



The love letters of Abelard and Heloise

By Peter Abelard Heloise

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It sometimes happens that Love is little esteemed by those who choose rather to think of other affairs, and in requital He strongly manifests His power in unthought ways. Need is to think of Abelard and Heloise: how now his treatises and works are memories only, and how the love of her (who in lifetime received little comfort therefor) has been crowned with the violet crown of Grecian Sappho and the homage of all lovers.

The world itself was learning a new love when these two met; was beginning to heed the quiet call of the spirit of the Renaissance, which, at its consummation, brought forth the glories of the Quattrocento.

It was among the stone-walled, rose-covered gardens and clustered homes of ecclesiastics, who served the ancient Roman builded pile of Notre Dame, that Abelard found Heloise.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Abelard and Heloise are nearly as famous a pair of tragic lovers as the fictional Romeo and Juliet; their shared passion for knowledge, religious faith, and one another sealed their destiny. Abelard was a well-respected, 12th-century Parisian scholar and teacher, and Heloise was his talented young student. The two relate their story through a set of letters to one another and intimate acquaintances. Their ardor is unmistakable; as Abelard writes to his love, "So intense were the fires of lust which bound me to you that I set those wretched, obscene pleasures, which we blush even to name, above God as above myself..." This forbidden lust resulted in a pregnancy and secret marriage, and when their union could no longer withstand the challenges in its path, each lover sought refuge in the church--Abelard became a monk and Heloise an abbess. Their correspondence continued as both achieved success in their new careers but continued to struggle with their feelings for one another; the set of letters powerfully articulates the wide range of emotions they experienced. So timeless is their love story that--after eight centuries--their passion, their devotion, and their struggle still resonate with readers.

Users Review

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William Vogt:

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