

ALL WRITERS NOT MEN OF LETTERS

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The word 'letter' has a wide range of use in the English language. There are a variety of letters. Any written (also printed) communication from one person to another to convey information, ideas, advice or opinion is a letter. This forms the bulk of the material handled by the Postal Department. The writers of these letters are from all parts of the world.

Apart from this common variety there are special types, too. A letter of authority is one by which one authorizes another to receive or do something on his behalf. A letter of introduction is a note by which one introduces one friend to another.

A letter of offer, in trade circles called "the offer", is a letter in which one offers to another to sell something or offers to do service on terms set out in the letter. A letter of acceptance is one by which the offer is accepted by the latter. An offer and its acceptance create a contract; each party is bound to do what either has proposed or accepted.

A letter of advice is a letter issued by a bank to another office of the bank, asking the latter to make payment or deliver goods to the party stated in the draft or letter. A letter from an agent to his principal, or from a person sending goods (consignor) to one who is the receiver (consignee), transmitting special information is also a letter of advice.

A letter of credit is a letter addressed by a bank or trading firm to one or more of its correspondents asking them to honor the bills of exchange or drafts drawn upon it by the parties specified in the letter. A draft is an instruction to pay money.

A 'day letter' is a telegraphic message sent during the day at a reduced rate. And a 'night letter' is a similar message sent at even lower rates during the night.

A 'letter of administration' is the instrument or writing issued by a court authorizing an administrator of a dead person to manage and settle the affairs of the deceased.

'Letters patent' are official papers given under the seal of the Government granting one person some specified authority or permis-

sion or privilege. 'Letters of marque' and 'letters of reprisal' are documents issued by one government authorizing the seizure of the subjects and goods of another state in retaliation.

In contrast to all these matter-of-fact letters is literature which is meant by the word 'letters'. This is the expression in words of the creative urge in man, a product of thought and imagination. Only those who do original, creative writing are men of letters. They write poems, verses, plays, short stories, skits, novels, essays, etc., which appeal to people with a taste for literature. They entertain, educate and edify or elevate the reader.

Of a class apart are those who devote themselves to belles lettres (meaning 'beautiful letters') -- fine, elegant, aesthetic writings which reflect one's love of and for beauty. They give the reader joy out of literature, making it an art -- a lalit kala, as they say in Sanskrit.