Picnics in English

Lord Chesterfield To His Son

B. More About Letter-Writing

- 柴斯特里爵土與其子書
- 論書信之二・二

In Wiloughby, September 19, 1729.

My dear Child—I am very well pleased with your last letter. The writing was very good, and the promise you make exceedingly fine. You must keep it, for an honest man never breaks his word. You engage to retain the instructions which I give you. That is sufficient, for though you do not properly comprehend them at present, age and reflection will, in time, make you understand them.

With respect to the omissions of your letter, I believe you have had proper assistance; indeed, I do not so great an extent that you can write a letter without help. You ought, however, to try, for nothing is more requisite than to write a good letter. Nothing in fact is more easy. Most persons who write ill, do so because they aim at writing better than their own, by which means they acquire a formal and unnatural style. Whereas, to write well, we must write easily and naturally. For instance, if you want to write a letter to me, you should only consider what you would say if you were with me, and then write it in plain terms, just as if you were conversing. I will suppose, then, that you sit down to write to me unstained, and I imagine your letter would probably be much in these words:

My dear Papa! I have been at Mr. Maltermare's this morning, where I have translated English into Latin and Latin into English, as so well, that at the end of my exercise he has writ "optimum." I have likewise pressed a Greek verb, and I pretty well. After this I ran home, like a little wild boy, and played till dinner. This became a serious task, for I ate like a wolf; and by that I mean exceedingly, as I am so very fond of food.

Well, sir, the above is a good letter, and yet very easily written, because it is exceedingly natural. Endeavor then sometimes to write to me of yourself, without mindimg either Latinity or the artifices of the lines. Take no trouble, give no trouble, means you will by degree, use yourself to write perfectly well, and after. Adieu. Comes to me to-morrow at twelve, or Monday morning at eight o'clock.

Your obedient son,

《保羅的信》

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