

Why Lovers MUST BE Liars.

Psychology Shows How True Passion "Short-Circuits" the Higher Mental and Moral Centres, Thus Making Possible the Latest Delightfully Nonsensical Love Letters by Rational Beings



"Byam Shaw's remarkably interesting picture, 'Love the Conqueror,' which shows all the famous characters of history brought, helpless, to the feet of love, without reason or power to save themselves, illustrates the psychology of this subject."

By Prof. David Edgar Rice, Ph. D.
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THE public has been treated to such an extraordinary outpouring of love letters in recent court cases that it becomes a proper function of psychology to elucidate as well as it can the nature of these phenomena.

A hard-headed business man writes raving nonsense in his love letters. A professor of moral philosophy tells outrageous lies. The wife of a clergyman, accustomed to the severest moral discipline, uses the most unbridled erotic language. A great singer, noted for the inconstancy of his affections, declares that he is "ever the same."

What is the meaning of these letters? What is the meaning of love letters, anyway? The science of psychology will explain to us that such epistles necessarily defy all the rules of reason. True passion is an elemental instinct that when aroused supersedes all the restraints of reason. The love letter does not need to have a meaning. It is simply an expression of unreasoning love. The lover is more likely than not to lie, because he is released from the control of all the higher mental centres, including that which ordinarily restrains him from lying. But he will not tell a mean or calculating lie. It is only in a few of the highest natures that the extreme of passion can be combined with perfect mental self-control, as in the case of the Brownings.

While universal experience confirms the statement of a well-known author that "love is the greatest thing in the world," it is equally true that in love and its manifestations, as in many other things, there is only a step from the sublime to the ridiculous. All the world, it has been said, loves a lover, but a large part of the world, none the less, stands quite ready to howl in derision, if not in contempt, if some mischance happens to expose to public gaze the surging emotions of his enraptured soul.

The love letter of everyday life, in the cold light of reason, takes first rank as the most absurd and ridiculous product of the human imagination.

If any one is not convinced on this point let him peruse a few of the effusions that have recently found their way into the public prints, a few specimens of which are given herewith.

The following rather tame examples, written by a "blond and pretty" maiden to her married lover, are typical emanations of the "snooky cokums" species of brain, which, utterly lacking in imagination, is confined to a range of ideas and expressions that is really pathetic:

"Doll Baby: The only thing missing is you. I have wished for you more than once. If I was to speak from 'der heart out' I would go on telling you how much I wish you were here."

"Dear Leo," says a second letter, "don't you think I am a very good doll baby to think of you so much and write to you so often? Friday, Saturday and Sunday I shall expect so much mail from you that it will take me two or three hours to read it. It's time for my bed, so good-night, be a good boy, and don't forget your sweetheart."

The frequent recurrence of baby talk and the use of diminutive terms of endearment, especially on the part of women, are the most distinctive characteristics of the fervent love letter. The woman who recently sued the great Caruso for breach of promise asserted that he was always "baby" to her, and in support of her assertion she offered many letters and postcards purporting to have been written by the great tenor, in which he thus described himself.

This tendency is easily accounted for when we recall the intensity of the maternal instinct, which is stronger and more important than the sex instinct in securing the perpetuation of the species. The woman's strongest love is that which she shows toward her own offspring, and, conversely, that which she holds most dear she likes to regard from the maternal point of view. Little wonder, then, that the man who has won her affection, no matter what his age or size may be, becomes for her a "baby."

"Exhibit No. 2" is on an entirely different plane, so far as literary style and the play of imagination are concerned. The author, formerly the wife of the Rev. Cranston Brenton, a distinguished Episcopal clergyman of Yonkers, had entered into a "mystic marriage" with Frederick Ernest Holman, a literary man of some prominence, without taking the precaution to secure a separation from her legal husband. The letter is in the form of an allegory, and was to be opened by her lover on a specified night. It runs as follows:

"I long so for you that I am half afraid to see you. I long so to give myself to you—to be all yours at last, that I hardly dare think of our green woods. To-night, then, you are mine, and mine alone.

"Once upon a time Eros gave a masked ball and invited the 'emotions.' They came in costume—costume intended to conceal the identity of each. To harp and flute they danced. They quaffed the wine of 'life' and their merry feast chased the flying hours.

"Eros watched and smiled.

"He knew.

"Deeper they drank. Wilder grew the dance. Tongues too reserved were loosened. Maidens demure

garment." He is so proud of her that he "would like to take her to Fifth avenue and Forty-second street at 5 p. m. and raise her on his shoulders and shout out, 'See what I have!'"

Lack of space forbids the further multiplying of examples. Enough have already been given to demonstrate the truth that love letters resemble nothing quite so much as the ravings of a disordered brain. They fairly seethe with silly exaggerations, perjuries, outlandish epithets, baby prattle and barbarous figures of speech.

To say that a man under the influence of a strong love passion is released from the restraints of rea-

control of the higher centres of thought. Lovers must be liars.

To put the same facts in a purely physiological form, we may say that the great substratum of mental life in man, in common with the lower forms of animal life, consists of a great array of inherited tendencies to action in the form of what are commonly known as instincts. Given a certain stimulus to the nervous organism, and its appropriate reaction follows as inevitably as night follows day. The only thing that can possibly prevent such a result is the existence of a different impulse, prompting to action of a different kind.



A Painting by a Lunatic, Which Has All the Meaningless but Highly Imaginative Characteristics of a Love Letter.

grew bold. Sombre men grew gay. Brave men grew braver. Talent grew to genius. Genius grew to inspiration. The time for unmasking came and all the guests had taken off their masks—save three. 'Anger' tore the mask from 'Passion,' and, lo! there stood 'Purity.' Turning in his wrath, 'Anger' stripped the mask from the other masked guest, who had come as 'Innocence,' and there stood 'Ignorance.' A dozen hands rushed out and tore the mask from 'Anger,' and there stood 'Jealousy.' Eros watched and smiled."

Equally devoted in spirit and rapturous in expression, the letters of Mr. William Rapp, former husband of Madame Schumann-Heink, to his "charmer," Mrs. Katherine Dean, show us how, by judicious selection and handling, the more commonplace vocabulary of everyday life may be pressed into the service of the heart. Mr. Rapp assures his "inspiration girl," his "darling wonder girl" and his "one best bet" that "every fibre of his being impels him to her" and that he is "intoxicated with the delicious incense of her

son is to say in reality that he is suffering from a form of madness. Not long ago a judge in a court of law went so far as to say in all seriousness that a man could not be held strictly accountable for his statements made under the influence of love.

Why is it that the rapturous lover, however well balanced he may show himself to be in the ordinary situations of life, so often throws prudence and propriety to the winds and indulges in conduct which to his fellow men seems so utterly absurd?

The explanation, from a psychological point of view, is to be found in the fact that in the situation we are discussing we have to do with a real conflict between a natural and impulsive expression of individual personality on the one hand and the conventions of society on the other.

Next to the instinct of self-preservation, the strongest impulse of the human organism is that of ardent love. This is nothing more than a biological necessity, in order to insure the perpetuation of the species.

As compared with this impulse, considerations of honor, honesty, prudence and propriety, however highly they may be prized from an ethical point of view, are of only secondary importance. They represent a much later development in the psychic life of the race and of the individual as well. For ordinary situations they are usually strong enough to exercise a controlling influence over conduct. They sit as judges over the varied impulses of the heart, reinforcing the good and suppressing the unworthy.

But when the supreme crisis of a life comes in the form of love, as it comes but once to many an individual, these weak arbiters of conduct lose their power, and the torrent of emotion sweeps away all obstructing barriers.

They are, in fact, short-circuited by the paramount emotion. A man or woman violently in love has lost

In minds endowed with memory and the power of reflection such inhibiting influences are to be found in unhappy results of earlier experiences. In this way there are gradually built up centres of inhibition, as they are called. When we "reason" out that a given act is dishonest, or improper or imprudent, it simply means that we permit the idea of a previous unhappy experience in connection with the given act to occupy the consciousness to the exclusion of the impulse itself. The doing of the act or the refraining from it then rests wholly on the question of whether the brain centres which originate the impulses

are stronger or weaker than those centres that tend to inhibit it.

Keeping in mind this conception of the nature of the mental process that takes place when a man is laboring under the stress of a strong emotion, we must agree that Shakespeare formulated a perfectly sound psychology of love when he said that "love is blind, and lovers cannot see the pretty follies that themselves commit." It is in reality a case of mental blindness. The lover does not choose to make himself absurd. He does not weigh the satisfaction that comes with full expression of his love against the shame that results from exposing his heart to

others. His passion alone holds the stage of his consciousness, and, as it were, deliberately cuts the wires through which help might otherwise come from the so-called inhibition centres.

And when the stress is over and the damage done—when the mental balance is re-established and the victim can sit down and calmly consider his own conduct in an impersonal way, it may well be that he himself will prove to be his own severest critic.

Love-making is as old as the race itself. Strange, indeed, is it that the very emotions that mean so much to an individual in his own personal experience, and that make so strong an appeal to him when idealized in literature, should lead him so far away from truth and excite nothing but ridicule and contempt when they are actually realized in the experience of another individual.



PHOTO © BY GEO. BARRIE & SONS.

"The mighty Hercules wasting his time with Omphale's knitting is the Greek interpretation of the silly phase of love." The Painting is by A. Boulanger.

New Ways by Which Laundries Ruin Your Clothes

GERMAN hospital superintendent has been making an interesting study of laundries which throws new light on the ways our clothes are often ruined by careless or inadequate methods.

One of the most common causes of damage to clothing in laundries is the use of hard or insufficiently soft water. Another frequent cause is false economy in the use of soap. By sparing the soap the material washed almost invariably runs the risk of being spoiled in a greater or less degree.

We are too prone to look upon soap merely as a chemical means of removing dirt, whereas in these days, when comparatively heavy-working rising and mangle machinery are used, a good soap is invaluable as a mechanical lubricant in preventing damage to the linen by ameliorating the action of the rollers.

This lubricating action can, however, only be fully secured when soft water is employed; with hard waters a large amount of soap is wasted. The public in general have no conception of what this waste really means, nor is it easy to express it in figures. But the experiments have shown that one part of lime in 100,000 parts of water means sixteen times the amount of soap necessary in soft water containing no lime.

Electric bleaching is another method which does serious harm to collars and linens. Experiments show that it deteriorates the fabrics fully fifty per cent.

Soaps containing a relatively low percentage of fat and alkaline soap powders are also responsible for a great deal of damage. When chemical disinfectants are used the damage from this cause is much greater, although not so apparent at first.