

Thank you for sharing the pages — the wording in the letter actually makes the meaning much clearer. The key lines appear to read (paraphrased from the first page):

“In regard to **Eddie’s instruction in books**, I have decided to get **Richardson’s**. A new work and used by all the best teachers here. It is considered much better than Bertini’s which has always been thought the best until the work came out... The **practice for the hand** is much better than **Bertini’s**, giving one more command over the pencil...”

This context tells us something important: **these are not language textbooks**. They are **penmanship / handwriting copybooks**.

Richardson’s Copy Books

“**Richardson’s**” refers to penmanship manuals by **Benjamin Franklin Richardson**.

Typical titles included:

- **Richardson's System of Penmanship**

These books were widely adopted in American schools in the **late 1840s–1850s**. They taught:

- correct pen holding
- stroke drills
- letter formation
- copy exercises progressing from lines to sentences

The system emphasized **muscle control and uniform strokes**, which fits the letter’s comment about “**practice for the hand.**”

Bertini’s Copy Books

“**Bertini’s**” refers to earlier handwriting copybooks by **Giovanni Bertini**.

A common title was:

- **Bertini's Copy Books**

These were popular in American schools during the **1830s–1840s** and taught traditional **copperplate script**.

By the **1850s**, newer systems like Richardson’s were sometimes promoted as improvements.

What the Letter Reveals

The letter is discussing **how a child should learn handwriting**, not language study.

Interesting Historical Detail

If the child mentioned (“**Eddie**” in the script) is **about three**, the letter may be discussing **early preparation for schooling**, since formal copybook training usually started around **age 5–7**. The writer seems to be thinking ahead about which **method the teachers prefer**.

✅ For your research on the Gray letters:

This passage is a nice small window into **1850s educational practices** — specifically how parents compared different **penmanship systems**, which were considered very important for proper schooling.

Most likely book Lucy meant by “Richardson’s”

The most probable title is:

Richardson's System of Penmanship

This was a **copybook series used in American schools beginning in the late 1840s and early 1850s**. It was promoted as a **modern improvement over earlier European copybooks**, emphasizing:

- progressive stroke drills
- better hand control
- systematic letter construction
- graded practice sheets for students

The wording in Lucy’s letter — “*a new work and used by all the best teachers here*” — fits exactly how Richardson’s method was advertised in school catalogs around **1850–1853**.

What “Bertini’s” likely refers to

The comparison book is probably:

Bertini's Copy Books

These copybooks were **older European copperplate writing manuals** widely used in American schools earlier in the century. By the **1840s–1850s**, many teachers were switching from Bertini-style copybooks to newer American systems such as Richardson’s or Spencerian.

Lucy’s wording suggests exactly that transition:

- **Bertini’s** → older but respected method
- **Richardson’s** → new system teachers were adopting