upon the tablets of the mind there is presented constantly to our mental vision a perfect copy of the letters and their varied combinations into graceful writing, the hand will strike for the single and definite purpose of reproducing the same, and will progress steadily to the attainment of skill requisite for the reproduction of the most perfect conceptions of the mind. The hand of the greatest sculptor or artist has no cunning not imparted by a skillful brain. Michael Angelo was the chief of artists, because of his superior mental conception of art; and may we not suppose that the untouched canvas presented to his mental vision all the grandeur and beauty in design and finish that delighted the eye of the beholder when completed into the most exquisite work of art? The hand can never excel the conception of the mind that educates and directs its action. If Spencer or Flickinger excel others in the perfection and beauty of penmanship, is it not because of their superior conception of that in which superior penmanship consists? The student who would have success must see that his practice is preceded by, and always attended with, thoughtful study and criticism.

After having once written the copy, study and criticise your effort before the next trial. Your faults noted, and a thought as to how they may be best corrected, will enable you to make an intelligent and successful effort for improvement. Remember that unknown faults can never be avoided or corrected. First study to discover, and then to mend. Short exercises—or copies—if rightly practiced, are much more favorable for improvement than long ones, inasmuch as they are repeated at intervals so short as to keep faults and criticisms fresh in mind, while oft-repeated efforts for correction will be correspondingly effective. Faults observed by ourselves or pointed out by others at the beginning of a long copy are very likely to be out of mind before that portion of the copy in which they occur is repeated.

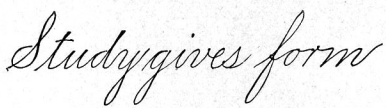
Writing Not a Special Gift.

It is often said that good writing is a "special gift." This idea is not only fallacious, but is exceedingly pernicious as regards the acquisition of good writing, inasmuch as it tends to discourage pupils who write badly, by leading them to believe that, not having "the gift," they are debarred from becoming good writers.

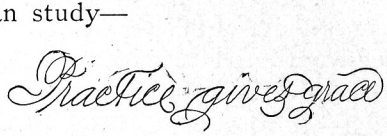
Good writing is no more a gift than is good reading, spelling, grammar, or any other attainment, and in the same way it is and *can* be acquired, viz., by patient and studious effort.

The correct form and construction of writing must be learned by study, while practice must give the manual dexterity for its easy and graceful execution. Many persons fail to become good writers from not properly uniting study and practice. Careful study with too little practice will give writing comparatively accurate in its form and manner of construction, but labored, stiff and awkward in its execution; while, upon the other hand, much practice with little study imparts a more easy and flowing style, but with much less accuracy as regards the forms of letters and general proportion and construction of the writing, which will commonly have a loose and sprawly appearance.

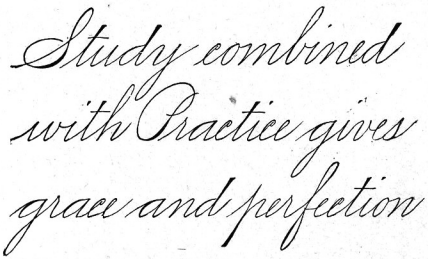
Example of writing which has resulted more from study than practice—



Example of writing in which there has been more practice than study—



Writing, the result of study properly combined with practice—



Undoubtedly, many of our patrons will see forcibly illustrated in one of these examples their own experience. So manifest is the effect of these different modes of practice that we have only to glance at a piece of writing to discern the extent in which a writer has combined study with practice while learning to write.

Unity and Simplicity of Form.

It is an old but true saying that a "jack of all trades is good at none." This is so from the fact that, working at many things, neither the hand nor brain can attain to a high order of proficiency or skill. It is the specialist that advances the standard of progress in all the directions of human discovery. Concentration of thought and action makes the great masters of the world, while by a diffusion of the same the greatest genius is dissipated and fails to attain to a marked degree of eminence.

So, in learning to write, the pupil who vacillates between many systems and multitudinous forms of letters must inevitably fail of becoming an expert and skillful writer. He has too much to learn *to learn* it well, and, like the "jack of many trades," must fail.

It is a matter of frequeut observation that persons learning or practicing writing vacillate between from two to six different forms of the capitals, and as many as are possible in the small letters, apparently in the belief that variety is the chief element of good writing, which is a double mistake, as it detracts from the good appearance of the writing at the same time that it enhances the difficulty of learning and executing it.

For example, we have known writers who, in executing a short piece of writing, would for many of the letters make use of forms as varied and numerous as follows:

and use more or less variety in all of the letters, thus requiring study and practice upon *about one hundred* different and unnecessarily complicated forms for the alphabet, in place of twenty-six. Thus the labor and uncertainty of becoming a skillful writer is magnified fourfold. A single and simple form for each letter, capital and small, should be adopted, and, with a few exceptions, which we shall hereafter explain, should be invariably practiced. Their frequent and uniform repetition will impart that accuracy of form, grace, and facility of execution which constitutes good writing.

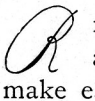
The simple forms are not only more easily acquired and more rapidly executed, but they are more easily read than the more ornate styles; in fact, those forms that cost the most are worth the least. It is as if a merchant should constantly purchase an inferior class of merchandise and pay the high price of the best; his chances for success certainly would not be very promising.

Economy of Form.

Labor, whether of the clerk or mechanic, is rewarded according to the results it can produce.

The copyist or clerk who can write one hundred words equally as well in the same time that another writes fifty, will certainly, other things being equal, command twice as much pay. The rapidity with which writing can be executed depends largely upon the simplicity of the forms of letters used and the size of the writing. A medium or small hand is written with much more ease and rapidity than a large hand, from the fact that the pen can be carried over short spaces in less time and with greater ease than over long ones, and can execute simple forms more easily and rapidly than complicated ones. To illustrate: Suppose one writer were to habitually make the capital R thus—

which requires eleven motions of the hand to execute; and that another were to uniformly make it thus—



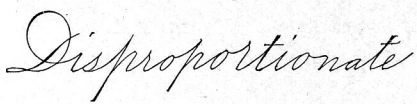
requiring only four motions of the hand. It is apparent that the difference of time acquired to make each cannot be less than the proportion of eleven to four. That is not all. The complicated form consists of many lines, some of which are required to run parallel to each other, and all made with reference to balancing or harmonizing with some other line, and requires to be made with much greater care and skill than the more simple form, so that the disadvantage is even greater than indicated by the simple proportion between eleven and four.

The practice of these complex forms of the alphabet will be fatal to rapid and legible business writing.

These remarks are intended to apply more especially to business and unprofessional writing. Where show and beauty are of greater consideration than dispatch, variety and complexity of forms are quite proper, and even necessary.

Correct Proportions Essential to Good Writing.

One might be able to execute faultlessly each single letter of the alphabet, and yet be a most miserable writer. Writing, to be really good, must be harmonious in all its parts; letters must be proportionate to each other, properly connected, spaced, have a uniform slope and degree of pen-pressure, etc., as well as an easy and graceful movement. The following example will illustrate the bad effect of disproportion of letters:



It will be seen that each letter, taken by itself, is

creditably accurate in form, and yet when associated with each other in a word, they present an appearance as ungainly as would an ox yoked with an elephant. We have often seen writing in which the letters were really badly formed, yet so harmonious in their combinations and easy in their construction as to present an attractive, not to say an elegant, effect; while, upon the other hand, we have often seen writing in which the letters were well formed, and yet so awkward in their combinations and labored in their execution as to be really painful to the sight of persons having a refined and correct taste regarding writing.

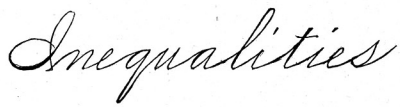
Correct and Incorrect Spacing.

Another important factor of good writing is the proper spacing and connecting of letters and words; upon these very much depends, as in many instances the connecting lines alone impart the distinctive character to letters.

In determining the proper spacing of writing, the distance between the straight lines of the small *u* may be taken as a space in width. The distance between the parts of letters having more than one downward stroke should be one space; between the letters, one and one-fourth spaces, measured at the head line, except *a*, *d*, *g*, and *q*, which should occupy two spaces, measuring from the preceding letter to the point of the ovals; between words there should be two spaces.

Example of correct spacing:

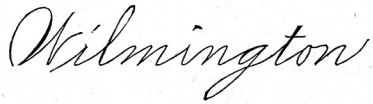
Incorrect spacing:



Slant of Writing.

The degree of slant now adopted by the leading authors, and one which we approve, is at an angle of 52° from the horizontal, as per diagram on another page.

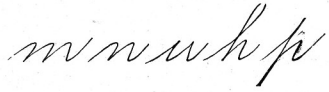
The relative effects of incorrect and correct slope may be seen in the following examples:



The variation in the slope of different letters and their parts will be rendered much more perceptible by

drawing straight extended lines through their parts, thus:

One of the most common faults in slope occurs on the last part of letters *m*, *n*, *u*, *h* and *p*, which are made thus:



Example of correct slant, space, proportion, etc.:

Size of Writing.

In its practical application to the affairs of life, writing must be greatly varied in its size, according to the place in and purpose for which it is used.

It would be obviously bad taste to use the same size and style of writing for the headings of a ledger and other books of account or record that would be employed on the body of a page. In the address of a letter and superscription upon the envelope much greater license, as regards size and style, may be taken than in the body of the writing. Nor is it practical at all times to maintain a uniform size for body writing. It may with propriety be written larger upon wide than narrow ruled paper. Care should always be taken to gauge the size of the writing according to the space in and purpose for which it is to be written. This should be done by varying the scale rather than the proportions of the writing. When writing upon ruled paper we should always imagine the space between the lines to be divided into four equal spaces, three of which may be occupied by the writing; the fourth must not be touched, save by the downward extended letters from the line above. This open space between the lines separates them, and enables the eye more readily to follow and distinguish between the lines when reading. A small or medium hand is the best, both as regards the readiness with which it is read, or ease and rapidity of its execution.

In a large hand the writing is apt to be more or less intermingled and confused, the loops of one line often cutting into and obscuring the writing upon other lines, while the more extended sweeps of the pen in the large writing are proportionately slow and tedious.

For legibility, ease and rapidity of execution, small, unshaded writing is decidedly the best.

Conspicuous Faults in Writing.

To note and indicate all the faults liable to occur in writing, or to prescribe a cure-all remedy, is more than we presume to undertake. They are as numerous and varied as are the circumstances, habits, tastes and accomplishments of the writers; but it is quite safe to say that a very large porportion of all the "onpleasantness" in writing comes from sheer carelessness on the part of the writers which is manifest in the awkward, nondescript or uncertain forms which are employed—forms often most easy and graceful, but which, taken separately, represent no intelligible character, and, apart from the context, are liable to be mistaken for any one of several letters that are similar in their construction. This fault is specially grievous where it occurs as an initial letter, in short names, abbreviations and cipher writing, as in such cases the context furnishes the reader little or no aid.

Another prolific source of annoyance, and not infrequently illegibility, arises from the inexcusable use of flourishes and superfluous lines; we say *inexcusable*, because, at best, they mix and confuse the writing, and, when hurriedly and carelessly made, they frequently take forms which are liable to be mistaken by the reader for letters or parts of letters, and thereby puzzle and annoy, if not entirely change, the intent of the writer. Another frequent fault is the personal eccentricity, which leads writers to adopt, as *their style*, forms for letters, and especially capitals and in autographs, which are entirely outside the pale of any known system of writing, and whose identity can only be guessed at by those unfamiliar with *their style*

While, as we have stated, it is quite impossible to name all the sources of bad writing, or to formulate rules for its prevention or correction, we do believe that there are many of the most common faults—among which are those enumerated above—that with a little thought and care may be avoided.

To aid our patrons so far as is possible by negative instruction, to avoid some of the more common and inexcusable faults, we have formulated a few rules, with examples illustrative, which we here present.

RULES.

Rule First.—All unnecessary, superfluous or flourished lines, as shown in Fig. 1 on opposite page, should be omitted.

Rule Second.—No capital letters or words should be joined together. (See Fig. 2.)

Rule Three.—Capital letters should not be joined to the smaller letters, or be of doubtful form. (See Fig. 3.)

Rule Four.—The capital T should never be looped at the top. (See Fig. 4.)

We have been informed by a manager of the Western Union Telegraph that several expensive litigations have grown out of the delivery of messages having the latter combination, as Seventy when it was written for Twenty, or *vice versa*, by the sender of the dispatch. We are not informed respecting the precise circumstances of any of the cases; but suppose the error to have been in orders to buy twenty thousand bushels of grain, shares of stock, or other thing of similar value, the consequences might have been serious.

Rule Five.—A capital H should never be so made as to be mistaken for an A or other combination. (See Fig. 5.)

Rule Sixth.—Cross all t's with a single horizontal line at the top. (See Fig. 6.)

A telegraph dispatch signed as in Example 6 was copied and sent to Ha-Hi-E, who was not known at the street and number to which it was directed, and it was consequently returned; and when the error was discovered, and traced to the operator who made it, he was asked how he came to make such a mistake, and whom he supposed Ha-Hi-E to be. The operator replied, "Some Indian chief or Chinese"—a very natural supposition in such a city of all peoples as is New York.

Rule Seven.—The capital I should always be made above the line, while the J should extend below. Otherwise, when used as initials or in cipher-writing, they cannot be distinguished with certainty.

Rule Eight.—The small *s* should never be made with the loop below the line, as it is liable to be mistaken for a *p* or *f*, as in Fig. 7.

Rule Nine.—Letters should be connected in their parts, and with other letters, by the proper and characteristic curved or straight lines. It is a very common and grievous fault in writing that a straight line or the wrong curve is employed in the construction and connection of letters, thus leaving them without distinctive character, or imparting one which is false and misleading. As, for instance, a form made thus may be taken for an , a , and, possibly, for a .

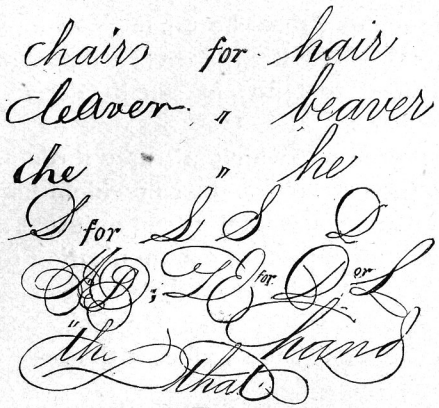


Fig. 1.

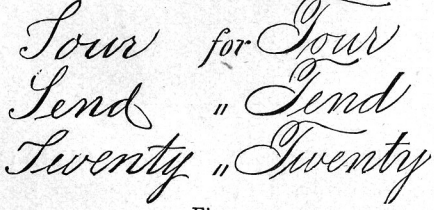


Fig. 4.

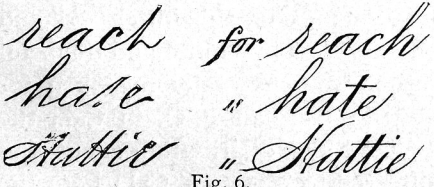


Fig. 6.

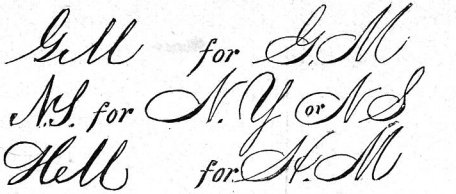


Fig. 2.

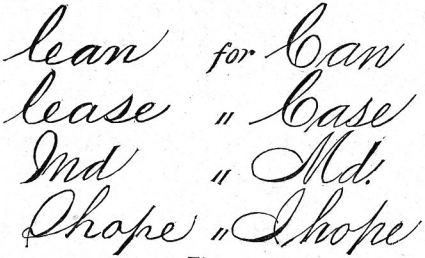


Fig. 3.

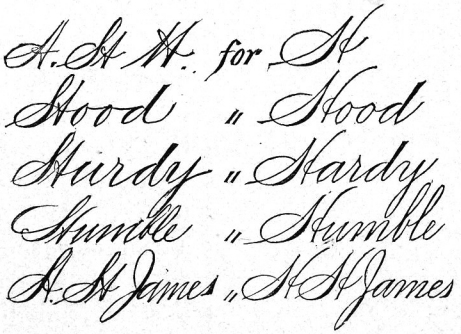


Fig. 5.

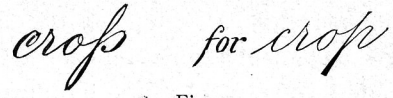


Fig. 7.

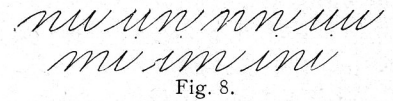


Fig. 8.

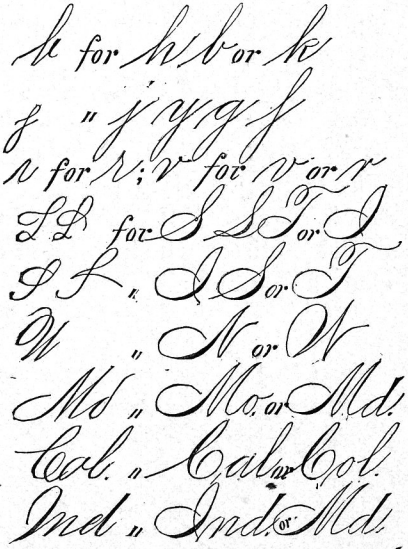


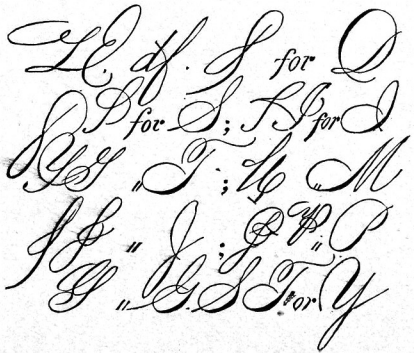
Fig. 9.

In cases where the context does not determine, its identity becomes a mere matter of guess, and when extended thus *MW* its significance, as will be seen, is still more vague and uncertain, as it might be intended for either of the seven combinations given in Fig. 8 on the preceding page.

With a properly-trained hand, no more time or effort is required to impart the true and unmistakable characteristics to each letter than to make forms whose identity is open to doubt and conjecture.

Rule Ten.—No letter should have a doubtful form, such as may be mistaken for one of several letters, as in Fig. 9 on preceding page.

Rule Eleven.—All eccentric forms and conspicuous personal oddities, which so often render writing, and especially autographs, illegible, should be avoided, as—

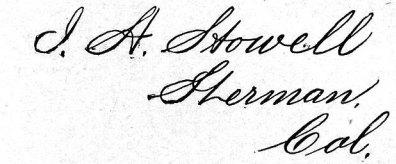


Writers should remember that short names and initial letters, when carelessly written, are very liable to be misread, from the fact that no aid can be derived from the context.

A large proportion of letters which miscarry through the mails do so from the careless manner in which they are superscribed. As an example, let us suppose that a writer desires to address an important communication to

J. H. Howell,
Sherman, Cal.,

but he hurriedly and carelessly superscribes it thus—



The abbreviation for the name of the State (Cal.) is so indefinite that the letter goes first to Colorado, but there being no Herman or Sherman in that State, it is finally re-directed to Herman, Cal., the inital "S" and following letter "h" being of so indefinite and doubtful a character, they together were naturally mistaken for an H; but there being no Herman P. O. in Cal., the mistake is finally discovered by a distributing agent, and the letter is again re-directed to Sherman, Cal.; here the

H in Howell is read St, and, accordingly, the letter is placed in S box for general delivery; not being called for, it is at length advertised in the list of undelivered letters, thus: I. A. Stowell. The J having been made above the line is mistaken for an I, while the initial H is so nearly closed at the top that it is mistaken for an A. After being duly advertised, the letter is sent to the Dead Letter Office at Washington, and from there returned, after several weeks, to the writer. J. H. Howell, in the meantime, has inquired daily for letters at the Sherman Post-office, when the delivery clerk has looked in the H box and answered, "Nothing." Mr. Howell has also carefully scanned every list of advertised letters, but never could he have imagined that the letter advertised for I. A. Stowell was the one he had so long and anxiously looked for.

It is just such errors as those above described that cause a large percentage of the miscarriages of mail matter. We present this article in the hope that by thus calling the attention of our many readers to these faults, they may be led to avoid them, and to that extent be benefited by our labor and research.

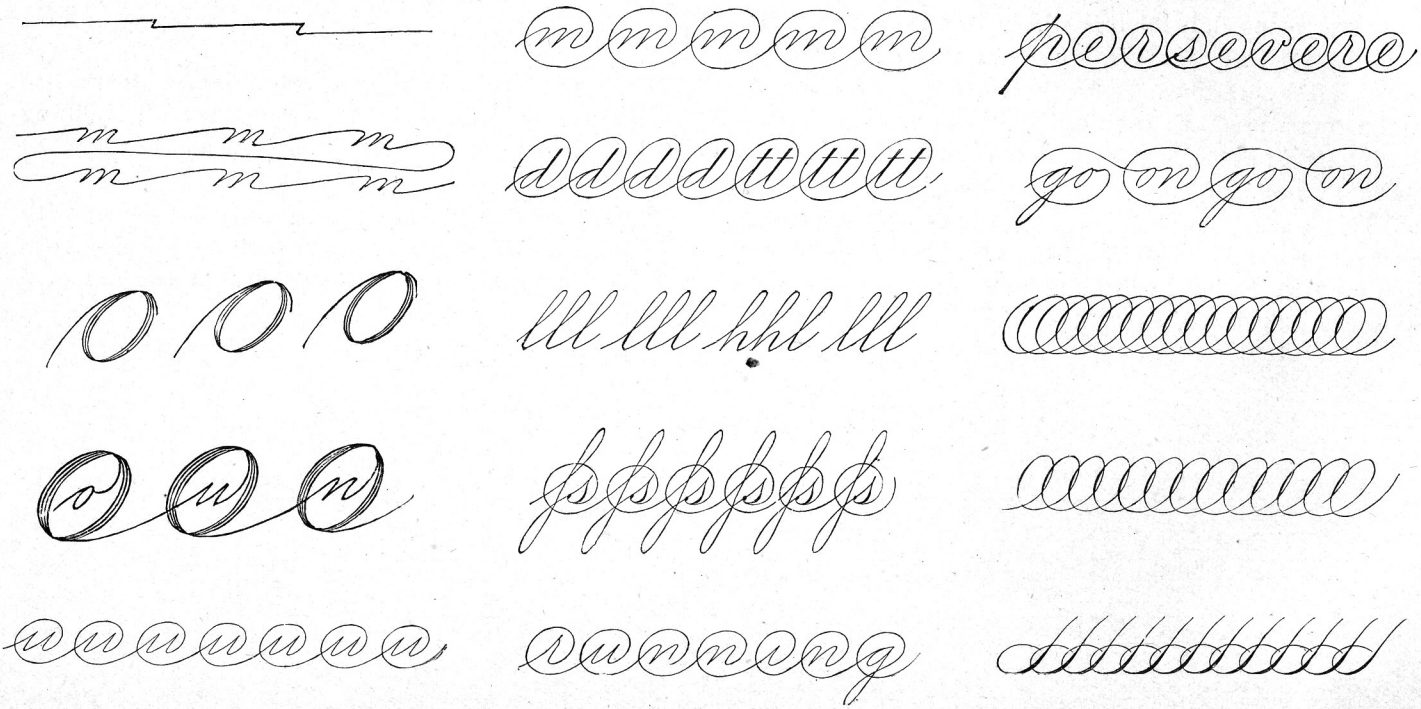
Movement Exercises.

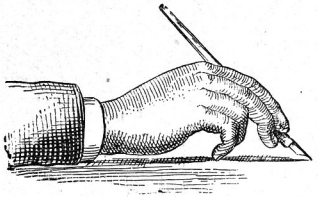
Much practice should be devoted by the learner to movement exercises, for the purpose of disciplining and bringing under perfect control the motions of the hand and arm.

The following will serve a good purpose, which, with the copies annexed, will answer well as a guide to a course of twenty lessons, with or without the aid of a teacher.

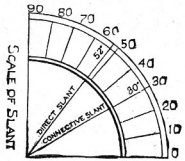
EXERCISES AND COPIES FOR PRACTICE.

Movement Exercises.





PRINCIPALS.



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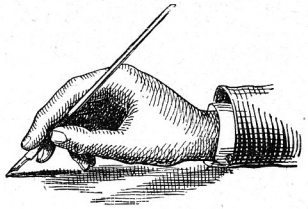

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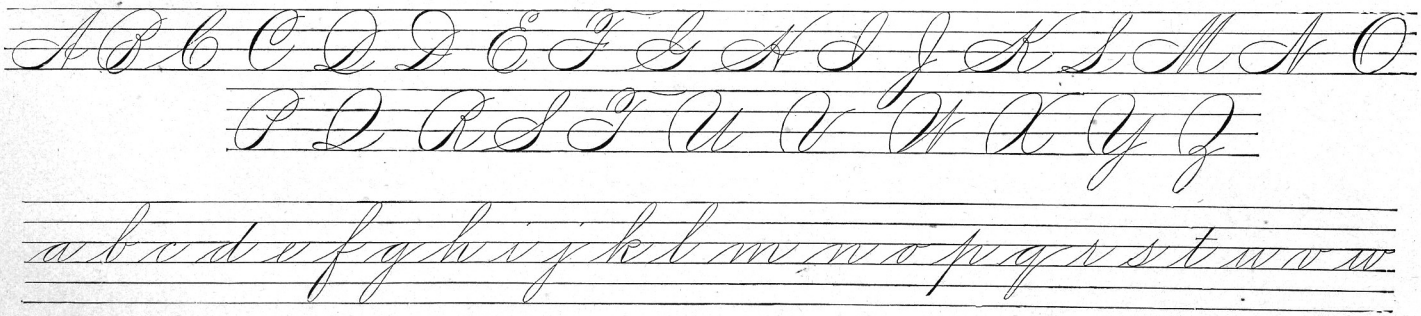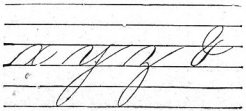
Standard Hand,