

PUBLIC LOVE LETTERS.

Anonymous Appeals Appear in Newspapers of Southern Italy.

The printed love letters in the advertising columns of papers in southern Italy fill the tourist with wonder, mingled with deep respect for the sentiment which will pay for their insertion. The following letter, taken from the Palermo Ora, contained 174 words, which at the advertised rate of a cent a word would cost \$1.74. If the Italian saying, "A lira is a dollar," is true, this would equal a bill of \$1.74, which would require a pretty devoted American lover to pay:

"Dearest Little One—What have I done to thee? Why this silence after thy promise? I experience from it a grief so violent that it renders me helpless.

"Thou art good, my Santuzza, as good as dear; thou knowest how this makes me suffer. Why dost thou do it? Thou knowest how I love thee, that thou art my religion. Have I offended thee?

"I seek intense occupation to keep my mind calm, but a thousand thoughts crowd my soul. Perhaps while you assume yourself you do not know how your silence agitates me. Oh, dear Madonna mine, darling, darling, my beloved joy, do not forget me; thou art my life, all there is for me, my good Santuzza.

"I could not longer live without thee. Forgive me if I have offended thee in any way, blessed little bird. Here all is as if thou wert to arrive at any moment. I seek to create for myself this most beautiful illusion, ever speaking to thee, vainly expecting news from thee with every post, with a violently beating heart.

"Do not believe me bad; I love thee so much: I kiss thy dear lips, thy most entrancing little countenance, all full of passion and tenderness. I am unable to hear once more thy dear, enchanting voice."

There were eleven letters of this kind in the same issue of the Ora, about an average number for a Palermo paper. Such letters are found in all Italian papers, but they grow shorter and shorter as one travels north until in Milan one line in the "agnony column" suffices to express the lover's anguish.

A style which seems theatrical to an American seems perfectly natural to an Italian. He will write exactly this sort of love letter in private. Some of the published letters of Napoleon to Josephine in their early married life are in the same strain.—St. Paul Pioneer Press.

HE TOOK THE CAKE.

A Story of William Black, the Novelist, and Mary Anderson.

One time when Mary Anderson was playing in "The Winter's Tale," in Duluth, William Black, the novelist, who was very intimate with Miss Anderson and her family, insisted upon assuming the part of one of the supers, who was dressed as a very old man with a venerable beard and locks that fell upon his shoulders. When Black went upon the stage in this disguise he walked about among his fellow supers with unceasing restlessness and, judging by the wild motions of his arms, seemed to be addressing to each in turn an impassioned harangue. The audience began to wonder who the new actor was and what on earth he was doing in a play in which neither he appeared nor the stage managers ever intended him to appear.

Presently came the time when it was the business of Perdita to distribute flowers among the peasants, among whom Black had his place. Miss Anderson, carrying on the practical jokes of the family circle, had prepared a message for this moment, and, having distributed flowers among the less favored supers, she handed to Black a large cake crowned with a wreath of laurel, saying as she did so, "You take it in allusion to his triumphs in the contest of wits at the supper table.

Her consternation, Black showed that he was quite prepared to carry out the jest, for, taking the cake from the hands of Perdita, he immediately distributed it in substantial portions to his hungry fellow supers, who, finding it to be of excellent quality, began to munch it greedily under the eyes of the house.—Exchange.

Elephants' Love For Finery.

Strange as it may seem, the elephant is passionately fond of finery and delights to see himself decked out with gorgeous trappings. The native princes of India are very particular in choosing their state elephants and will give enormous sums for an animal that exactly meets the somewhat fanciful demands they have erected. For these they have made cloths of silk so heavily embroidered with gold that two men are hardly able to lift them.—Pearson's Weekly.

Force of Habit.

"I understand that all star cast was suffering languid."

"That men think," remarked the laughing woman, "causes fully one-third of all the trouble in the world."

"I" rejoined the mere man, "and when women say causes the other two-thirds."—Chicago News.

Poor Consolation.

Benham—You have torn my coat. —That's all right. Your coat is long enough to be in two sections.—Judge.

CRUDE ASTRONOMY.

Russian Peasants Have Queer Ideas of Sun, Moon and Stars.

We have it on no less authority than that of Caesar that the Druids taught their disciples many things about the form and dimensions of the earth and the heavens and a host of doctrines on the motions of the stars. Even death itself was to them an astronomical fact. They held that from this life we pass to take up our abode in one of the heavenly bodies. That they firmly held to this belief is manifest from the fact that they had no objection to lending money to be repaid in the other world. They looked upon the passage of life in much the same way as we regard a journey across the Atlantic.

There is no doubt that even now in various parts of Europe the views of the peasantry as to the heavenly bodies and celestial phenomena have changed but little from those of their predecessors of a thousand years ago. A Russian contributed to the Bulletin of the Astronomical Society of France has given the results of his observations on this point extending over ten years. The astronomical lore of the Russian peasantry of the north, center and south is limited to a knowledge of the existence of the sun and moon of three constellations, of the Milky way, of one planet, of comets, shooting stars and meteors. The sun is to all a mysterious and beneficent being.

The moon covered with ice and snow is ever in flight from its brother the sun. Upon its disk may be seen unmistakably portrayed the murder of Abel by Cain, the latter being done to death by a pitchfork. Chill are the lunar rays, and were betide the child of man who shall sleep unprotected therefrom! From the horns of the crescent much useful information as to the forthcoming weather may be derived by the learned in such things.

The stars are lamps or candles which are lit and extinguished daily by the Eternal. A shooting star is the soul of one who has just passed away. Comets are heralds of war and famine. No Russian ever forgets that the Napoleonic war followed the great comet of 1811.—Westminster Gazette.

MALIBRAN'S CAPTIVITY.

A Romantic Incident in the Career of the Great Singer.

The following incident is told of Mme. Malibran, whose voice once upon a time excited the most unromantic to folly.

She was resting in her dressing room at the theater after singing in the part of Desdemona, her passionate soul still quivering with the emotion of the part and the tears and applause of her listeners. A person entered and begged her to go to her mother who had been taken ill. A carriage not her own, was at the door. She was whirled through the streets and led, much to her surprise and fear, into a strange house and to an excellent boudoir, hung and carpeted with rose colored silk.

Here the beautiful songstress was left alone after being assured by her attendants that her mother was well, that the message was a subterfuge and that her captivity would last until she sang something.

On a low seat sat a tyne such as that which thrilled in Malibran's fingers as she sang Desdemona's touch song.

At first she determined to resist, but after a short time her mind reverted to the evening, and almost unconsciously she took up the instrument and sang the "Romance de Saule." As she concluded sounds of enthusiastic applause and trembling accents of delight came to her through the still hangings, and she was then conducted by liveried servants to her carriage and to her home.

The next morning she found on her table a casket containing a magnificent pair of earrings, and inside the cover, written in diamonds, was the word "Merci." But the event remained a mystery to her forever.

Retort Filial.

In a warm argument one of the contestants had a poor case, but he defended his position vigorously.

"Oh, yes," the other one chuckled, "you have your defense, but you've lost. Losers always have their defense. Lincoln used to illustrate that with a story about his boy Tad.

"Lincoln and Tad were lunching one day in the White House.

"Don't eat your fish with your knife, boy," said Lincoln sternly. "It's not polite."

"But, father," said Tad, "is it polite to stare at folks when they're eating?"

Very True.

A grandmother was reproving her little grandchildren for making so much noise. "Dear me, children, you are so noisy today! Can't you be a little more quiet?"

"Now, grandma, you mustn't scold us. You see, if it wasn't for us you wouldn't be a grandma at all."—Harper's Weekly.

Why Lulu Was Happy.

Lulu was but two and a half years old when the first huckleberries she had ever seen were placed upon the table in a covered dish. When the cover was taken off she clapped her hands, exclaiming delightedly, "Oh, look at all the shoe buttons!"—Delicetator.

Knew Her Limitations.

He—Now that we are married, pet, do you love me enough to cook for me? She—Enough, darling? I love you entirely too much for that. —Boston Transcript.

A TIMELESS WORLD.

What Would Happen if We Were Entirely Inclosed by Clouds.

If astronomers are right in ascribing the wonderful brightness of Venus to the existence of an atmosphere continually filled with clouds, then she must be a world without time—at least there can be no measurement of time there such as we have here.

It is because we can see the sun and the stars that we are able to traverse the oceans and run railroad trains across the continents.

Surround our earth with an unbroken shell of clouds and what would become of all our clocks and chronometers? Not a ship could safely cross the sea; not a railroad would be able to run its trains without a series of frightful wrecks. In a few weeks every clock and watch would be hopelessly wrong and all exact timekeeping would cease.

Probably there are few who stop to think of the way in which our every day life depends upon astronomical observations. Our great primary timekeeper is the earth rotating on its axis. If we could not see the sun and stars because of clouds we should not know that the earth rotates and there would be no standard to which we could refer our timepieces and by which we could correct them. In fact, we should probably have no timepieces.

There could be no hours and minutes, for they are exact divisions of an ideal day based upon celestial observations which would be impossible to us.

They could not be based upon clocks or other mechanical devices, because the most exquisite chronometer that can be constructed will not keep time indefinitely and must be continually corrected by means of observations of the stars made in the observatories.

There could be no accurate maps of countries or charts of the seas, for such maps and charts can be made only by the aid of astronomical observations.

There could be no parallels of latitude or meridians of longitude, for they, too, are based on celestial observations which would be impossible to us.

We should not know with any certainty where we were upon the earth. We could not measure the distance from New York to London nor from New York to San Francisco.

Poetical minds, moved by the spectacle of Venus in her glory, have drawn brilliant pictures of the delights of life in that radiant world, but there is another side to the question of which we may well think as we gaze admiringly upon her electric splendor.—Garrett P. Serviss in New York American.

The "Arabian Nights."

The collection of tales called the "Thousand and One Nights," or the "Arabian Nights," is of unknown date and authorship. It was first made known in Europe about the end of the seventeenth century by Antoine Galland, who was employed by Colbert to collect manuscripts in the east. The copy of the Arabic manuscript brought by Galland from Syria contained a marginal note dated 1584, and from internal evidence the middle of the fifteenth century has been fixed upon as the probable period of the composition of the work. Some of the tales were evidently borrowed by the writer from other authors, and Von Hammer identifies at least the plot and some of the stories of the "Arabian Nights" with an earlier collection in Persian called the "Thousand Fanciful Stories."

April Fooling.

The origin of the custom of April fooling cannot be traced with any degree of certainty. In the literature of the last century there are found many references to it, and yet beyond that it is scarcely possible to go. One suggestion is that the custom of playing tricks on the first day of April was derived from some ancient pagan custom, such as the Hull festival among the Hindus or the Roman feast of the fools. One fact, however, we do know, and that is that the practice prevails in many countries under various names which would seem to indicate that it dates away back to the early history of the race.—Brooklyn Eagle.

Four Extremes.

The coldest place on earth inhabited by man is Verkbojansk, above the arctic circle, in northeastern Siberia. The thermometer there drops to 90 degrees below zero in January, but sometimes rises to 86 degrees above zero in the shade in July, dropping, however, to the freezing point on the warmest summer nights. The hottest place in the world is the interior of the great Sahara desert, in Africa, where the thermometer rises to 121 degrees. The wettest place is Greytown, Nicaragua, where the mean annual rainfall is 290 inches. The place of least rain is Fort Nolloth, in South Africa, where less than an inch sometimes falls in a year.

All For Love.

"Did you ever know a girl to die for love?"

"Yes."

"Did she just fade away and die because some man deserted her?"

"No; she just took to washing and worked herself to death because the man she loved married her."—Houston Post.

A Cruel Hint.

Nell—Harry had such a masterful way about his proposing that I liked. Belle—Did you? That's queer, for it was exactly what made most of us other girls turn him down.—Baltimore American.

Live as though life was earnest and life will be so.—Owen Mc.Orth.

SIR JOHN SOANE'S WHIM.

The Practical Joke a Celebrated Mar Played on Posterity.

One of the most famous of post-mortem jokes was that perpetrated by the donor of the celebrated Soane museum of pictures and other valuable objects d'art to England, the late Sir John Soane, who died in 1837. In his will Sir John made provision for the opening of three sealed cupboards on certain specified dates in the presence of the trustees. In 1896—that is to say, almost thirty years after the death of the testator—the first of the mysterious receptacles was with much ceremony and breaking of seals opened in the presence of a committee of men, with the then president of the Royal Academy, Sir F. Grant, at their head. In stead of a priceless treasure or some evidence that would throw an entirely new light upon some doubtful incident in political history the contents of the cupboard proved to be worthless accounts, letters and stationery.

Twenty years passed by, and the interest that had smoldered after the disappointment of 1896 was again fanned into flame at the prospect of breaking the seals of the second cupboard, at which rite there were present, among others, Dr. Alfred Waterhouse, R. A., and Sir then Dr. R. W. Richardson. Like the cupboard mentioned in the well known nursery rhyme, Sir John's second cabinet proved "bare" of any sensation, the contents being chiefly composed of letters relating to certain long forgotten family quarrels that had not even the merit of being interesting. If some of those authorized to be present at the opening of the third and last receptacle of mystery were dubious about the profit that would accrue by letting the light of day fall upon the contents thereof after sixty years' darkness, one at least, Sir R. W. Richardson, looked forward with unabated interest to that day in 1896 when the last seal would be broken and the mystery solved, but he, alas, died just two days before the ceremony was performed, and the fact that Sir John had played a practical joke upon posterity was duly confirmed by the presence of a collection of perfectly worthless letters and papers.

THE EVIL EYE.

To Praise a Turkish Baby Is to Terrify Its Mother.

Turkish women, even the most enlightened of them, are very superstitious. To praise a baby to its mother is all your life is worth should the baby happen to fall ill afterward.

The evil eye is the most common belief, and little children, who may be dressed in the height of European fashion otherwise, will wear under the brim of their hats a piece of garlic or other potent charm against the evil eye. Nilisy Hanoum, a woman not only well educated, but possessed of an unusual mind, had four children. They were faultlessly dressed in imported English clothes, but each of them wore some trinket against the evil eye. I teased her about it, and she protested that it was not her doing. "The slaves put them on, and I do not wish to hurt their feelings by taking them off," she said.

I resolved to test her enlightenment, and the next time I saw the baby with her I exclaimed, "What a lovely little creature!"

"You wretch!" she cried. "Spit on that child at once!"

I laughed at her manifest terror, but hastened to add, "I do not think her lovely in the least, for she has red hair and freckles and a pug nose, but I wanted to find out whether it was you or the slaves who put that garlic on your babies."

She shrugged her shoulders. "The slaves did it, but I suppose I do in the bottom of my heart believe in the evil eye. It is in the blood."—Mrs. Kenneth Brown in Metropolitan Magazine.

A Great Work of Art.

It was Apelles who visited the studio of Protogenes in Rome and, finding the artist absent, drew a thin colored line in such a way that the Roman knew that only his Grecian brother could have done it. But, not to be outdone, Protogenes drew a thinner line upon that of Apelles, and when this was seen Apelles drew a third line upon that of Protogenes. This puny was then looked upon as the greatest work of art, so says the story, in the palace of the Caesars.

A Shady Place.

A hotel keeper near New York city is a Frenchman, and his family know little more about English than he does. His suburban hotel stands in the center of a square filled with large trees. When the proprietor wanted to call attention to this advantage he put on his cards, "The most shady hotel around New York." The reputation of the place is beyond reproach, and the proprietor does not know yet why so many persons smile when they read the line quoted.

Not at All Stylish.

Madam—What a funny looking hat that woman has on! Adam—Don't see anything funny about it. Looks mighty sensible to me. Madam—Yes; that's what makes it so funny looking. Te he!—New York Times.

Just as Good.

"Have you any postage stamps?" asked the man entering the drug store. "I have not," replied the druggist, "but I've got plasters that stick just as good."—Yonkers Statesman.

If you wish any blessing look for it yourself.—Arrian.

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