

Your next injunction that a writer should not fill his letter with complaints of paucity of subjects, "I am not conscious of having offended against - certainly not in this letter, for here the very number of ideas seeking for expression" confused and by their different claims so much delays that I at length concluded by taking them as they occurred the good and bad together - Here I might introduce the simile of sand running through a small opening; but I will be concise, and have more to the imagination than New York. April. 1st 1835. expressed -

Your remarks upon those other characteristics of a letter, its being a "speedy Answer" and of suitable length, I must leave to be discussed at some future period and proceed to give you information on a subject with regard to which I appear to have produced. It is an oft-quoted remark of W. H. Garrison, that in time we may become used to anything even the Evil in China; such being the case as enforced by such high authority who can do just the fact I entertain sanguine hopes that with an exercise of six months you have become accustomed to my want of punctuality as a correspondent, that you have ceased to hasten any portion of your thoughts upon my remainings, and would be on the contrary more astonished were I so much to depart from my wonted custom as to send you any quick reply. As according to the present constitution of rather rashness of society decidedly outrage either is astonishment or to be astonished. I could not for a moment harbour the thought that through any means should be justly applicable to either of us. I would always excuse so as we have recourse where we are in the habit of always thinking hoping that a poor excuse is better than none, and forgetting I. Frankins' remark upon those who are good at making excuses. However if you will promise not to be astonished, I will, in return, promise and endeavour to be more punctual for the future. I am sure of your forgiveness, and perhaps it is on that account that I do not require it; as fear (unworthy confession) is with every man on most occasions a more powerful spur to action than gratitude. Though this be the case, I hope that you will depend for my reformation rather on my gratitude for your favours than for the fear, I might have for your censures - The latter though the most efficacious is not the most pleasing.

I am not going to leave the city.

This last page is written in what the learned writer from whom you quote would call the diffuse, but which I would call the rambling style; as when we ramble over the fields on a summer's day, setting out perhaps with some nominal object of pursuit, for a while we hold our course direct, but soon, as chance or whim direct we wander from our path, allured by the gaudy butterfly, or culled by each popping flower that meets our eye, until surprised by the close of day, we return to our homes our object uneffected, our goal unreached. So in this species of writing, we start with some leading idea, (though perhaps indistinct and not half developed), we commence the expression of this idea, but are turned from our purpose by some intrusive thought or fanciful conceit, until at last surprised by the unwieldy length of our period we are obliged to close, no one thought being fully expressed. In a word we have written a concise sentence according to the definition of your authority on such subjects "one in which more is suggested to the reader's imagination than is expressed."

Ending here my peroration, I proceed to execute the pleasing duty of returning you my heartfelt thanks for your very acceptable letter; though thanks are due for any communication coming from you my Dear Emma, for your last letter they are more especially so. In those preceding you indeed gave me pleasure by informing me of your welfare and that of your kindred, entertained and interested me by your news or instructed me by your sentiments; but the same expressions might have used, the same thoughts introduced, and the same subjects discussed in an ordinary letter to an indifferent person. In those you asserted friendships and no doubt felt it, but in this alone have you given evidence of that feeling, and you have done this by ^{noticing} ~~correcting~~ my faults. Since I have asserted that this act is a sure indication of a friend, provided always it be performed in a proper spirit, and with a view to the improvement of him in error rather than to the purpose of exhibiting our own superiority or for the gratification of establishing my claim

to that character find a ^{few} faults with your style of writing. It may be comprised in few words "It is general, not particular. General propositions are often very pleasing to contemplate, & fill us with admiration of the genius of a writer but are seldom ^{applied} of any practical ~~admission~~ application.

Of what advantage can it be to me to be informed that "one of the most obvious distinctions of style arises from an author's expanding or contracting his ideas more or less?" Had you said "your style is too concise or diffuse as the case may be, giving an instance of the fault, comprehending exactly what you would object, the correction would be comparatively easy; as it is, I have not sufficient self-knowledge to be myself aware of the particular fault which needs correction; and I not considering my letters of sufficient importance to need preservation I have copies of none which I have written, to which I might refer, and referring apply your judicious criticism."

One other little fault needs a ^{long word} admonition and I have done - A prose quotation of more than three lines is absolutely inadmissible in a letter; a quotation evinces that we take little interest in our correspondence; as unwilling to undergo the "drudgery of brains" necessary to work out and arrange our own ideas, we have recourse to those of others, and use not only their ^{ideas} language but even their language. You may plead that quotations might have more weight, but that again is paying no compliment to your correspondent to suppose that to render good sense and truth of any avail, it must be sanctioned by a name.

As I would not be numbered among those who know their faults but never mend, I shall adopt so many of the corrections you have been so very kind as to furnish me with as I could comprehend, and that the others may be hereafter equally beneficial I shall preserve a copy of this present letter, hoping you will bestow upon it some particular criticisms, not abstract propositions with regard to letter writing in general but some remarks having a direct bearing upon the faults of this present epistle.

This letter has in perfection your points requisite for a good letter, "bears a direct reference to the one which it was intended to answer" and in this

one point at least I have been benefited by your kindness.
It sympathises with ^{or rather responds to} the sentiments contained in your letter, as
as I have been able to judge of them; actuated by a wish for my
improvement your letter was written, by the same motive actuated
the answer is returned.

It shall also contain all the news I am in possession of — since I last
wrote the weather had been variable — I have been quite well as has
also Mary — I have been pursuing my law studies, and also taking
lessons in French — I have been to about half a dozen parties all of which were



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18

Miss Emma Smith
Care of Mr. Whittier
Examination
Boston &c

very pleasant especially one at your friend Eliza Stodd's. — I suppose a
minute description of the various dresses or of the style of the suppers would
not be very interesting, and I can imagine that I shall be excused
for not mentioning the belle of the evening, what music we had &c.
and I doubt not your imagination can paint the headaches
of the subsequent day — Here are all the news I can at this moment
recal, and if in any future letter you find the news department
deficient, you can refer to this, looking upon this as the synopsis
of the employments of each passing month — ever the same — varied
and even then in the most trifling particulars, by the season alone. —