

# Francis B. Courtney's *Lessons in Dashy Writing*



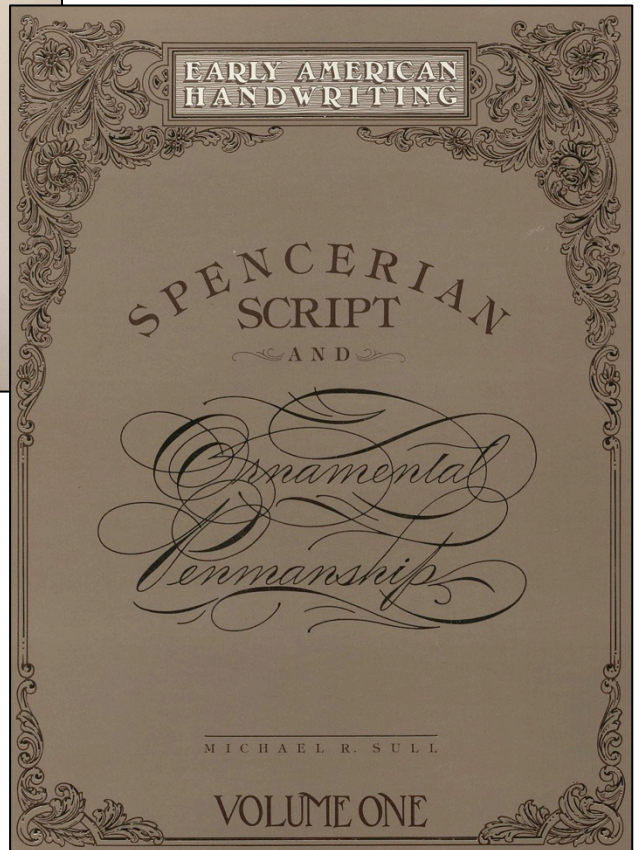
Francis B. Courtney  
(1867-1952)

Compiled by Dr. Joseph M. Vitolo, 2014  
*Penman and IAMPETH Historian*

The following pages contain Francis B. Courtney's (1867-1952) 'Lessons in Dashy Writing', originally published in the early 1900's. It was recovered for modern penmen by Michael R. Sull when he published the series in his landmark two-volume publication *Spencerian Script and Ornamental Penmanship*. Courtney's lessons were re-published in Sull's first volume of his book set. The images contained in this document were taken from Michael's book.



Michael R. Sull



*The following biography is used with permission from Michael Sull's Spencerian Script and Ornamental Penmanship, Volume I.*

### **Francis B. Courtney (1867-1952)**

Known as "The Pen Wizard" by his peers, Francis B. Courtney was truly unique among penmen. As a student at age 17 of AH Hinman, the grand old master and student of PR Spencer, Courtney developed his passion for penmanship early in life. Shortly thereafter, he received further training in penmanship at the Spencerian Business College, Cleveland, Ohio.

His first position after graduation was as an accountant in a manufacturing company, which he held for two years. However, preferring to work in a business college environment rather than in a general office, Courtney wrote 200 single page specimens, each line being in a different style, and sent them out to business colleges throughout the country. This brought him many job offers, and his reputation as a penman grew rapidly. Over the years, he taught at many such colleges: Hinman's College, Worcester, Massachusetts; Portland, Maine Business College; Lincoln, Nebraska Business College; Spaulding's Commercial College, Kansas City, Missouri; McDonald Business College, Des Moines, Iowa;

Caton's Commercial College, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Wood's School of Business, New York; Cedar Rapids Business College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Toland's Business University. He was one of the most consistent contributors to the Penman's Art Journal, the American Penman and the Business Educator, and was very prolific in his personal correspondence with his friends and colleagues.

No other penman was so versatile in various writing styles as Francis B. Courtney. He was most flamboyant in the penmanship demonstrations he gave, and he exhibited his prowess with the pen often. He seemed to revel in dashing out exotic and novel forms of decorative writing, a number of which were of his own creation. His Needlestitch script, Courtney's Backslanted script, Figure Writing, and Letterheads became trademarks for this great penman. Throughout his long life, he was an avid teacher, and influenced many young writers with his flawless work. He died at 85 years of age in 1952.

# INSTRUCTIONS

## FOR FRANCIS B. COURTNEY'S LESSONS IN DASHY WRITING

**D**ashy writing is worth the attention of anyone who can appreciate the beautiful. The graceful curves, the harmony of lines, the delicate touch, and the dashy shade combine to make forms both pleasing and fascinating, and those who have a few leisure moments each day can find rare pleasure in practicing from the copies. It has high commercial value, and the possessor of a dashy hand can always find a ready market for his skill.

Dashy writing occupies an important place in the history of the development of our commercial schools, and no small measure of the success of the pioneers in the commercial educational field is due to their ability to handle the pen skillfully. In the early days it was a conspicuous feature of the business school, and it is doubtful whether the business schools of this country would now be occupying their present position in the educational field had it not been for this agency in their early development. Many of the proprietors of our greatest commercial educational institutions received their first inspiration for the work they have accomplished from their skill in writing. Nor have these schools ever lost sight of the value of dashy writing in attracting the favorable attention of the public to their institutions.

It is my aim in presenting this series of copies and suggestions to make it practical and of the greatest possible value. The copies represent the rapid style I use in my every day work. They contain grace, harmony, and dash, the three elements of beautiful writing.

### PREPARATION.

Good materials are absolutely necessary. Without them you can accomplish nothing. What do you need? Not an elaborate equipment; just some good paper, several oblique penholders, a box of fine pointed flexible pens, some blotters and a good table of the right height. Any ordinary straight-back chair is good.

Now, having the equipment, position demands your attention.

The photographic illustrations tell the whole story much better than it could be told in words. Study them carefully. Observe in illustration No. 1 the position of the chair, the posture of the body, the manner in which the feet are placed on the floor, the position of the head, and the arms on the desk. In illustration No. 2 you will please note the relative positions of the arms. The elbows, as shown by the illustration, are equally distant from the body. Keep the shoulders square, the head level, and your work directly in front of you. Notice the position of the paper on the desk, and the manner of holding and adjusting the paper with the left hand. Stop right here until you thoroughly understand everything relating to position.

### HOW TO HOLD THE PEN.

The manner of holding the pen comes next. Let us study illustrations 3, 4, and 5 very carefully. No. 3 shows how the penholder is held between the second finger and the thumb. No. 4 shows the under part of the hand as it is when ready for action. No. 5 shows the relative position of the fingers and how they are brought under the palm of the hand. There is but little difference between the appearance of the hand when holding the pen correctly, and when at rest with the fingers partly closed. Of course it is understood that no two hands are made alike, so you are not expected to make your hand look like those in the illustrations. But it is the general principles of correct penholding that you should study and apply.

Illustration No. 6 shows both sides of the arm when in position for writing, and illustrates further the holding of the pen. Notice how the arm rests on the large muscle below the elbow, that the wrist and hand are absolutely free from the desk, and the third and fourth fingers serve as a vehicle on which the hand rides lightly over the paper in whatever way the mind directs. Study your hand carefully and then the illustration. When you have caught the idea you have already learned how to hold your pen, one of the first essentials of dashy writing.

### MOVEMENT.

There is but one movement to which I have chained my life's work in the field of dashy and rapid writing. It is the muscular movement, the movement that has done more for penmanship than any other ever tried or even suggested. It is the foundation of all penmanship skill. You must acquire it or any amount of time and effort you may devote to this work will be lost. You must develop and

store away a generous quantity. You must practice exercises until the action of the arm is light, absolutely free, and under perfect control. Such action can be acquired only through a complete relaxation of all the muscles of the hand, arm and shoulders. Gripping the penholder severely produces a rigid tension of the muscles, prevents freedom, lightness of touch, and grace of movement. Do not attempt any of the shaded strokes until you can make the light strokes with perfect ease on copy slip No. 4. The oval exercise is the best promoter of good results and the true secret to dashy writing.

### THE SHADES.

The shaded strokes will doubtless cause you a great deal of trouble and discouragement, but by careful study and persistent effort you can accomplish the desired end. Your first tendency will be to make them slowly, and resultingly heavy and lifeless. You must overcome this at once. The shades require the same free action as the light lines. They are made with a lively, yet deliberate movement, a bold, springy pressure on the pen and a quick release without stopping or checking the motion. The principles for shade practice are on copy slip No. 4.

I would impress upon you the importance of the foregoing instructions, and ask you in your own interests to observe them carefully in all your practice. Applying the foundation principles as outlined above, is the only way that anyone has ever attained a high degree of skill in writing.

### THE COPIES.

Take up the copies in their order and practice each one until you can make it with a fair degree of skill before proceeding to the next. Review the copies frequently but always practise systematically.

Copy slip No. 6 contains letters made from capital stem. They are important factors in the acquirement of a free dashy style of writing.

Copy slips No's. 7, 8 and 9 contain words commencing with every letter in the alphabet. You will observe that the oval exercise forms the basis of every good capital letter. Keep your ideal of writing in sight, and it will not be long before you will reach the summit on which you have fixed your vision.

Copy slips No's. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 contain sentences beginning with the capital alphabet. In speaking of these copies the American Penman says: "We believe the equal of this series of off-hand copies has never appeared in a penmanship paper. They should be studied minutely. They furnish material for almost an endless amount of practice."

Copy slips No's. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23 contain signatures. The harmonious curves of the hair lines and the correct crossing of lines must be carefully observed. The shades must be properly distributed and so as to balance the combination. The forms of the letters should be complete and the same as if standing alone. Study, practise, compare and criticise.

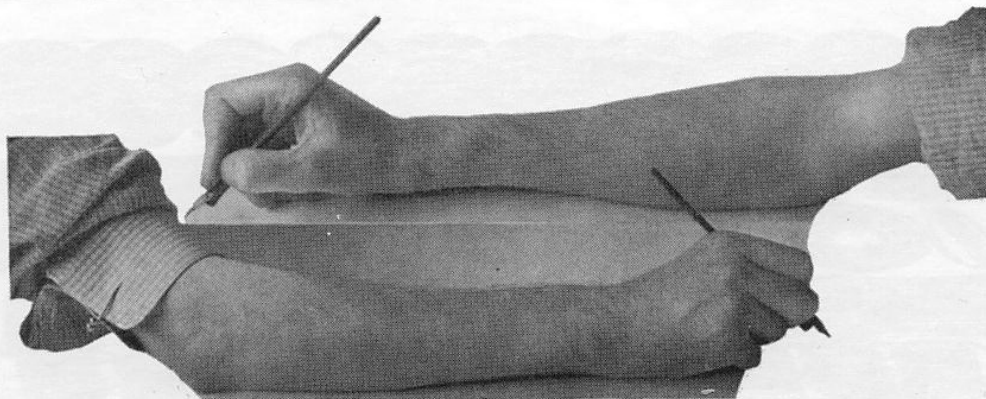
Copy slips No's. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30 contain 7 alphabets in one. Here we have the light and shade portrayed. There must be the proper mingling of light and shade or we have no art. One brings out the fine points of the other and relieves the possibility of sameness.

The artist who produces face and form, the landscape painter, who gives us the dreamy moonlight and evening sunset with his brush, is indeed deserving of great praise. But the man who with his trusty pen, produces the flying birds of the air, the swans of the lake, and the penmanship that none can detect from copper plate, deserves to be a recognized equal. For what grander art, what greater accomplishment than to be able to place upon paper a nation's writing that mystifies and charms, and creates much wonder among those who are less able to produce it. Let us then always select the best material, equip ourselves with the best copies that can be produced, and in every stroke that touches the paper change it into a work of art to be admired.

Believe in yourself, believe in your ability, believe me sincerely when I say that the accomplishment of a good handwriting is within the reach of every thoughtful, careful, and industrious student.

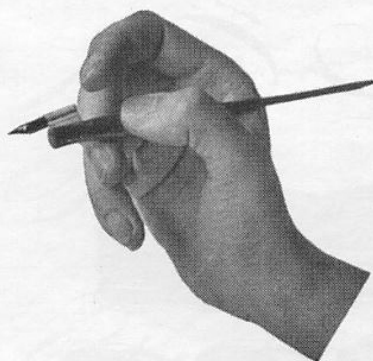
I assume that those who read these suggestions are interested to a certain degree in good handwriting. Practice for it now while the opportunity is ripe. For it may be like the shell on the shore that the traveler sought to reach with his stick, but he waited so long that old Neptune altered his mind and got back his pearl. The waters washed his opportunity from him at a single dash.





1

No. 6 Francis B. Courtney's arm ready for action  
Thousands of letters never receive a reply. The handwriting is too poor.



2

No. 3

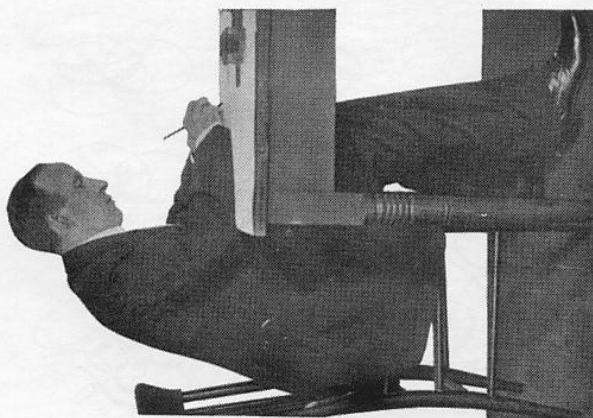


No. 4



No 5

The hand that wrote the copies, showing how the pen was held.  
There is no longer any doubt who is at the head of the penmanship profession. Francis B. Courtney has long been there. He is the master penman of the world.--A. N. PALMER, Editor American Penman.

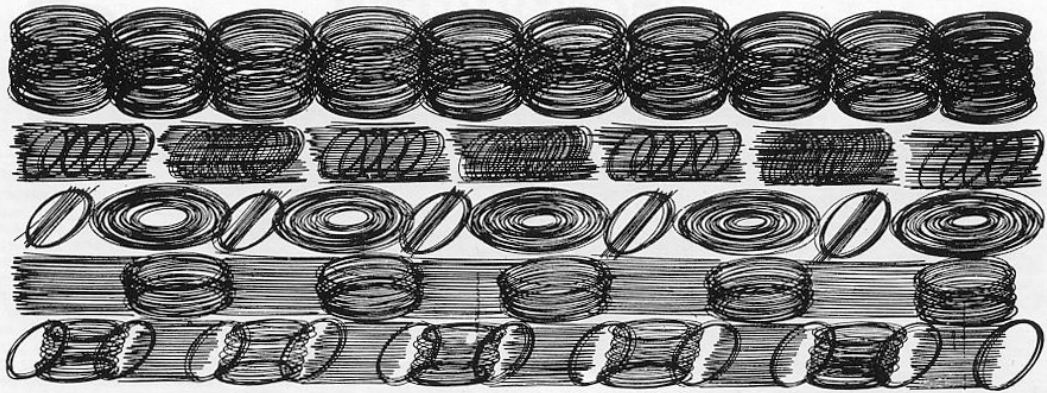


3

Francis B. Courtney is the most skillful and versatile penman in the world--American Penman

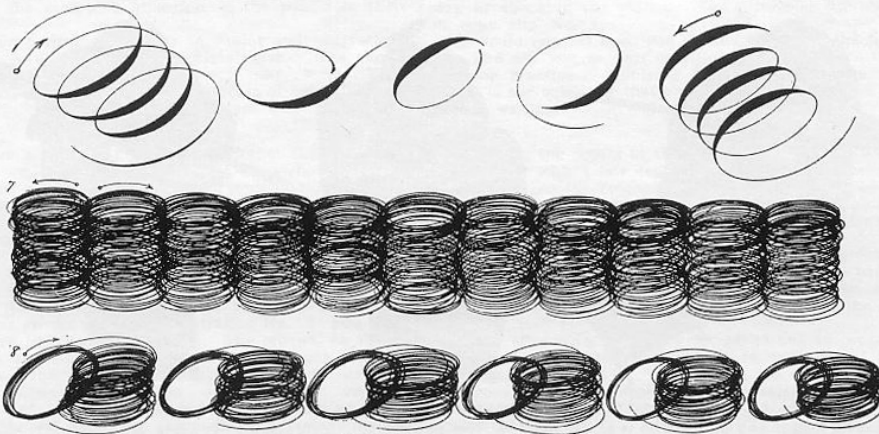


Mr. Courtney at work



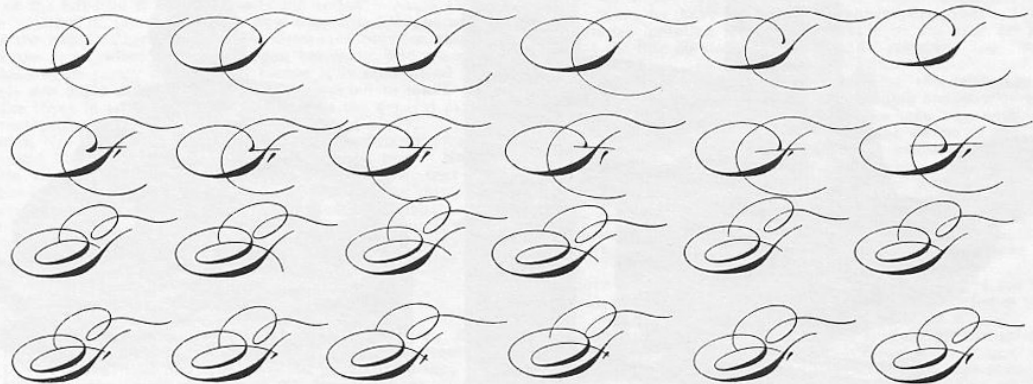
4

Hundreds of poor writers make the chances for good ones all the better.



5

Good writing touches the golden chord of opportunity.



6

Good writing carries you direct to the office where business is transacted.

Amesport Barrington Cambridge  
Detroit Eastport Fairmont  
Gardner Harveysport Indiana

7

Good writing has a value in it that business men appreciate and pay good salaries for.

Jamesport Kearney Louiston  
Montague Newport Overton  
Portland Quincy Ravenpoint

8

Good writing is one of the promising ladders by which young men rise in the world. It's a good way.

Sigourney Thornton Uniontown  
Varney Warren Xenophon  
Younger Zanzibar ZHoutner

9

A business man judges the inside by the outside. So he seldom opens poorly written applications

Opin has a head and a point  
Busy bees collect honey from flowers  
Cotton velvet is very soft To the feel  
Dollars are our largest silver coins

10 A boy with a poor handwriting is out of tune with hope . He plays discord on the strings of opportunity.

Earthen ware is baked in furnaces  
Forts are surrounded by a moat  
Great haste often makes great waste  
Hard apples keep better than mellow

11 Good writing is the guide to business chances

It is not how much we do but how well  
January the first month of the year  
Knowledge in youth is wisdom in age  
Live coals of fire glow with heat

12 Good chances come thick and fast to good writers.



Millers separate the bran from flour  
Never envy those who are above you  
One hundred cents are worth a dollar  
Polite people please their friends

13

Poor writers have no chance under the scrutinizing eye of the business man.

Quicksilver is heavier than lead  
Rain will make the ground moist  
Spring is the first season of the year  
The miller grinds corn into meal

14

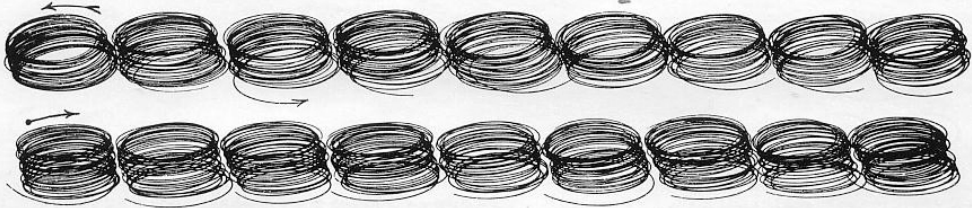
The man with an opportunity to offer doesn't look for the boy with a shaky handwriting to give it to  
He seeks the best.

Upright and do right make all right  
Value writing for there is value in it  
Wheat flour will make good bread  
Xenophon fixed historical events

15

There is ever ready employment for the young man who can write a good hand.

*You should save the fragments of time  
 Youaves always win prizes in drills*



16

Good writing is the nest egg of prosperity that hatches out golden opportunities.



17

In order to be a candidate for good employment you must be an able candidate. Good writing candidates are the best



18

When you write a good hand there comes a knock at the door. You are wanted in the business office.

*P. G. Rowing* *C* *R. L. Bower*  
*I* *W. C. Bartlett* *K*  
*R. L. Bower* *L* *S. P. Raurfort*

19

Good writing is the foot path to steady employment. It is the guide post to good pay.

*R. L. Barnat* *M* *J. R. Carr*  
*N* *C. Gaiffin* *L*  
*J. D. Rowan* *P* *C. C. Raurert*

20

Fine penmanship fits people for positions

*J. S. Caton* *Q* *P. R. Brant*  
*R* *T. W. Rainer* *S*  
*L. R. Quarter* *T* *V. Carrot*

21

Young people applying for positions must possess good writing.

*Hairfort* *U* *R.B. Hunt*  
*V* *G.W. Carter* *W*  
*L. Rawnet* *X* *L. Parker*

22

A good handwriting is a stepping stone to a successful business life

*W.C. Rainey* *W.C. Carney*  
*Y* *D. G. Lanier* *Z*  
*R.C. Owens* *J.R. Rainey*

23

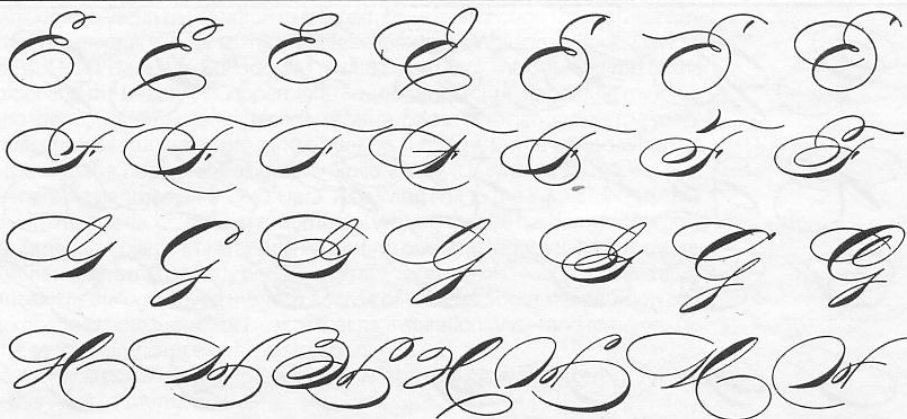
Good writing is the best introduction to the busy business man

*A A A A A A A*  
*B B B B B B B*  
*C C C C C C C*  
*D D D D D D D*

24

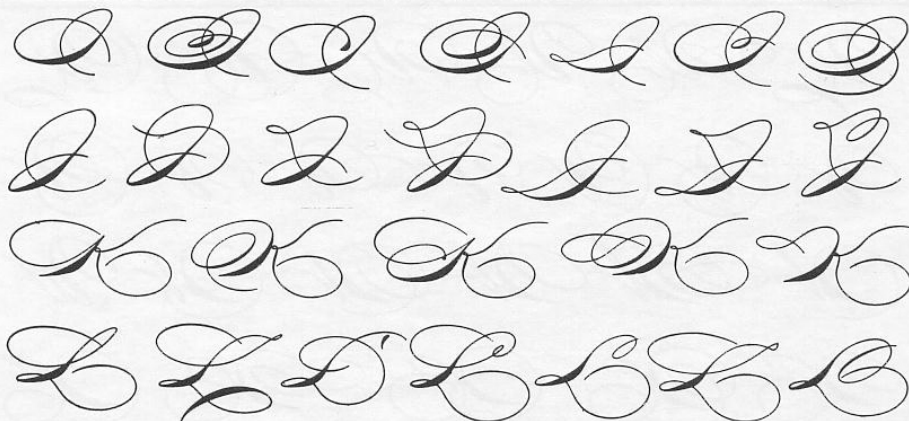
Improve your chances by improving your penmanship.





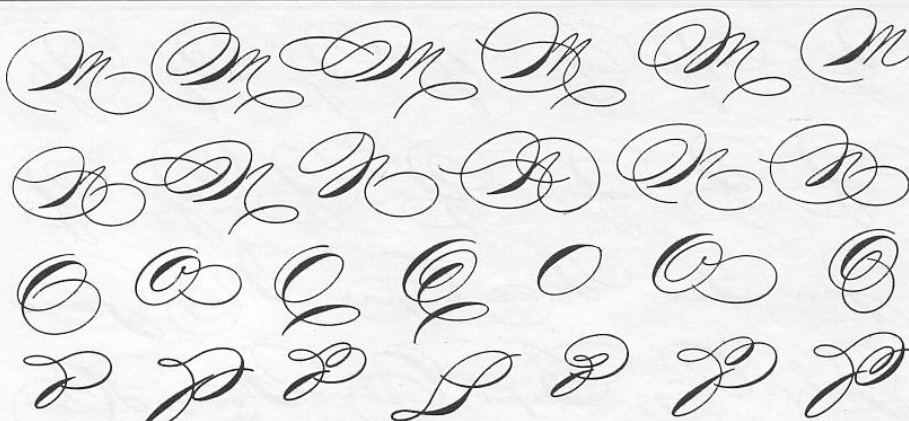
25

Your future position may depend upon your penmanship.



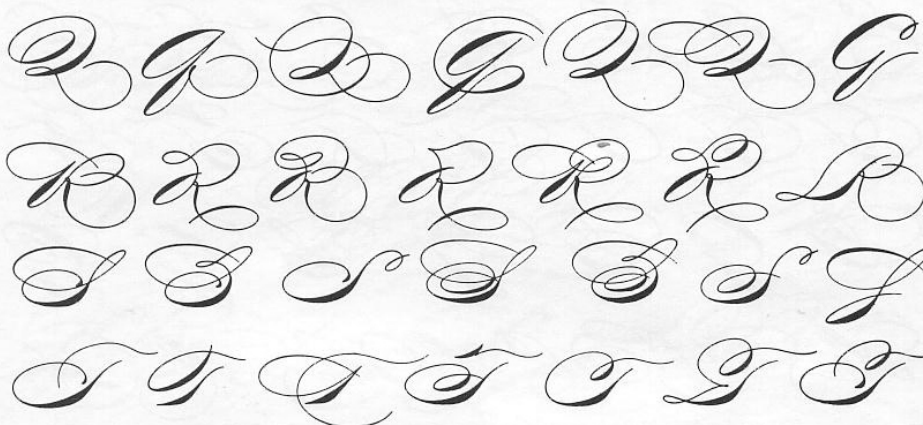
26

Good writing will help you to retain permanent employment.



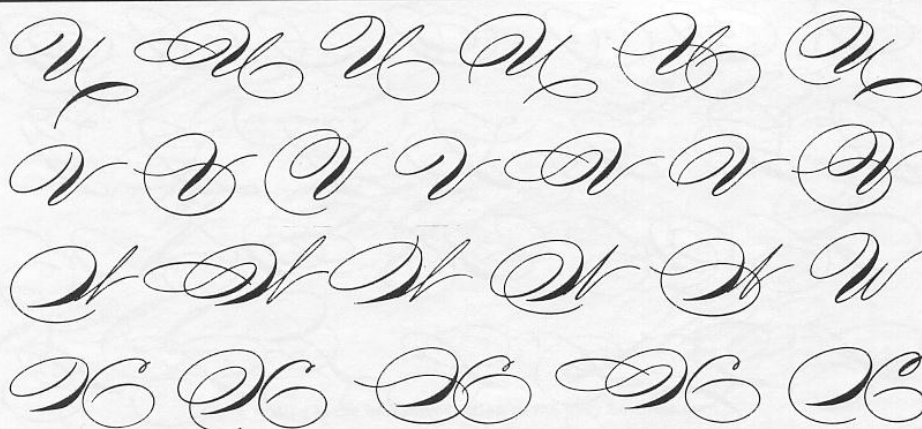
27

The best and most lucrative positions are tendered those who write well.



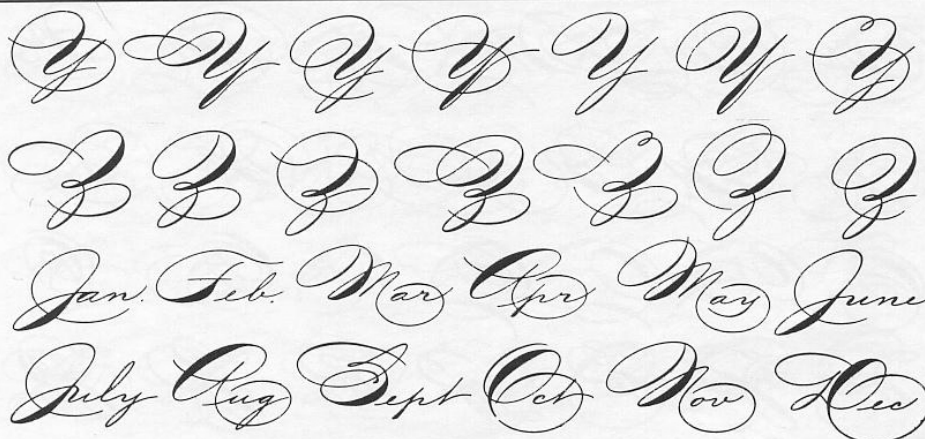
28

Good writing is one of the surest stepping stones to profitable employment.



29

Poor penmanship holds many a young man back



30

Open positions take the best writers.



### A Complete Course

Containing thirty plates of the finest off-hand ornamental copies that Courtney has produced, with full instructions for home practice.

ONE DOLLAR POSTPAID

Box 129

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Dear Mr. Courtney:

It gives me pleasure to say that I am much gratified with the results which I obtained by practicing from your "Lessons in Ornamental Writing." Can safely say that my handwriting has improved two hundred per cent. I shall never regret the time spent on your masterly copies, and can cheerfully and conscientiously recommend your "Lessons" to those who are ambitious to become good rapid writers.

Yours truly,  
W. R. STOLTE



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AFTER

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SENT POSTPAID UPON RECEIPT OF \$1.00

To Any Part of The World

FRANCIS B. COURTNEY, Publisher

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

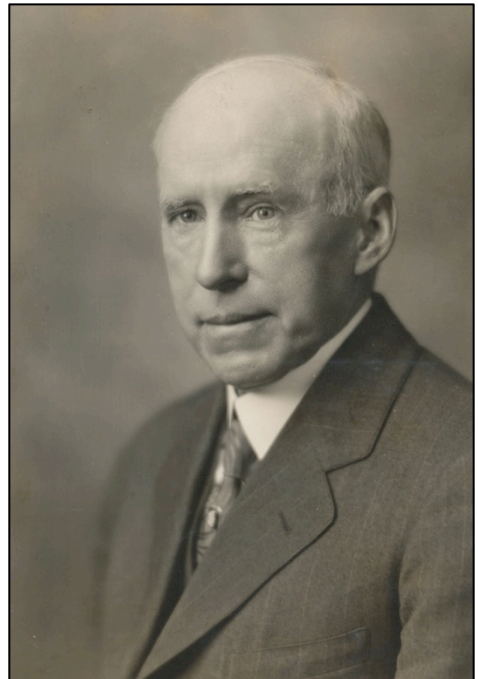
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A. N. PALMER, Editor, American Penman

*Francis B. Courtney,*  
*Handwriting Expert.*  
*Examiner of*  
*Forged and Questioned Handwriting.*  
DETROIT, MICHIGAN

COURTNEY'S SCHOOL OF PENMANSHIP  
BY CORRESPONDENCE  
DETROIT, MICHIGAN

# Francis B. Courtney

(1867-1952)



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