

*Baker Street Elementary
& The Victorian Web*

Presents
"The Life and Times in Victorian London"



Baker Street Elementary

& The Victorian Web

The Life and Times in Victorian London
098 - The Agony of Ecstasy (The Agony Columns in Victorian
Newspapers) - 09/03/2020



I believe the agony column — personal advertisements appearing in the newspapers — as “a chorus of groans, cries, and bleatings.”



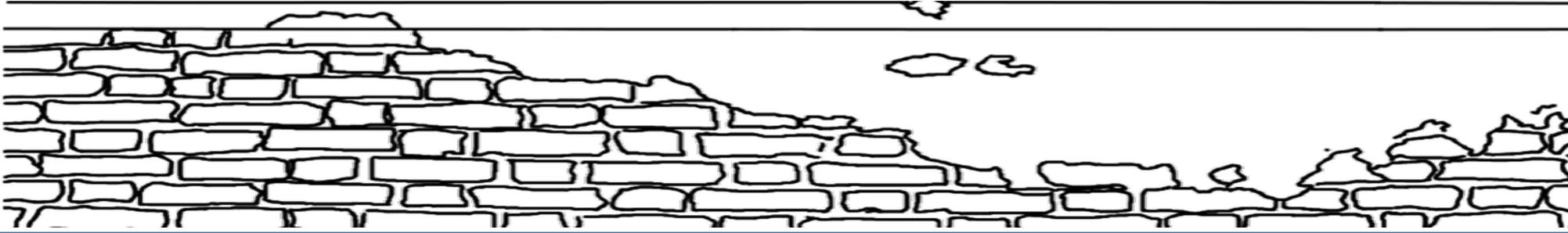
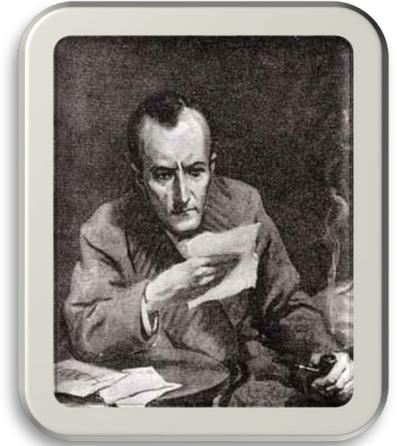
But I still peruse the column as well as other advertisements religiously, keeping them in special scrapbooks.

EMMA to JACK.—My dearest boy, I am alone. I must see you. I want you to come early one day next week, and take me for a coach drive. You arrange which day. Place of meeting? At what time? And let me know soon as possible. Fondest love. Write daily. Be kind to me.

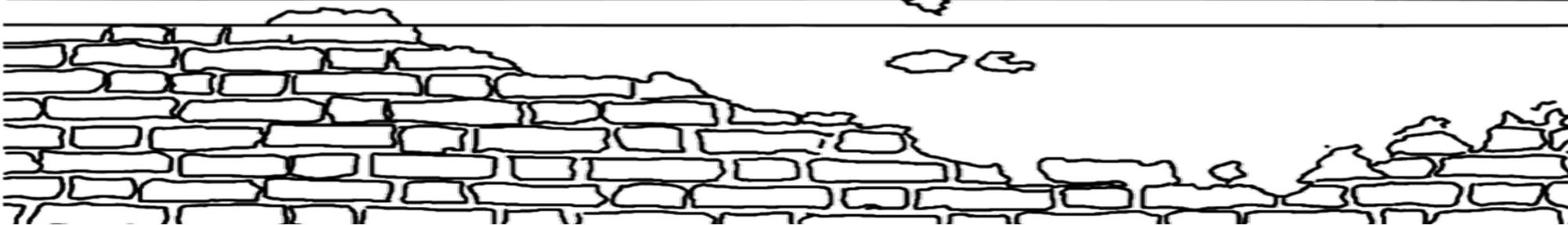
JACK to E. W***D.**—Telegram returned wire immediately full address: Jack Craven Kelly's Librarian, Vigo-street.



This habit will prove useful in our future adventures, such as "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans" and "The Adventure of the Red Circle," where I will be able to follow communications between those involved in the case.

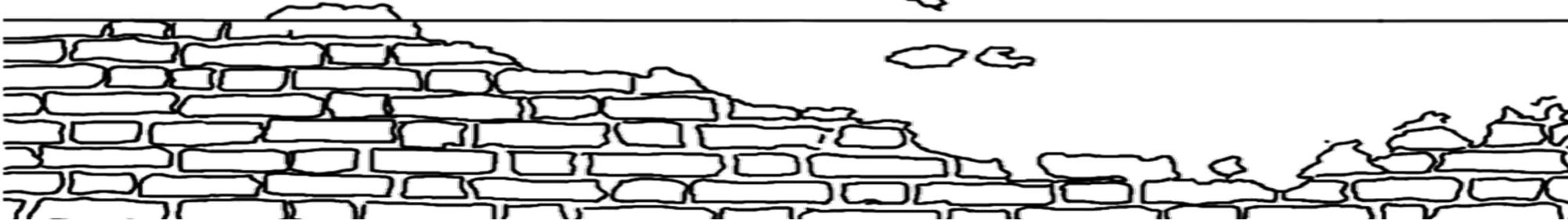


I will even place an advertisement to locate someone connected to a case, as in A Study in Scarlet, The Sign of Four, "The Naval Treaty," "The Blue Carbuncle," and "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax."



The earliest reference to an agony column appeared in 1853, but personal advertisements had already been appearing in The Times of London.

A CASE.—If the Lady who a Gentleman has written into her carriage from Covent Garden Theatre, on Wednesday the third of this month, will oblige the Advertiser with a line to 'Z.Z. Spring Garden Coffee House', saying if married or single, she will quiet the mind of a young Nobleman, who has tried, but in vain, to find the Lady. The carriage was ordered to stand in Bond-street. The Lady may depend on honour and secrecy. Nothing but the most honourable interview is intended. The Lady was in mourning, and sufficiently clothed to distinguish her as possessing every virtue and charm that man could desire in a female that he would make choice of for a Wife. Deception will be detected.





These usually sought missing relatives or friends or sent secret messages between lovers.



For us, these will represent sources of data, as well as a source of amusement, such as decoding the secret messages between lovers.



M. A. W.—12.11.88. Later on account of illness. Write to address I gave you, or advertise.—Shall be in town after 16th inst.

M IN—NU NU.—Am dying. Write, suspense terrible.—NETCHUE.

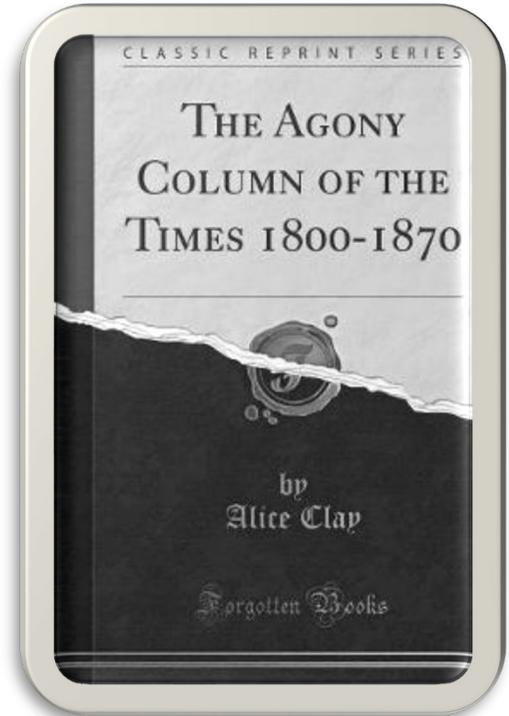
S WEEETHEART.—“Be just Sweetheart,” etc. I want you to write (here) something known only to ourselves. In a fog about you! Hendou Skater!

T ULIP—VARIEGATED.—In mercy’s sake darling tell me about your own health and happiness you are indeed brave and true but silence on these matters will rack my brain. Will you go for letter (to same place as previously arranged a little while ago) the first opportunity after Monday, it will contain important information. May God bless you. True till death.

W. H. D. wants to hear from Maggie M. He has written frequently to Henry-street.

5. —Cannot write, “envelope.” Ignorance of Address. Will you arrange M. If not, it must be last. The question you asked last Wednesday you will never know. You shall see me again. Only for you I shall not leave England, and

So popular is the column and readers' interest in deciphering and following these short missives, Alice Clay in 1881 will provide instructions on how to decode the messages in her collection and analysis of some that appeared from 1800-1870.



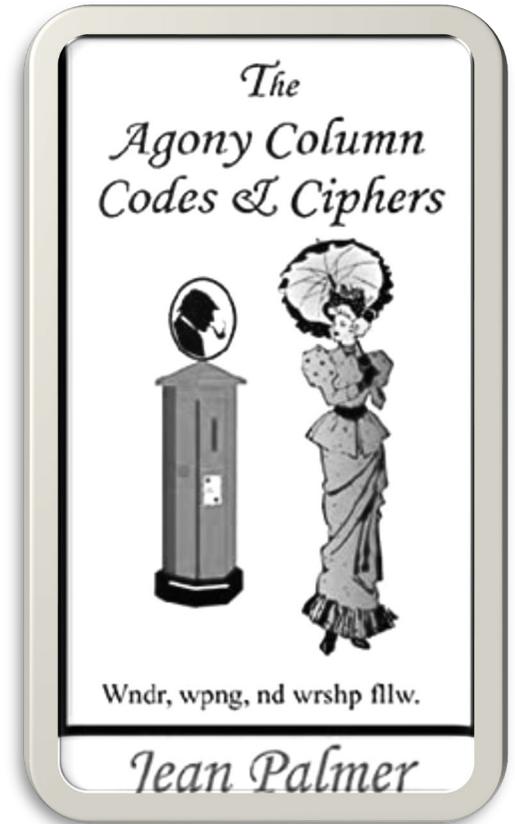
She will note the early announcements appeared to be directed at matrimonial requests and quite supported the romantic notion of "love at first sight."



EMMA to JACK.—My dearest boy, I am alone. I must see you. I want you to come early one day next week, and take me for a coach drive. You arrange which day? Place of meeting? At what time? And let me know soon as possible. Fondest love. Write daily. Be kind to me.

JACK to E. W***D.**—Telegram' returned wire immediately full address Jack Craven Kelly's Library Vigo-street.

In 2020, puzzlers will try their hand at decoding using Jean Palmer's 2008 collection The Agony Column Codes & Ciphers.



*Fair warning, this
pastime could prove
quite addictive...*



By the mid-20th century, the agony column will become an advice column overseen by an "agony aunt," although the roots of published letters from those seeking guidance could be traced back to John Dutton.





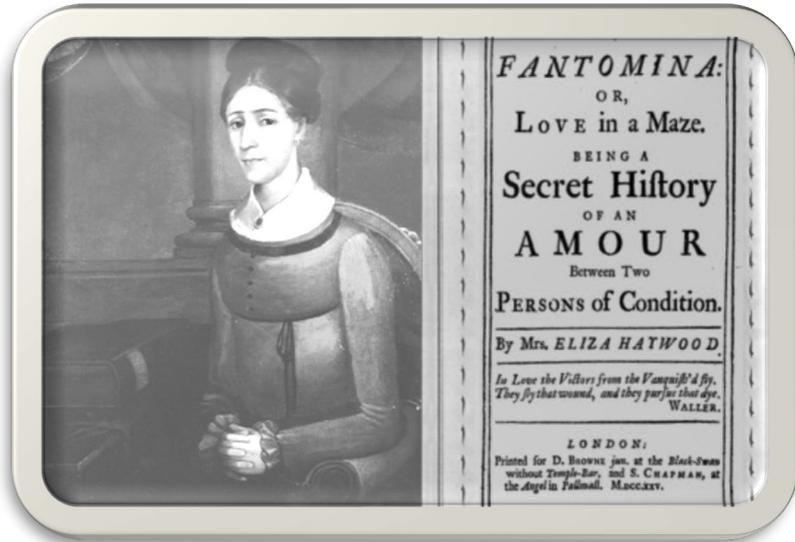
He allowed readers to seek guidance in letters which he published in his Athenian Gazette.



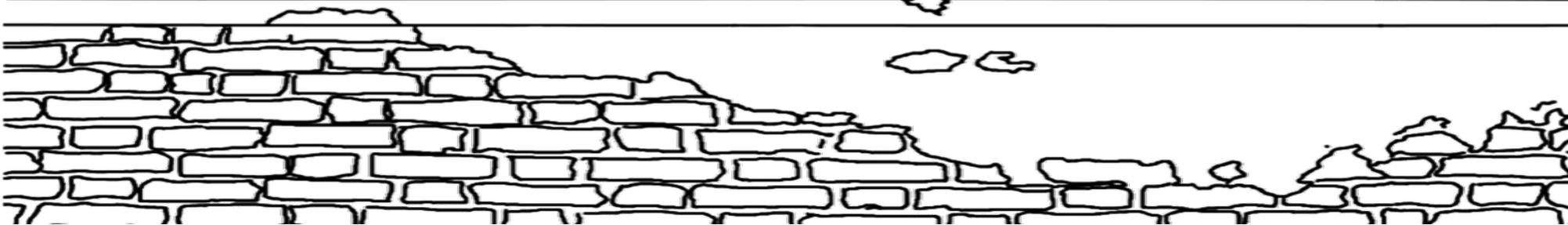
After working for Dutton answering some of these requests, Daniel Defoe created his own publication, Review, and became its agony uncle in 1704.



Women entered the advice world in 1740 when Mrs. Eliza Haywood at the *Female Spectator* and Miss Frances Moore at the *Old Maid* added such columns to their publications, firmly establishing the column as advice from "agony aunts."



Despite the decline in newspaper readership in recent years, a need will still exist in the 21st century for such advice, but requests will appear in blogs, online magazines, forums, Facebook, and other digital outlets.



Those responding to questions about monetary, relationship, family, or other personal problems will note writers pursue such anonymous advice due to a lack of trusted family or friends with whom sensitive information can be shared.



The agony aunt or uncle will still see their role as acknowledging the correspondent's story, provide feedback and sharing other sources of help, where needed.



Ask Ashley: Hit us, Ashley, one last time

Last Updated: 3:03 PM, May 27, 2012

Posted: 9:18 PM, May 26, 2012

Like 14 people like this. Be the first of your friends.

+1 0

Tweet 9

More Print



Ashley Dupre

Dear Readers:

I won't be giving any advice today. Instead, I want to tell you how much

you've taught me.

When I started this column over two-and-a-half years ago, I was unsure how it would be received had been dealing with the repercussions of the Love Guv scandal, one of the toughest times in my life, and watching the collapse of Tiger Woods when I felt the need to voice my opinion. The Post published a story about my take on Tiger and soon after asked if I would contribute this column.

I'm proud to say that Ask Ashley has been a greater success than I ever thought. Not a financial



*For those seeking
companionship rather than
advice, personal advertisements
will exist in the 2020s.*





Often referred to as "lonely hearts columns," these will provide an avenue for those seeking a relationship to provide a description of themselves as well as their preferences for a companion.



And given limited space with which to do so, a code will be developed — just as with the personal messages in the agony column — identifying relationship status, ethnicity or nationality, and gender.

A	Asian
ACA	All calls answered
AL	Animal lover
AQU	Aquarius
A/S/L	Age/Sex/Location?
AARI	Aries
B&D	Bondage and domination
B	Black
BB	Body builder
BBW	Big beautiful woman
BF	Boyfriend
BHM	Big handsome man
BHM	Bald headed man
BI	Bi-sexual
BIF	Bi-sexual female
BIM	Bi-sexual male
C	Couple
C	Christian
CAN	Cancer
CAP	Capricorn
CD	Cross-dresser
CU	See you
D	Divorced
DDF	Drug and disease free
DF	Drug free
DOB	Date of birth
Dom	Dominate male
Domme	Dominate female
EA	Fat acceptance



With the advent of very private digital communications, the agony column as a means for not-so-secret messaging between lovers will have gone by the wayside.



Lonely Hearts



Online Dating

The Guide

*Meet Your Match Safely without
Heartbreak and Financial Pain*

*Alfred Savich
lonelyhearts.com*

As recent agony aunts will note, the need for advice still exists as does a means for meeting others.

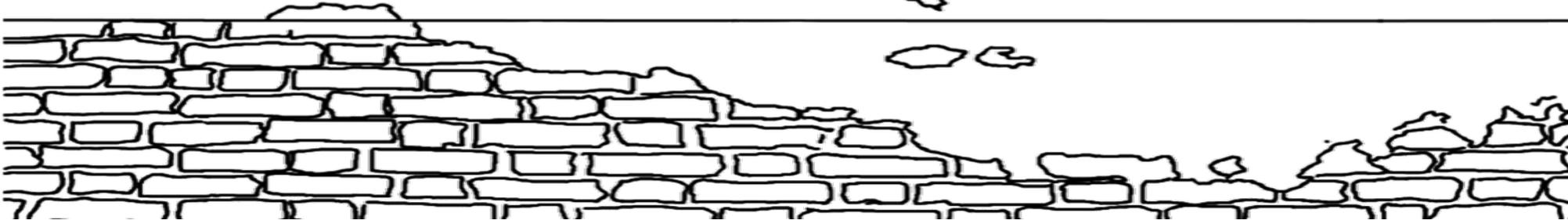


You would most likely find such columns even more full of "groans, cries, and bleatings" than in 1902, but still a means to keep a finger on society's pulse.



*So we have completed
topic 98 in our series...*

*Yes, but we'll be back
with another topic
soon...*



Original Source Material for this topic:

- 1) <https://wordhistories.net/2017/01/27/agony-column/>
- 2) Keaghan Turner, "Sherlock Holmes and the 'Agony Column': A Study in Convergent Media," *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 61: 4, 2018, page 435.
- 3) Alice Clay (editor). *The Agony Column of the "Times": 1800-1870*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1881. Page vi.
- 4) Jean Palmer, *Agony Column Codes and Ciphers*, England: Authors OnLine, 2005.
- 5) <https://wordhistories.net/2017/01/27/agony-column/>
- 6) <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/nov/13/agony-aunts>
- 7) Robin Kent, *Aunt Agony Advises*. London, W.H.Allen, 1979. Page 1.
- 8) <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/nov/13/agony-aunts>
- 9) Petra Monica Boynton, "Agony, Misery, Woe: A New Role For Media Advice Columns" in *The Lancet/Psychiatry*. Volume 2. March, 2015, page 203.
- 10) <https://www.revolvy.com/page/Personal-advertisement>
- 11) <https://fourthgarrideb.com/2018/09/03/data-data-data-the-red-circle/>



Baker Street Elementary

"The Life and Times in Victorian London"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:

JOE FAY

LIESE SHERWOOD-FABRE

GEORGE P. LANDOW

RUSTY MASON &

STEVE MASON

WE ARE EXTREMELY

THANKFUL TO LIESE AND

GEORGE FOR THEIR SUPPORT

OF THIS PROJECT...

