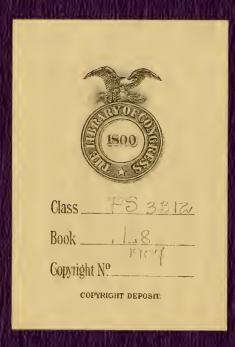
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The Cove Sonnets of Abeliand and beloise

EllaWheelerWilcox











The Love Sonnets of



Ella Wheeler Wilcox



enblished a W.B. Conkey Co at Bammond, Ind. 1907





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FAILE BUILTIE

COL

The story of Abelard and Heloise has trailed across the centuries like a burning comet across the heavens. Seven hundred years have not diminished its fiery splendor.

The tragic history contained in the five remarkable letters left by the lovers is as vivid a page in the world's literature as though Abelard and Heloise had lived, loved and suffered only a decade ago.

In embodying these letters in sonnet form I have retained to a great degree their identical language. In no instance has liberty been taken with the original meaning or purport. The sonnets are therefore little more than a rhyming paraphrase of the immortal love-letters of A belard and Heloise.



Ella Wheeler Wilcox









beloise to Aveland



I

y that vast love and passion which I bore you,
By these long years of solitude and grief,
By all my vows, I pray and I implore you,

A ssuage my sorrows with a sweet relief.

A mong these holy women, sin abhorring,

Whose snow-white thoughts fly ever to the Cross,

I am a sinner, with my passions warring,

All unrepentant, grieving for my loss.

Oh, not through zeal, religion or devotion,

Did I abandon those dear paths we trod;

I followed only one supreme emotion,

I took the veil for A belard-not God!

O vows, O convent, though you have estranged

My lover's heart, behold my own unchanged!







heloise to abelako



П

ithin the breast these sacred garments cover,

There is no altar of celestial fire:

I am a woman weeping for my lover,

The victim of a hungering heart's desire.

Veiled as I am, behold in what disorder

Your will has plunged me; and in vain I try,

By prayer and rite, to reach some tranquil border,

Where virtues blossom and where passions die.

But when I think the conquest gained, some tender

And radiant memory rises from the past;

Again to those sweet transports I surrender;

Remembered kisses feed me while I fast.

Though lost my lover, still my love endures;

Though sworn to God, my life is wholly yours.







heldise to avelard



Ш

efore the altar, even, un-

I carry that lost dream with all its charms;

A gain to love's dear overtures consenting,

I hear your voice, I seek your sheltering arms.

Again I know the rapture and the languor,

By fate forbidden and by vows debarred;

Nor can the thought of God in all His anger,

Drive from my heart the thought of Abelard.

My widowed nights, my days of rigorous duty,

My resignation of the world I knew,

My buried youth, my sacrifice of beauty,

Were all oblations offered up to you.

O Master, Husband, Father, let me move

With those fond names your heart to pitying love.







beloise to Avelard



IV

now then the anguish of my sad condition,

And break the silence of unending days;

Appease me with one sentence of contrition,

For that command which doomed me to these ways.

I am your wife. Despite my sacred calling,

Despite my vows, my consecrated life,

Despite the fate so tragic and appalling,

That wrecked two hearts, yet still I am your wife!

May you not, then, in pity for my sorrow,

Permit me once to look upon your face?

Or, that denied, may I not comfort borrow

By your discourses on the means of grace?

You cast your pearls before unheeding swine:

Would you save souls? Then, Abelard, save mine.







beloise to Abeland



fin those hours when soul
and body mated

In that wild ression - 1:1

In that wild passion which may not endure—

If in those hours so fervent and so fated, I loved you with emotions

I loved you with emotions not all pure,

Yet even then the mortal man was never

So dear as was the grandeur of his heart.

And now I love you, and shall love forever,

Though earthly joys no more may play their part.

Since in the cloister I am shut with reason,

Persuade me with devotion to remain.

In our communion there can lurk no treason;

You caused my sorrows, now relieve my pain.

At your command I chose this hated lot:

Console me sometimes with a spoken thought.







beloise to Avelard



VI

y all my chains, my burdens and my fetters,

I plead with you to ease their galling weight,

And with the soothing solace of your letters,

To teach me resignation to my fate.

Since you no more may breathe love's fervent story, I would be bride of heaven. Oh, tell me how!

Awake in me an ardor for that glory,

The love divine, so lacking in me now!

As once your songs related all love's pleasures,

Relate to me the rapture of your faith.

Unlock the storehouse of your new-found treasures.

And lend a radiance to my living death.

Oh, think of me, and help me through the years!

Adieu!—I blot this message with my tears.













Avelaro to beloise



VI

nowing the years of our delight were past,

And those seductive days no more could lure,

I sought religion's fetters
to make fast

The sinful heart that purposed to be pure.

In this seclusion, to conceal my shame:

In this asylum, to forget. Alas!

The very silence shouts aloud your name:

Through every sunbeam does your radiance pass.

I fled, to leave your image far behind,

I pictured you the enemy of hope,

Yet still I seek you, seek you in my mind,

And down the aisles of memory I grope.

I hate, I love, I pray, and I despair,

I blame myself, and grief is everywhere.







avelard to heldise



VIII

eligion bids me hold my thoughts in check,

S ince love in me can have no further part;

But as wild billows dash upon a wreck,

So passions rise and beat upon my heart.

The habit of the penitent I wear,

The altars where I grovel bring no peace;

God gives not heed nor answer to my prayer,

Because the flames within me do not cease:

They are but hid with ashes, and I lack

The strength to flood them with a grace divine,

For memory forever drags me back

And bids me worship at the olden shrine.

Your image rises, shrouded in its veil,

And all my resolutions droop and fail.







aveland to beloise



IX

looked into the heaven of your eyes,

And dared the flames of hell: I heard you speak,

And strove no longer to be strong and wise—

Earth's rapture lay in being fond and weak.

Oh, paradox! that virtue like your own,

To guilty shame transformed a holy life,

And the entrancing music of your tone

Changed peaceful harmonies to jarring strife.

I would forget, and think that you forgot,

Our wild abandon and the sinful thrall

Of stolen hours of bliss. Oh, bid me not

The memory of those vanished days recall!

While you remember, how can I forget?

Or hope's star dawn, till passion's sun has set?









abelied to beloise



ay not for me those sacred vows you took,

And your vocation ruthlessly profane:

Such blasphemies God will not o'erlook,

Nor grant salvation till your passions wane.

Your constancy gives food to vain desires

And your affection adds to my offense;

You do but pour on recollection's fires

Destructive fuel, of tumultuous sense.

Convinced of sin, of sin I am not cured;

The mind repels it, but the heart invites.

Oh, give not then fresh woes to be endured,

By new recitals of our old delights!

I faint beneath the burdens that I bear,

Without the increased weight of your despair.







Abelited to beloise



XJ

his mortal love, when dwelt upon with joy,

The love of God may not annihilate.

Oh, would you with old memories destroy

My piety, in its incipient state?

My vows to God grow feeble, in the war

With thoughts of you, and Duty's voices die,

Unanswered, down my soul's dark corridor,

While in my heart is passion's desperate cry.

And can you hear confessions such as these,

And thrust your love between my God and me?

Withdraw yourself, unhappy Heloise,

Be Heaven's alone, and let my life go free.

Drain sorrow's chalice, bravely take your cross;

To win back God, lies through the creature's loss.







Avelard to beloise



XII

ou call me Father; I was parricide:

You call me Master; it was sin I taught:

You call me Husband, yet you were my bride But after blight and ruin had been wrought.

Blot out those words, and substitute instead,

The darkest titles wounded pride can name.

Through me your honor and your peace lie dead;

took your virtue, and I gave you shame.

Not we alone in passion's pit were hurled;

Because we failed, shall other lives be weak?

Our follies have set standards for the world;

Of our wild amours shall the centuries speak.

For my salvation let your tears be spent;

A dvance in virtue, and repent! repent!

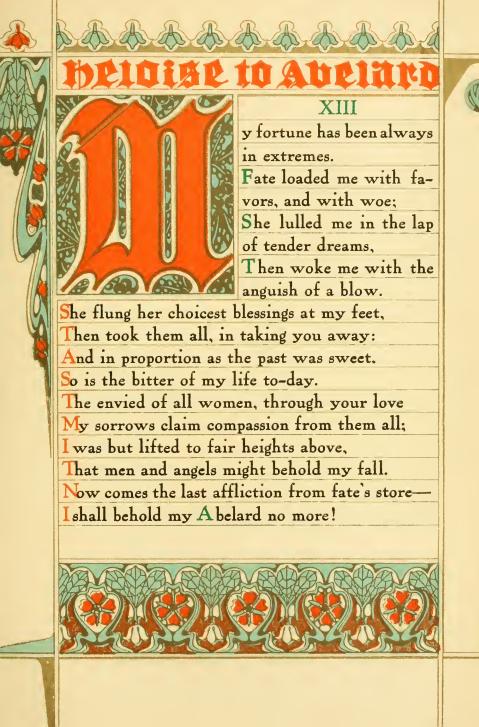














meloise to Avelard



XIV

ot mine the right to murmur or complain,

For I alone am your misfortune's cause.

I am the portal to your house of pain;

For Heloise you broke God's holy laws.

I meshed your greatness in my beauty's snare;

You found destruction, gazing in my face;

And Samson's fall and Solomon's despair

Are lived again in Abelard's disgrace.

Yet grant me this poor comfort, for my dole-

I sought not, like Delilah, to destroy;

Mine was the passion-blinded woman's role

Who gave her virtue for her lover's joy.

Convinced of love, I hastened to pour out

Life's dearest treasures, that you might not doubt.







veloise to Avelard



XV

made no use of pretext or defense;

I valued virtue, only to bestow;

Like white, high noontide, glaring and intense, Love drowned the world

Love drowned the world of reason in its glow.

To be beloved by Abelard—that thought

Absorbed all other purposes like flame,

Such havoc passion in my bosom wrought,

I banished honor, and invited shame.

I thrust out duty, and installed desire;

I aimed at nothing but possessing you.

Oh, God, could I but quench with tears the fire

Of memory of those delights we knew!

Could I forget, or grieve for what was done,

Divine forgiveness might be sought, and won.









XVI

give but lip-repentance for my sins,

And no contrition to my soul is known:

Each day my lawless memory begins

Recounting pleasures that were once our own.

ach night I see my Abelard in dreams.

ntranced with love, we turn away from books;

nd all of wisdom in your utterance seems,

nd all of rapture in your words and looks.

nd I remember that dear place and spot

here first your passion spoke and kindled mine.

hat tide of time can wash away, or blot

uch mem'ries from the heart? Has love divine,

nd your misfortune, brought you into peace,

hile I still strive with storms that never cease?







heloise to Aveland



XVII

o you, in slumber, sometimes stretch your arms
To clasp the yielding
form of Heloise?
Do you recall my kisses
and my charms?

Or have those pleasures lost their power to please?

Within these walls, I weep and ever weep.

This cloister echoes my rebellious cries:

Worn out with sorrow I relive in sleep

The unabating grief that never dies.

Shall Abelard, the all-entrancing theme,

Consume the soul that ought to seek God's throne?

How can I hope the Power I so blaspheme,

Will grant me pardon, or my sins condone?

Oh, you whose face I never more may see,

Have pity on my plight, and pray for me!











anelity to heldise



XVIII

rite me no more. Let all communion end.

We left the world, to purify our thought.

But prayer is vain, and penance comes to nought, When human passions with our hearts contend.

No alchemist within the heart can blend

Desire and faith; the peace which we have sought,

By crucifixion of the flesh is bought.

Let rites redouble, and let prayers ascend.

Your letters prove my foes. When I would gird

God's armor on, and pinion to the dust

Regrets that bar my path to Paradise,

I fall inert, before each burning word;

Resolve is slain, as by a dagger-thrust;

And Christ is hidden by your ardent eyes.







aveland to beloise



XIX

rite me no more. Bestow yourself on God. Your letters stir me with

a deep unrest,

Old half-healed wounds reopen in my breast,

And blood-drops stain the young unsullied sod

Where walked the feet of Faith, repentance-shod.

My prayerful tho ts swerve in their upward quest,

And carnal love is once again their guest-

Again, in dreams, is pleasure's pathway trod.

Write me no more; you draw me back to earth.

Moved by your words, I lose the better way,

My purpose falters, and my courage faints.

Oh, crush each lawless impulse at its birth,

Learn the large meaning of the word "obey,"

And drain the bitter chalice of the saints.











XX

rite me no more. Grow diligent in prayer;

Let God, not Abelard, be your concern.

When mem'ries torture, and when passions burn, Look to the Cross, that refuge of despair;

Its outstretched arms are ever waiting there.

Immortal life is something we must earn

By conquest of the baser self. Oh, turn

Your thoughts from earth, to worlds divinely fair.

Let silence give our sorrowing love true worth.

To love you, means to leave you with no sign:

To love me, means to let my life go free.

But when death calls our purgéd souls from earth.

Oh, may your senseless clay rest close to mine!

Adieu! adieu! and write no more to me.





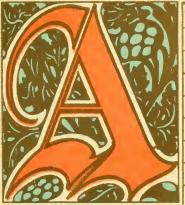








in expression abelian



XXI

t last G od shows me proof of H is regard,

And tranquil joys replace grief's uncontrol.

Desire no longer riots in my soul;

Gone are the dreams of love and Abelard.

My holy meditations are not scarred

By scalding tears from memory's brimming bowl;

My thoughts fly unimpeded to the goal

Dethroned your image and forever barred.

Oh, let my infidelity proclaim

To all the world how fickle love can change!

A rival rules the heart once deemed so true.

Yet, ere you think me sunk in utter shame,

Hear my disclosure of what seems so strange—

Tis God alone takes Heloise from you.







beloise to Avelard



XXI

o more will I endeavor to arouse,

By recollection's soft, seductive art,

The guilty fondness of your suffering heart;

To fate's decree my broken spirit bows.

I think of you no longer as the spouse,

But as the father, set from men apart,

Insensible to passion's poison dart,

The holy steward in God's sacred house.

My peace was born of anguish, but it lives,

A phenix risen from love's funeral pyre.

The path to Duty is the path to Bliss:

There is no pleasure save what virtue gives.

And yet—again to touch that mouth of fire,

To lose the world, and find it, in your kiss!



















