

SOME LONDON STYLES

Samuel Richardson, *Letters Written to and for Particular Friends, on the Most Important Occasions* (London: C. Rivington, J. Osborn and J. Leake, 1741), pp. 39–42. Glasgow University Library, shelfmark gow Sp Coll Bk2-k.3.

Charles Hallifax, *Familiar Letters on Various Subjects of Business and Amusement: Written in a Natural, Easy Manner; And Publish'd, Principally, for the Service of the Younger Part of Both Sexes* (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), pp. 15–25, 97–104. Cambridge University Library, shelfmark 7240.d.54.

George Fisher, *The Instructor: Or, Young Man's Best Companion. Containing Spelling, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, in an Easier Way than Any yet Published*, 19th edn (London: H. Woodfall, J. Fuller, W. Strahan, J. Rivington, R. Baldwin et al, 1767), pp. 46–50. Robinson Library, Newcastle University, shelfmark Bradshaw 374.1 FIS.

The following extracts are offered as examples of different styles prevalent at mid-century. Letters were frequently culled from Samuel Richardson's *Letters Written to and for Particular Friends, on the Most Important Occasions* (1741) and from Charles Hallifax's *Familiar Letters on Various Subjects of Business and Amusement* (1754) by a variety of other, far more popular regional and transatlantic manuals. Their styles would therefore be widely familiar across the Atlantic world. Fisher's *Instructor* was reprinted innumerable times on both sides of the Atlantic in different English, Scottish and American editions; its letter writing style would therefore be widely familiar too. Letters were also frequently culled from Eliza Haywood's *Epistles for the Ladies* (London: T. Gardner, 1749), which is available from Pickering & Chatto and therefore not reproduced here.

Samuel Richardson (bap. 1689–1761) was the author of several hugely popular epistolary novels: *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1747–8) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753–4). He was also one of several well known eighteenth-century writers who composed letter manuals. His *Letters Written to and for Particular Friends* are now often known as *Familiar Letters*, after the title given to them by their modern editor.

Like all letter manuals, Richardson's *Letters Written to and from Particular Friends* was designed to provide 'Rules to Think and Act by, as well as Forms to Write after';¹ in other words, this was both a conduct book and a set of letter-writing models. Richardson's Preface concentrates on the duties and principles of conduct he hopes to inculcate, perhaps assuming that these might be less obvious to contemporaries than the manual's letter-writing function. Richardson's letter-writer went through five London editions between 1741 and 1752, a respectable but not stunning achievement. Many of Richardson's letters did, however, live on in other manuals. Later manuals usually drew upon Richardson for models of writing and conduct for people in the lower and lower-middle ranks; they also culled some of the letters of advice in which his collection abounds.

Charles Hallifax's *Familiar Letters* announces in its introduction that it is designed 'chiefly to form the Style'; but also to 'form the judgement' by conveying knowledge of the world ('what you may depend upon from your Equals, and what you are to expect from your Superiors; or rather, what you are not to expect from them').² Nothing is known about Hallifax, and this too may have been a pseudonym. But appropriately for a name borrowed from earls, Hallifax's manual was overall more upmarket than Richardson's, offering many 'Letters written to the greatest Person, and from those in different Stations' as well as many 'Letters of Politeness and Ceremony' situated primarily among the gentry. The style of Hallifax's letters to superiors is exemplified in the second extract from this manual (below, pp. 34–41). However, the letters most frequently culled from Hallifax, besides some of his letters of advice, were letters between elder and younger brothers, and letters between parents and children written in the sentimental style (as in the first extract, below, pp. 23–33). This manual is described in its Introduction as a compilation of manuscript letters by different hands, to which the compiler had added letters of his own. Though describing the letters as 'Written in a Natural Easy Manner' on its title page, it therefore contained different styles. There were five London editions of Hallifax's manual between sometime before 1754 (described as the second edition) and 1765, some of which spell his name with a single L.

George Fisher's *The Instructor: Or Young Man's Best Companion* was a *vade mecum*. Besides instruction on grammar, spelling, making ink, and letter writing, it contained sections on arithmetic ('both vulgar and decimal'), on double-entry book-keeping, geography, astronomy and gardening, together with forms of bills of lading, invoices, receipts and bills of exchange and all the standard legal forms. *The Instructor* was emphatically designed 'to form the young Man's Mind for Business,' (though it did have instructions for women on how to make pickles and wine) *The Instructor* offered relatively few model letters, but began its collection with a mixed letter 'of business and love'. This was an extremely common type of letter at a time when people often preferred to do business (especially

transatlantic business) with family, friends and acquaintance, and it suggests that the models from different letter classes which follow could also be combined. The style of Fisher's letters is simpler, tauter and closer to ordinary conversation than Richardson's or Hallifax's, and even non-business letters are short and functional, and get straight to the point.

Fisher's *Instructor* was a huge transatlantic best-seller. There were twenty-eight London editions between c. 1735 and 1798, plus multiple London printings outside this series which describe themselves as 'a new edition' or 'for the booksellers'. Multiple editions were also printed in Edinburgh between 1762 (or earlier) and 1799. The edition of 1773 describes itself as the twenty-second. Glasgow produced five runs between 1786 and 1796, and Dublin and Belfast one printing each, in 1736 and 1754 respectively. Fisher's *Instructor* was also printed multiple times in America in slightly different forms, and under three different titles: *The American Instructor*, *The Instructor or American Young Man's Best Companion* and *The Instructor or Young Man's Best Companion*. Franklin & Hall were one of its American printers.

These were not the only styles in circulation. The styles seen in Volumes 1 and 2 were still around. Complementary letters, letters translated from the French or Latin, and letters borrowed from John Hill's *Young Secretary's Guide* continued to be reprinted. Older manuals also survived in peoples' homes and libraries; indeed, judging by inscriptions and marginalia, manuals on both sides of the Atlantic were handed down in families and were often still in use a century or more after their publication date.

Notes:

- 1 Samuel Richardson, *Letters Written to and for Particular Friends, on the Most Important Occasions* (London: C. Rivington, J. Osborn and J. Leake, 1741), preface. p. 2.
- 2 Charles Hallifax, *Familiar Letters on Various Subjects of Business and Amusement: Written in a Natural, Easy Manner; And Publish'd, Principally, for the Service of the Younger Part of Both Sexes* (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), p. v.

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L E T T E R XXVI.

*From a Country Chapman beginning Trade, to
a City Dealer, offering his Correspondence.*

S I R,

Manchester, Oct. 26.

TH E Time of my Apprenticeship, with Mr. *Dobbins* of this Town, being expired, I am just going to begin for myself in *Chesterfield*; having taken a Shop there for that Purpose. And as I know the Satisfaction you always gave to my Master in your Dealings; I make an Offer to you of my Correspondence, in Expectation that you will use me as well as you have done him, in whatever I may write to you for. And this I the rather expect, as you cannot disoblige Mr. *Dobbins* by it, because of the Distance I shall be from him; and I shall endeavour to give you equal Content with regard to my Payments, &c. Your speedy Answer, whether or no you are disposed to accept of my Offer, will oblige,

Your humble Servant.

L E T-

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LETTER XXVII.

In Answer to the foregoing.

S I R,

I HAVE received yours of *October 20.* and very chearfully accept the Favour you offer me. I will take Care to serve you in the best manner I am able, and on the same foot with Mr. *Dobbins*; not doubting you will make as punctual Returns as he does; which intitles him to a more favourable Usage, than could otherwise be afforded. I wish you Success with all my Heart, and am

Your obliged Servant.

LETTER XXVIII.

From a Maid-servant in Town, acquainting her Father and Mother in the Country, with a Proposal of Marriage, and asking their Consents.

Honoured Father and Mother,

I Think it my Duty to acquaint you, that I am addressed to for a Change of Condition, by one Mr. *John Tanner*, who is a Glazier, and lives in the Neighbourhood by us. He is a young Man of a sober Character, and has been set up about two Years; has good Business for his Time, and is well beloved and spoken of by every one. My Friends here think well of it, particularly my Master and Mistress; and, he says, he doubts not, by God's Blessing on his Industry, to maintain a Family very prettily: And I have fairly told him, how little he has to expect with me. But

most Important Occasions. 47

But I would not conclude on any thing, however, till I had acquainted you with his Proposals, and asked your Blessings and Consents. For I am, and ever will be,

Your dutiful Daughter.

LETTER XXIX.

From the Parents, in Answer to the preceding.

Dear Nanny,

WE have received your dutiful Letter. We can only pray to God to direct and bless you in all your Engagements. Our Distance from you, must make us leave every thing to your own Discretion; and as you are so well satisfied in Mr. *Tanner's* Character, as well as all Friends, and your Master and Mistress, we give our Blessings and Consents with all our Hearts: We are only sorry we can do no more for you. But let us know when it is done, and we will do some little Matters, as far as we are able, towards House-keeping. Our Respects to Mr. *Tanner*. Every body joins with us in Wishes for your Happiness; and may God bless you, is all that can be said; by

Your truly loving Father and Mother.

LETTER XXX.

From the same, acquainting her Parents with her Marriage.

Honoured Father and Mother,

I Write to acquaint you, that last *Thursday* I was married to Mr. *Tanner*, and am to go home to him in a Fortnight. My Master and
Mistress

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Mistress have been very kind, and have made me a Present towards Housekeeping of Three Guineas. I had saved Twenty Pounds in Service, and that is all. I told him the naked Truth of every thing. And indeed did not intend to marry so soon; but when I had your Letter, and shew'd it him, he would not let me rest till it was done. Pray don't straiten your selves out of Love to me. He joins with me in saying so, and bids me present his Duty to you, and tell you, that he fears not to maintain me very well. I have no Reason to doubt of being very happy. And your Prayers for a Blessing on both our Industry, will, I hope, be a Means to make us more so. We are, and ever shall be, with Respects to all Friends,

Your most dutiful Son and Daughter,

LETTER XXXI.

Recommending a Superior Man-Servant.

SIR,

THE Bearer of this is Mr. *Jahn Andrews*, whom I mentioned to you last time I saw you; and for whose Integrity and Ability to serve you in the Way you talked of, I dare be answerable. I take the greater Pleasure in this Recommendation, as I doubt not it will be of Service to you both. And am, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant.

