



# The love letters of Abelard and Heloise by both

*Abelard and Heloise*

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**The love letters of Abelard and Heloise by both** Abelard and Heloise  
THE STORY OF ABELARD AND HELOISE.

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.

[Pg 8] From his noble father's home in Brittany, Abelard, gifted and ambitious, came to study with William of Champeaux in Paris. His advancement was rapid, and time brought him the acknowledged leadership of the Philosophic School of the city, a prestige which received added lustre from his controversies with his later instructor in theology, Anselm of Laon.

His career at this time was brilliant. Adulation and flattery, added to the respect given his great and genuine ability, made sweet a life which we can imagine was in most respects to his liking. Among the students who flocked to him came the beautiful maiden, Heloise, to learn of philosophy. Her uncle Fulbert, living in retired ease near Notre Dame, offered in exchange for such instruction both bed and board; and Abelard, having already seen and resolved to win her, undertook the contract.

Many quiet hours these two spent on the green, river-watered isle, studying old philosophies, and Time, swift and silent as the Seine, sped on, until when days had changed to months they became aware of the deeper knowledge of Love. Heloise responded wholly to this new influence, and [Pg 9] Abelard, forgetting his ambition, desired their marriage. Yet as this would have injured his opportunities for advancement in the Church Heloise steadfastly refused this formal sanction of her passion. Their love becoming known in time to Fulbert, his grief and anger were uncontrollable. In fear the two fled to the country and there their child was born. Abelard still urged marriage, and at last, outwearied with importunities, she consented, only insisting that it be kept a secret. Such a course was considered best to pacify her uncle, who, in fact, promised reconciliation as a reward. Yet, upon its accomplishment he openly declared the marriage. Unwilling that this be known lest the knowledge hurt her lover, Heloise strenuously denied the truth. The two had returned, confident of Fulbert's reaffirmed regard, and he, now deeply troubled and revengeful, determined to inflict that punishment and indignity on Abelard, which, in its accomplishment, shocked even that ruder civilization to horror and to reprisal.

The shamed and mortified victim, caring only for solitude in which to hide and rest, retired into the wilderness; returning after a time to take the vows of monasticism. [Pg 10] Unwilling to leave his love where by chance she could become another's, he demanded that she become a nun. She yielded obedience, and, although but twenty-two years of age, entered the convent of Argenteuil.

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