

American Copybooks

An Outline of their History from

AMERICAN COPYBOOKS

An Outline of their History from Colonial to Modern Times

by STANLEY MORISON

With Thirteen Illustrations

PHILADELPHIA

WM. F. FELL CO. PRINTERS

1951

Preface

The justification for this publication is that its subject is relatively new, and has lately attracted some interest. In 1933, I lectured at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, on the history of handwriting as we have it in the Western World. In three installments I endeavored, with the help of a hundred slides covering two thousand years, to explain why we write the way we do. The last lecture was filled in with an outline of the developments in American calligraphy. This was made easy for me by the late George Plimpton, then the head of Ginn & Co., the educational publishers of New York. Mr. Plimpton's collections included a fine range of early, middle and late "Calligraphica Americana." Mr. Plimpton kindly allowed me the free run of his library, and permission to take photographs for use as lantern slides.

In connection with the lectures, the Grolier Club of New York mounted an exhibition of printed copybooks from their origin in the work of Ludovico Arrighi Vicentino (Rome, 1522) Mr. Plimpton lent a considerable number of the exhibits, Italian, French, Dutch, English and American, which I described to the members. In the following year I wrote an article entitled "American Penmanship" for the *Colophon* (New York, 1934). It is now reissued in revised and much expanded form.

In the meantime Professor Ray Nash has lectured on the history of American handwriting. The Boston Club of Odd Volumes in 1942 arranged an exhibition of copybooks principally from Mr. Nash's collection. Mr. Nash's introduction, read at the opening, was later printed in an illustrated booklet: *Some Early Writing Books and Masters* (Boston, 1943)

A similar exhibition was held at the Grolier Club of New York in 1944, in which connection Mr. Nash addressed the members. He also contributed an illustrated article to *Antiques* (New York, September, 1944) and another to the *Journal of the American Institute Of Graphic Arts* (New York, April, 1945)

More recently, my term as John M. Wing Visiting Fellow at the Newberry Library, Chicago, 111. For 1949 gave me the opportunity of renewing acquaintance with the works of American masters. Apart from the Newberry's earlier acquisitions I was able once more to examine the collection, brought together by my late friend, C. Lindsay Ricketts, formerly of Wilmette, Ill., who possessed by far the best collection of calligraphy in private hands. This collection is now at the Newberry where, by the generosity of the Trustees and the Librarian, I was enabled to work upon it. During my Fellowship I put together an article on "Early Italian and American Printed Writing Books" which appeared in the *Newberry Library Bulletin*, second series, No. I (October, 1948). This may be allowed mention at least by way of completing the bibliography and giving me the chance to thank my friends in Chicago for their great liberality.

It was while I was working at Chicago that I received from Philadelphia a request to contribute to the series of "Keepsakes" the Win. F. Fell Company plans to issue from time to time. They kindly accepted the suggestion of printing this expanded edition of the essay that appeared in the Colophon, referred to above. The present print is by no means a complete outline of the subject. Much remains to be done before a full and just account of the development of American handwriting is possible. A prior requirement is a bibliography on the lines of Sir Ambrose Heal's volume on the English Writing Masters. I look in the direction of Professor Ray Nash of Dartmouth College at Hanover, N. H. and Mr. Philip Hofer of the Harvard College Library. In the meantime the present text is offered for correction.

I am grateful to the Wm. F. Fell Company for the handsome form they have conferred upon the present material, and the illustrations they have included in what pretends to be no more than a note on an admittedly minor yet not uninteresting department of Americana, to which the contribution of Philadelphia is not insignificant.

STANLEY MORISON
London, February, 1951

A TREATISE that exhibits and teaches the art of alphabetical writing, shows the pupil, by diagram or model, how to form capitals, and tells when to employ small letters, is called a "copybook." The term is Elizabethan, although the first English printed publication of the kind by Jean de Beaulieu and John Balloon is merely entitled *A Booke* (containing divers sortes of hands, London, 1570). But Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, published in 1594, refers to "a text B" as in a "Coppie-Book." The term may well be far older.

Copybooks, either written out or printed direct from wood blocks or copperplates, comprise the readiest sources of our knowledge of the changes in script. The books, written or printed, were compiled by professional scribes, private secretaries or public writing masters. Such written instruction books in the art were known in the Middle Ages. Printed examples first appeared in Italy in the 1520's and circulated in England a generation before Beaulieu and Balloon's *Booke* inculcated the elements of what was known in Elizabethan England as "clarkis-shyppe." It was necessary for a "clark" in those days to practise several hands appropriate to the language and purpose of the work. Even a novice needed a gothic as well as a roman hand, and those in two styles: formal and informal. All early treatises on handwriting comprise at least these varieties. Today such books in England and America are simple and teach but a few hands, all of them variations of formal and cursive roman.

Of course the copybooks issued by the writing masters whose names they bear are not the only guides to the changes in the script used by our forefathers. But they remain a primary source, since the original private correspondence, public writing in charters, books and other documents, written professionally or otherwise, prove, among other things, that the writers were notably faithful to the teaching of their masters. Thus King Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth wrote the formal Chancery cursive exactly according to the models set in vogue by the Italian humanists. The great and the less great of that generation wrote a plain hand, broke into decoration for the initial and final words of the letter, and flourished their signatures and the names of those whom they were addressing. These are the oldest tricks of conscious personal calligraphy. The same habit may be seen in the autographs of the fathers of the American republic. Benjamin Franklin was particularly good at it. He

wrote a good "copybook" hand, as will be seen. Thus private persons kept to the style they learnt from the professionals. The gap between script of the professional and the lay writers was then negligible, and hence it is often possible to date approximately manuscripts and autographs.

Divergence between private and professional handwriting came later, with first the excesses, lastly the decay, of professionalism. Few private writers have the capacity, or the time, for elaboration. Flourishing of capitals, shading of the small letters, and overelaboration are the besetting sins of the writing master, the penman and the clerk. They are already to be seen in the Middle Ages elevating a plain hand of proved

utility to the level of a "work of art," preferring floridity to legibility, safeguarding their interest by making a "mystery" out of scrivenering. By continuing the use of medieval gothic, lawyers and their scribes maintained the "mystery" almost until our own day. Legal writing, equally with legal phrasing, can be made so complicated and difficult, so utterly illegible and verbose, that scribes and solicitors are called in to write and interpret it in exchange for fees.

It is the nonprofessionals who lead the reaction against decadence in script. The scholars, clerical and lay, of the Renaissance had reacted against the luxuriant forms created by scribes and notaries of the late Middle Ages; and, taking as their model the early medieval hand, the amateurs based upon it the forms from which derive our modern roman and italic printing types. Yet, within a hundred years the new tribe of late sixteenth century professionals were doing to the original, plain, humanistic italic what their predecessors had done to gothic: they made it tricky, "arty," pretentious.

The same thing occurred again in England at the end of the seventeenth century. By that time, owing to the increase of shipping and commerce, those able to write, and able to teach the art, were much more numerous than they had been. The medium for such commercial purposes which had long been plain enough now assumed a highly professionalism form. A simple plain hand can be learnt in a relatively short time. This was not quite what the seventeenth century professors wanted. Their interest was to make writing difficult, and themselves and their copybooks indispensable. In England, Edward Cocker was the most conspicuous of this sort. He was an engraver as well as a scrivener and sent forth from his school in St. Paul's Churchyard a mass of textbooks on reading, writing and arithmetic. The mercantile clerks of the Restoration period responsible for bills of exchange, bills of lading, etc., needed to be very expert writers, "according to Cocker." The style was all too complicated to last.

It was that fine performer, John Ayres, who brought English writing masters back to the plain Italian hand which had now been modified in France and Holland. His first copybook was *The Accomplish't Clerk* (London, 1683); but it was his second that made his name: *A Tutor to Penmanship* (London, 1695, 1698). This was the first time the word "penmanship" had been used in the English language. Henceforth the best pedagogues of England, from Ayres in 1698 to Seally in 1770, taught an open, clear, round hand that was plain and free from flourishes. Decorations were optional and, if decided upon, appeared in the margin. This was true "penmanship" in the English sense. The models were superbly engraved on copper and brilliantly printed on fine wove paper; the English still term this hand "copperplate."

"Copperplate" came to maturity in the middle of the eighteenth century; its progress at home and its acceptance abroad, in varying degrees of formality, rank it as a very significant calligraphic development. It was admirably fit for the writing out of what was commercially necessary. By Ayres' time, landlordism had given way to capitalism and at last "business was business," i.e., trade. Such a change in the economic and social conditions necessarily entailed a change in handwriting. Time became more valuable than it had been in Cocker's time. The best of the eighteenth century writing masters who prepared youth for jobs in the Customs and the business offices now knew better than to indulge in the calligraphic affectations that delighted the earlier generation. In its way, and for its purpose, the English copperplate hand was highly satisfactory. It would be an exaggeration to call it attractive. In truth it is colourless and thoroughly matter-of-fact; it had, then, precisely the quality which still commends it to the city of London: practicality. Ayres, who began as a footman in the house of a Lord Mayor of London, recognized the importance of this virtue.

This inherent practicality of the eighteenth century English Round Hand, combined with the world wide expansion of English commercial activity at the same time, gave it, between 1750 and 1800, a dominating position in Europe. The writing schools of France, Spain, the Low Countries, and finally Italy itself, began to copy it. It was, and is, known in Italy as the *Lettere Inglese*, in France as the *Lettre Anglaise* and in Spain as the *Letra Inglis*. Naturally, the English Round Hand was taken to America and taught there. Yet in America, what Ayres would call the "penmanship" of *The Accomplish't Clerk* has nowadays a style, recognizable by what Sherlock Holmes would call the "trained eye," differing from English penmanship intended for the same purposes.

This difference between the contemporary American and British commercial hands has a curious history. Both originate in "natural hands" that are popularly described, irrespective of its process of reproduction,

on both sides of the Atlantic as "copperplate." A copybook by the Rev. Lewis Hughes (1570-1645), a minister labouring in the Bermudas and elsewhere, was known to William Massey, the English antiquary. No complete copy seems to exist. It was designed to be set forth for the benefit of the new planted Vineyards of the Lord Jesus in Virginea, Sommer Islands (i.e., the Bermudas discovered by Sir George Summers) and New England." He encouraged his pupils to begin by tracing over print and letters, roman, italic, and gothic. Obviously at this time he, or his bookseller, had failed to secure the services of a copperplate engraver; or perhaps he believed that easy reading came before writing. In the leaf referred to, Hughes alludes to his publication of a "Horn Booke." From the beginning, this object supplied pupils with the full alphabet in capitals and small letters; consonants and vowels were repeated separately, and as reading examples there were given the Our Father and the Creed. It was, in effect, a sheet version of the educational part of the old liturgical Prymer of the Middle Ages. Hughes' idea was that the youth of the "Virgineas" should learn to write, as well as to read, from the same model alphabets.

It is to be hoped that a bibliographer may someday identify Hughes' instructional manual from which the single typographic leaf now in the Bagford Collection is taken, discover a copy of the "Horn Booke" and, lastly, find a copy of Hughes' copybook engraved, London, circa 1650: Plain and Easy Directions to Faire Writing. This is a lot to ask. Meanwhile it is difficult to agree with Sir Ambrose Heal that the engraved calligraphic plate, also in Bagford, mentioned in English Writing Masters (Cambridge, 1931, p. 134) may have been taken from Hughes' copybook. There is no demonstrable connexion, I fear, between the single typographic leaf described above which undoubtedly survives from an unknown publication by Hughes, and the copperplates that adhere to the same leaf of Bagford's scrapbook. Thus the available details are few regarding the calligraphic work of one whom his biographer, George Watson Cole of the American Antiquarian Society, describes as "the second writer (i.e., second to Captain John Smith) who may be classed as an American author."

After Hughes, the education of Americans proceeded by way of imported English manuals. The handwriting models in the manual published by the Bedford master, William Mather, under the title, destined to become typical of a new encyclopedic class of home instructor, Young Man's Companion (London, 1681) were well known in America. All London editions were circulated in the American colonies. Mather's is an English version of the Italian humanistic cursive in which vestiges of the older gothic secretary hand are still to be found, as, for example, in the "r" of "Heart," and "Instruction" (see Fig. 1). These vestiges are significant. It should be remembered that the English Puritans were nationalist in outlook, and, as regards the majority, antihumanist. Many practised the old gothic secretary hand and they are to be found reestablishing its use where they gained power. Thus, in Pembroke College, Cambridge, where Roger Williams (1603-1683) was educated, under the Protectorate the secretary hand took the place of the humanistic. A compromise hand, partly secretary and partly humanistic (or italic), was inevitable; it was invented during the Puritan period, and William Mather's hand is an example. Of the Pilgrim Fathers, both William Brewster (1567-1644) and William Bradford, who had lived on the Continent, practised a careful Italian hand, orthodox in the period circa 1620. George Gould, Samuel Fuller, George Cooke and other fathers wrote a hand of mixed secretary and Italian elements. The secretary hand died hard. There are several signatures on the Declaration of Independence which are clearly in the style of the "Compromise" plate from William Mather.

Cocker's books also found a ready market in the Colonies. Doubtless too, though there is no evidence of it, Ayres' A Tutor to Penmanship was known in the Boston bookshops. It would certainly be pleasant to find, in the New England commercial writing of the period, traces of Ayres' version of Lucas Materots' 1141

"Lettre Italienne Bastarde," and thus possess evidence of the transplantation to America of the most significant of all the hands of the early seventeenth century. This is speculation; but it can hardly be doubted that Ayres' principal manuals, which were known on the Continent (Servidori and Torio, of Madrid, both praise them), were familiar in New England. I am inclined to think that the plain "copperplate" of Charles Snell (1667-1733) must have been known to Abia Holbrook (1718-1769), the writing master of Boston, Mass., whose piece of writing dated 1745 is here reproduced (Fig. 2). It is a finely written piece in the true English Round "copperplate" hand developed out of Materot's specimen of 1602; to give one precise "earmark," Holbrook's h and I are not looped.

The first known American printed models of handwriting for the youth of the Colonies came out in Philadelphia: George Fisher's *The Instructor, or American Young Man's Best Companion*, containing Instructions for Reading, Writing and Arithmetic and Many other things besides the Art of making several sorts of Wines. Benjamin Franklin committed this frank piece of piracy under the imprint of Franklin & Hall in 1748. It was a well known English manual, and the word "American" had no part in the original title. The first London edition, which I have not been able to see, was published in 1725. The many American editions of *The Instructor* that followed upon Franklin & Hall's carefully retained the several specimens of handwriting that had originally been offered to the youth of England, and in the editions of Isaiah Thomas and others the plates were closely similar to those in the English editions. Benjamin Franklin's edition was an exception; his writing models were original, differing in execution and in detail from all those of his American rivals, and equally from the English editions. Moreover, Franklin's *Instructor* differed elsewhere, "for," says the writer of the Preface (doubtless Franklin himself), "the British edition contained many things of no interest to those living in these parts of the world. In their room I have inserted other matter more immediately useful to us Americans." Franklin's specimens comprised four "Copies of the most usual, fashionable, and commendable Hands for Business," i.e., a Round Hand (Fig 3), a Flourishing Alphabet (Fig. 4), an Italian Hand (Fig 5) and a Gothic Secretary (Fig. 6). The Round Hand is an individual creation by Franklin, owing little to his professional predecessors or contemporaries. The lower case is unlooped except for the f and long s, while the capitals B, P, R have the looped initial strokes that may be seen in Franklin's autograph. The Italian Hand is a bastard combination of the English Round capitals (without looped initial strokes) and a slightly decorated lower case. The weighting of the ascending characters b, d, h, l, and c comes straight down from the Roman scribes of the mid-sixteenth century and is to be found set forth as a model for ladies by many American professors of the mid-nineteenth century. The Secretary Hand is medieval. It would be worth knowing how late gothic secretary was in use in Philadelphia or elsewhere in the Colonies. I do not know the last American edition of George Fisher's *Instructor*, but there is a copy in the British Museum (John Bioren, Philadelphia, 1801).

There are additional treatises on handwriting whose early date is to the credit of Philadelphia and the neighbourhood, and claim mention in this paper. The *Youth's Entertaining Amusement* by W. Dawson came out in 1754, In 1755/6 Christopher Sower brought out at Germantown, in Philadelphia, his *Hoch-Deutsch Americanische Calender*. He included a specimen of English text written in Round Hand and reproduced on wood. It is a good unlooped piece of writing of seventeenth century aspect. Thomas Powell's *The Writing Master's Assistant* was published in 1764. The last named antedates Jenkins by a generation. I have never seen it, or Dawson, and know of the existence of these books only through the list in Barnard's American journal of Education for March, 1863, which the late C. L. Ricketts transcribed for me many years ago. A general educational work emphasising the importance of writing and providing specimens in the style of *The Instructor* is *The Writing Scholar's Assistant*. It is illustrated with two engraved plates of a "Plain Running Hand" (a term of some significance), Round Hand, German and English Text; and roman and italic print. The book was published by Isaiah Thomas (Worcester, 1785)

In default of a copy of Powell or Dawson turning up, it is as well to treat the Jenkins as the first purely American designed, made and produced copybook. It has a title of genuine young American flamboyance. John Jenkins' *The Art of Writing*, reduced to a plain and easy system, is more than a copybook it is a detailed treatise on the art of penmanship. It was brought out by Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer Andrews of Boston in 1791 (see Figs. 7 and 8).

Jenkins set out to teach to "Gentlemen and Ladies and to the Young Masters and Misses throughout the United States" an "easy system" of penmanship, which was, in effect, an orthodox version of the English unlooped Round Hand. Fortified with the approval of the severest Calvinists in New England Charles Bulfinch, John Hancock, the Reverend Dr. Jeremy Belknap, John Adams and even Jonathan Edwards Jenkins might be expected to teach a plain hand. In fact he genuinely and rightly believed in simplicity. As he truly claimed, "All needless scrawls and flourishes naturally obscure the simple idea of the letters": a sentiment that might well be published to some of our modern practitioners of "penmanship." Should his work meet with the approval of the public, Jenkins promised a set of elementary copybooks, and after many delays they were issued in 1813; these, too, inculcate the orthodox English Round Hand.

Jenkins' elementary copybooks, thus announced, were anticipated by Shepherd of New York, who brought out in 1801 specimens of the late eighteenth century English Round Hand, to which he gave a slightly romantic touch. Dean (New York, 1808 and Carver (Philadelphia, 1809), to be referred to later, are in the "plain" tradition, while Wrifford of Boston (? date) shows in his capitals a tendency to flourish.

The plate of flourished capitals (Fig. 4) inserted by Benjamin Franklin in his edition of George Fisher's Instructor may not be blameless in encouraging some of the New England penmen to lavish ornament where it should not be applied. But even Franklin's authority did not spread flourishing far in New England. Jenkins' "system," plain as it was, kept its place in the esteem of the American teachers of handwriting of the period 1790-1810

Jenkins' term "system" does not seem to have enjoyed any vogue in America at that resurgent period. The "system" consisted not in the process of writing, but in his analysis of the letters into parts, and his use of question and answer in tuition. Jenkins' "system" was, in fact, no more than an up-to-date "method" of teaching. There was nothing revolutionary in it. Almost simultaneously with Jenkins' second edition of the Art of Writing, i.e., in 1814, Benjamin Howard Rand's A New and Complete System of Mercantile Penmanship appeared in Philadelphia. Rand had already been busy in the attempt to improve not only the style of such writing as was "adapted to business generally," but its speed of execution. Rand's specialty was a facile version of the Round Hand with long and looped h, l, k, etc., the whole having increased slant. This was known as the "Running Hand." It was a distinct success, and in America, as applied to commercial purposes, a distinct novelty. There is something truly American about Rand's acceptance of the Running Hand. He saw the point of its efficiency, and he pressed its merits for business. Rand, however, did not exactly invent the hand, or the description "Running." Henry Dean's Analytical Guide to the Art of Penmanship, first published at Salem, Mass., in 1805, and reprinted in New York in 1808 drew literally and liberally upon the London copybooks. The book displayed a "Running Hand," a description, I fancy, then new in America; as new, in fact, as Isaiah Thomas' Writing Scholar's Assistant of 1785. Dean, it should be noted, did not do in 1805 what Rand did in 1814. He made no specialty of the Running Hand; he was content to show a specimen.

In England the Running Hand had been taught at least since the time of John Seally's book with that very title, The Running Hand (London, circa 1770; Heal pl. LXXVII). It seems to have originated in the narrow, looped, strongly inclined script that so combined speed and elegance as to have been thought (why is not clear, unless clerkly conservatism disdained the novelty) tolerable for use only by the female sex. It is a type of writing that may be seen developing in the London copybooks during the time of John Bland (1730-1740). The masters then and later were in agreement that looping was effeminate and so improper in business. It was not until the last quarter of the century that masters appreciated the convenience of loops. At the same time they laid renewed emphasis upon the dogma that good writing requires that the pen be never lifted in the course of a word.

This change of attitude toward loops and continuity of line makes all the difference between the eighteenth and nineteenth century hands. If respect for speed and for the dogma of not lifting are combined, loops are inevitable. The hand then begins to "run." Thus, when speed as well as form became esteemed virtues in a clerkly hand the sloping, narrow, looped hand originally thought appropriate only as a "ladies' hand" became canonical for business use. Hence the vogue of Running Hand in Britain and the United States. As far as America is concerned the title Running Hand, and the script itself, derive from Dean and Rand.

Meanwhile, a new teacher had arisen in England: the great Joseph Carstairs. He began to teach in 1809; by 1820 he had attracted a very fashionable audience. Our Fig. 9 shows a specimen, dated 1813, of the hand he established in the esteem of the sophisticated. In his Bond Street apartment Carstairs taught what he, too, called a new "system." This was the first time that Jenkins' word dazzled that section of the English public interested in handwriting. The precise origins of the application of the word are obscure. There is no evidence that Carstairs had so much as heard of Jenkins, and Carstairs used much more than "method" in his teaching. For him speed was the necessary element, and he urged, with truth, that style alone can never constitute a "system." System, in his mind, was a means of guaranteeing speed and regularity. Carstairs lived at a time when, in England, mechanical inventions were beginning to be fashionable. He, himself, invented a mechanism called the "talantograph," and made a great hit with it in London society, for he was,

too, an efficient salesman. He persuaded the Duke of Kent to take the chair at a public meeting where his "system" was given the benefit of the unanimous resolution that "the free use of the fingers, hand and arm as taught by Mr. Carstairs' method should be introduced into schools." The basic idea was to tie a ribbon around the thumb and first and second fingers in order to compel the pupil to use his arm. This nowadays would hardly be what we should call a "free" use of the fingers, but it secured what Carstairs wanted, i.e., that his pupils should exercise by a new swinging, regular movement of the arm that would aid speed.

Lack of bibliographical detail (Sir Ambrose Heal does not carry his monumental work further than the year 1800) makes it impossible for the present writer to make precise statements regarding the priority of the word "system." When the necessary bibliographical research has been completed it may well be found that the word "system," like the mechanism called the "talantograph," originated in that new technique, itself a branch of the writing known as "stenography." Schools of shorthand were springing up in London in Carstairs' time and it looks pretty certain that his emphasis upon speed is the result of competition with writing masters who also taught shorthand. One of these, James Henry Lewis, accused Carstairs of plagiarism. Too much notice should not be taken of the accusation, since Lewis was fond of railing against his colleagues. Lewis, however, is not a man to be despised. He, too, used a machine in his teaching of handwriting and showed it to Sir Walter Scott, who likened it to a muzzle on a dog's nose. Lewis, too, was fond of the word "system" and applied it to the stenography of his own invention. It is in stenography, moreover, that the word "system" is applied today. To trace the connexions between contemporary stenographic and contemporary calligraphic teaching would take us far; it should not be overlooked, however, that Carstairs' idea of swinging, regular exercise of the arm as an aid to speed would have been understood by Pitman and Gregg.

The Carstairs handwriting, then, involved the use of the whole of the forearm and not only the fingers. This forearm movement explains why, in comparison with the plain eighteenth century Round Hand, say of John Ayres, the nineteenth century style of Carstairs has more flourish. Its slope, too, is greater. There is more of the diagonal in it, and the letters are farther apart because the joining strokes are longer. The greater slant was also an encouragement to speed because it made the body of the letters slimmer. But it is a nasty invention nevertheless, made still more objectionable by the finely cut pen that Carstairs adopted. This fine pen encourages a very disagreeable contrast between the thick strokes and the thin strokes of the letters, making the upstrokes too delicate to be really visible, thus producing a very illegible result. Moreover, the manufacture of smooth wove papers had been perfected, and these also encouraged very finely shaded scripts just as, earlier, they had made it possible for Baskerville, the writing master turned printer, to lead the way to the adoption of the "modern" printing type with contrasted thicks and thins. (If Carstairs' mystical word "system" worked admirably in England; the country was ready for it just as, after Jenkins' time, America also found it timely. Before 1828, Benjamin Foster taught the Carstairs Ccssystem" in his school at No. 84 Broadway, New York City. In 1829, he became Master of the Art of Writing at the Female Academy at Albany, N. Y., where he persuaded the city's Scientific Institute to appoint a committee to examine the merits of the Carstairs system in general, and to look into the merits of Mr. Foster's adaptation of it, in particular. The committee ended its labours in 1830. One of the committee, S. de Witt Bloodgood, prepared the report, which was voluminous. It drew in mention of everybody from Beauchesne and Baildon to Tompkins and Carstairs. Bloodgood's report was definite: the committee was interested in "system." Jenkins was criticised as an author on the way to "system" but not properly informed regarding the principle of combination, in words and sentences except, it was alleged, in "large hand." Dean was dismissed as having "little that may be reduced to contemporary practise"; Huntingdon was "destitute of originality," and Rand did not even aspire to be the author of a "systematised" work. Carstairs did so aspire; that was his great merit. Foster, in fact, followed Carstairs very closely, tying the fingers with ribbon in order to provide the desired movement of the arm. In 1830 Foster published at

Albany his Practical Penmanship being a development of the Carstairsian system illustrated with twenty four plates, and thereby gave American penmanship its present general form with the exception of a significant development to be noted shortly.

Abroad, Foster's script, curiously enough, was for a long time known as the "American System." This happened in France, doubtless because the English were, as usual, unpopular, and perhaps because, meanwhile, Carstairs' teaching fizzled out in conservative England. After all, there is something ladylike

about a heavily sloped script. Jenkins knew this and only looped when setting a model for the "Misses" of the United States, while Foster, it will be recalled, became famous as Master of the Art of Writing at the Female Academy at Albany. Rand's loops to his Running Hand would have been reckoned a drawback in England. Carstairs, too, erred by falling into snobbery, the besetting vice of writing masters. He saw himself already fashionable in the West End, and his hand taken up by the upper bourgeoisie. But as a writing master he failed, despite his efforts on behalf of "clerks engaged in real business," to get his hand assimilated by the hard headed commercial people in the city of London. For them Carstairs remained a West End script. In America, things were different. The original teaching of Carstairs, naturalized by Benjamin Foster, had met with great acceptance after 1830, Foster had two great disciples: years ago their relative importance was a matter of dispute. To settle the point it is necessary to read through the whole of the records of the litigation between A. R. Dunton and P. R. Spencer; also the papers referring to the disputes between A. R. Dunton and N. M. Scribner. Some light on the problem of priority of "invention" as between A. R. Dunton and P. R. Spencer is shed by the collection deposited in the Newberry Library, Chicago, by Spencer's grandson, Mr. P. H. Sloan. This rich collection contains sets of A. R. Dunton's early copy sheets and I have no doubt, myself, that a stricter investigation than mine will prove that Dunton was at least an early and independent practitioner of very much the same kind of hand that Spencer made popular, i.e., a flourished, elongated, and heavily shaded script. It is certain, too, that Dunton and Spencer were contemporaries but uncertain that either was the inventor of any new thing. Of N. M. Scribner I know nothing but that he was a keen man of business, and at odds equally with A. R. Dunton and P. R. Spencer. Platt Rogers Spencer, the son of a Revolutionary War soldier, was taken by his father from his birthplace in New York to Jefferson in Ohio and taught writing at Ashtabula, Geneva and elsewhere in the state. In 1848 he was persuaded by Victor Rice to bring out a set of specimens printed on separate sheets enclosed in an envelope; this form of publication was not new, for it had been preferred by sixteenth century Italian masters as the initial stage of a book, and single leaves, printed or written, or part one and part the other, had been current in the studios of the French masters of the eighteenth century. Later it had fallen into desuetude but it was certainly new in America when, under the description "Copy Slips," Spencer issued his specimens. It was one of the allegations against him that a Slip was unsuitable to the tutorial purpose intended; a Copy Book was what was required and A. R. Dunton had already brought out the Duntonian System of Penmanship at New Orleans in 1843. This system was explained and illustrated in a series of graduated copybooks. There is no evidence that they, or any one of them, had come into the hands either of Spencer Or Rice. The hands in both Spencer's and Dunton's publications are similar; both show dependence upon Foster, and through him, upon Carstairs; that is to say, upon the hand of Carstairs and not so much upon his "system." Both Spencer and Dunton were "systematic" in the interest of speed. There was, henceforth, to be no relaxation of this demand. Thus when N. M. Scribner and J. W. Payson joined Seldom Dunton (doubtless a connexion of A. R. Dunton) in 1855, the firm's publications were given a new general title: "Payson, Dunton and Scribner System of Rapid Penmanship." In Boston it produced the same narrow, slanted hand, with loops. History repeated itself. A. R. Dunton's and P. R. Spencer's scripts differ from that of Jenkins exactly as Seally and Carstairs differ from Ayres and Snell.

Modern American handwriting, then, derives immediately from the teachings of H. Dean, B. F. Foster, A. R. Dunton and P. R. Spencer. The chief difference between the two former and the two latter is, to use Jenkins' words, the contrast between weighing light with the edge of the pen, and weighing heavily with the full. Dunton and, even more, Spencer show a marked preference for increasing the contrast between the thicks and thins, showing a noticeable partiality for flourishes, and encouraging a certain waviness in the curves. A singular detail, peculiar to American writing, is a finishing stroke to the base of the small letter s. This has become so much of a fetish with American penmen that even today no American hand without it can be considered orthodox. It would appear that this s with finishing stroke was the invention of Dunton, or Dunton's firm. In the Seventies, allegations and counter allegations of stealing, plagiarism, misrepresentation, etc., were made by the two great rival firms, Payson, Dunton & Scribner, and the firm of P. R. Spencer's Sons. For years the latter firm had taken the lead, at least in the middle western states. New books were brought out in the Fifties which, it was alleged, were plagiarisms of A. R. Dunton's published specimens. The term "Spencerian" appears first in the title of a business seminary, The Spencerian Commercial College, Pittsburgh, Pa., in the prospectus of which P. R. Spencer is described as the "Principal Professor of Penmanship, and Teacher of Commercial Correspondence." This prospectus makes reference to the Buffalo Commercial School of Spencer and Rice as recently discontinued. The series of eight progressive copybooks, published at Buffalo in 1859 in "The Spencerian System of Practical

Penmanship" is the first use I know of the term in connexion with handwriting. What Spencer's personal hand was like in 1858 may be seen from the letter to his "Dear Children" dated from Hiram, referring to the activities of N. M. Scribner. Mr. P. R. Sloan kindly allows me to reproduce his grandfather's letter in its entirety.

From this time the systems, Dunton's and Spencer's, were at daggers drawn. Dunton had the support of N. M. Scribner; Spencer's sons were joined by James W. Lusk of Buffalo. In 1863 Professor M. D. L. Hayes of Payson, Dunton & Scribner was successful in demonstrating the superiority of P., D. & S.'s combined System of Practical Penmanship. The demonstration was made to the satisfaction of the school directors and other officials of the city of Columbus, Ohio, a city in the heart of the enemy country. Within a short time, however, Professor Hayes left the Boston firm and took their system with him to Buffalo, and according to his old associates assimilated the Spencerian to Duntonian model as revised by himself. The leading Spencerian spirit was now not a Spencer but an ex-Duntonian.

Platt R. Spencer himself, who had been in charge of the department of Penmanship in the Cleveland (O.) Business College, died in 1864. The sons appear to have been lost in the organisation of business colleges and, when heard of, embroiled in quarrels. Professor Warren P. Spencer, a son, the Boston firm took to task in their Reply of Payson, Dunton, and Scribner to the Absurd Claims of the Spencerian Authors to Originality (Boston, 1871). The lithographed specimens in the appendix are of value as exhibiting the degree of correspondence between the rival systems in the years 1857/69. It was in P., D. & S.'s exercise book No. 3 (1860) and in their Manual of Penmanship showing "Ladies' Series No. 10" (of 1862) that the s with finishing stroke first appeared. Curiously, the Boston firm's analysis does not particularize this letter, now recognizable as the hallmark of American script. The feature is copied in the Spencer books for the first time in 1864, when P. R. Spencer was approaching the end of his life, and attached to one of their exercises. In 1868 his children added the Ladies' Series No. 9.

The above details, derived as they are for the most part from N. M. Scribner's publicity, are open to confirmation. The Spencerian counterblast, P. R. Spencer defended by his Sons, has, I regret to say, evaded my search. The final judgment between the two awaits the patience of an American who will find and read the necessary papers.

Platt Spencer had five sons whose considerable organizing ability perpetuated the Spencerian "system" even before 1864, when the originator died. The chain of Spencerian business colleges was established by the five sons in forty four cities. Whatever the precise merits of the two systems and their priority (and I incline to Dunton), it has thus become inevitable, if not just, to describe the national American hand as "Spencerian." 1401

Pending a thorough re-examination of the Dunton/Spencer controversy the credit but not the fame for the invention of the characteristic American Mercantile Hand goes to A. R. Dunton of Boston and New Orleans, who began teaching as early as 1835. The fame goes to Spencer. It is under his name that the hand is familiarly known and will be known in the future. Platt Rogers Spencer, alone of American writing masters, is assured of some measure of permanent fame; he, with Victor Rice, is entered in the Dictionary of American Biography. He was born in 1800 of Rhode Island stock and died at the age of 64. To him and his five sons the Middle West is indebted for the existence of the American business college. If A. R. Dunton had had five or six sons, the fame of, and the credit for, the American Mercantile Hand might have been his. But if the history of writing masters had thus taken a different course, the history of writing itself would hardly have altered. The original Duntonian script, and the Spencerian plagiarism, were both practical for the purpose, if slightly over pretty. But, to attract support, a hand needs a certain amount of flourish and this hand has preserved intact the approval given by American bankers and merchants in 1850.

The successors to Spencer in the direction of contemporary commercial colleges are hardly likely to scrap a model that has been the mainstay of American business for something like 100 years. It is not to be doubted, therefore, that for the next half century at least "Spencerian" in one variety or another will be the medium of the average American commercial clerk of either sex; and, secondly, that they will learn it as

their forefathers learnt it: from Spencerian and Duntonian models printed, like their predecessors since Arrighi's Of 1522, in the form of a copybook.

This publication is the first of a series to be printed and distributed in celebration of the 75th year of the founding Of WM. F. FELL CO.

Type used for text is Baskerville No. 353 with Commercial Script for display heads. Special Cursive Ornaments are used throughout. Paper is Mohawk Superfine 70 lb. basis.

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