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THE AGONY COLUMN

By Earl Derr Biggers

ILLUSTRATED BY WILL CRAIG

TWO years ago, in July, London was almost unbearably hot. It seemed,

looking back, as though the big, baking city in those days was meant to serve as an antechamber of torture—an antechamber of preparation for the hell that was soon to break in the gates of the great war. About the soda-water bar in the drug store near the Hotel Cecil many Americans tourists found solace in the slumps and creases of foam. Through the open windows of the Pharmacy two shops you might catch glimpses of the English consuming quarts of hot tea in order to become cool. It is a peculiar therapy, you say.

About nine o'clock on the morning of Friday, July twenty-fourth, in that memorable year elsewhere branded and fourteen, Geoffrey West left his apartments in Adelphi Terrace and set out for breakfast at the Carlton. He had found the breakfast room of that dignified hotel the coolest in London, and through some miracle, for the season had passed, strawberries might still be had there. As he took his way through the crowded Strand, surrounded on all sides by honest British faces wet with honest British perspiration, he thought longingly of his rooms in Washington Square, New York. For West, despite that Geoffrey was an American, an Kansan, his native state, and only passing business was at that moment holding him in England, far from the country that gave off unusually cool breezes of its remoteness.

At the Carlton West found two morning papers—the Times for study and the Mail for entertainment—and then passed on into the restaurant. His waiter—a tall, soldierly Prussian, more blond than West himself—saw him coming and, with a nod and a mechanical German smile, set out for the plate of strawberries which he knew would be the first thing desired by this American. West seated himself at his usual table and, spreading out the Daily Mail, sought his favorite column. The first item in that column brought a delighted smile to his face:

"The one who calls me Dearest is not genuine or they would write to me."

Anyone not familiar with English journalism will recognize at once what department it was that appended most to West. During his three weeks in London he had been following, with the keenest joy, the daily gnat of Personal Notices in the Mail. This string of intimate messages, popularly known as the Agony Column, has long been an honored institution in the English press. In the days of Elizabeth Holman it was in the Times that it first found its way, and it was in the Times that it first inserted some affecting, mysterious message in R. Later the Telegraph gave it space; but, with the advent of penny journalism, the simple soul moved on mass to the Mail.

Tragedy and comedy mingle in the Agony Column. Eying men are urged to return for forgiveness; unrequited lovers are warned that "Father has warned properly." Oh, Dearest Geofrey! Leave that would please by their anchor Alas! and Elsie are frankly published—at her with a word—for all the town to read at. The profession in the brown, derby states with horror that the blond gentlemen who get off the train at

Shepherd's Bush has quite won his heart. Will she permit his address? Answer: his departure.

Best of all, he could detect in these messages nothing that was not open and innocent. At their worst they were merely an effort to abduct old Lady Conventions; this institution was so rare in the British, he felt it should be encouraged. Besides, he was heartily fond of mystery and romance, and these engaging tales hovered always about the column. So, while waiting for his strawberries, he smiled over the ungrammatical outburst of the young lady who had come to doubt the genuineness of him who called her Dearest. He passed on to the second item of the morning. Spoke one whose heart had been completely conquered:

My Love sleeps. She of seven towns. Corner and from Victoria, Wednesday night. Carried program. Gentleman answering inquiry desire acquaintance. Reply here.—L. R. S.

West made a mental note to watch for the reply of seven towns. The next message proved to be one of Ay's lyrics—now almost a daily feature of the column:

DEAREST: Tender, loving wishes to my dear one. Only to be with you now and always. None "false in my eyes." Your name is music to me. I love you more than life itself, my own beautiful darling, my proud sweetheart, my joy, my all! Rejoice of everybody. Kiss your dear hands for me. Love you only. Thine ever.—N. B.

Which, reflected West, was generous of Ay—at ten cents a word—and in striking contrast to the gorgeous lover who wrote, further along in the column:

—loves dearly; wants; longing; mine —

But these extremely personal notices ran not alone to him. Mystery, too, was present, especially in the aquatic utterances:

DEAREST MEXICAN: Not mine. Alligator killings now. "The well, delighted.—P. M. F.

And the rather suggestive suggestions:

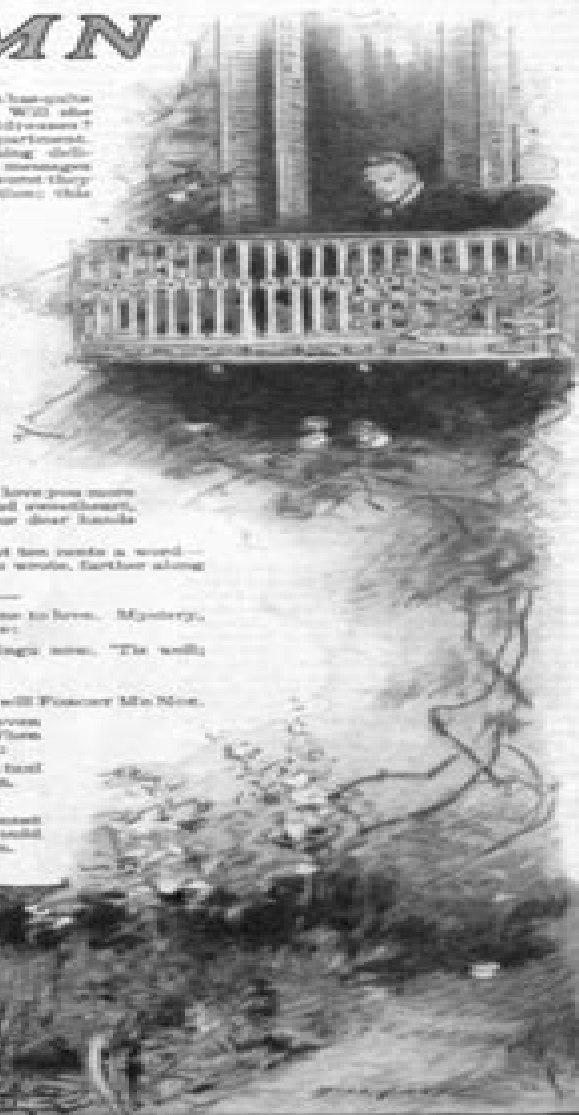
DEAREST: First round; tooth gone. Please. You will Pounce Me Not.

At this point West's strawberries arrived and even the Agony Column could not hold his interest. When the last red berry was eaten he turned back to read:

WARRIOR: Wed. 11:12 train. Lady who left in tail and sword, care to know gent, gray coat?—S. M. M.

Also the more dignified request put forward by

GENTLE GENTLE: Gentleman who new lady in house 2 Monday morning in Great Central Hotel 151 would greatly value opportunity of obtaining introduction.



Agony Column

Michael Rajnik



Agony Column:

The book delves into Agony Column. Agony Column is a crucial topic that needs to be grasped by everyone, from students and scholars to the general public. The book will furnish comprehensive and in-depth insights into Agony Column, encompassing both the fundamentals and more intricate discussions.

1. The book is structured into several chapters, namely:

- Chapter 1: Introduction to Agony Column
- Chapter 2: Essential Elements of Agony Column
- Chapter 3: Agony Column in Everyday Life
- Chapter 4: Agony Column in Specific Contexts
- Chapter 5: Conclusion

2. In chapter 1, this book will provide an overview of Agony Column. This chapter will explore what Agony Column is, why Agony Column is vital, and how to effectively learn about Agony Column.
3. In chapter 2, the author will delve into the foundational concepts of Agony Column. The second chapter will elucidate the essential principles that need to be understood to grasp Agony Column in its entirety.
4. In chapter 3, this book will examine the practical applications of Agony Column in daily life. The third chapter will showcase real-world examples of how Agony Column can be effectively utilized in everyday scenarios.
5. In chapter 4, this book will scrutinize the relevance of Agony Column in specific contexts. The fourth chapter will explore how Agony Column is applied in specialized fields, such as education, business, and technology.
6. In chapter 5, the author will draw a conclusion about Agony Column. The final chapter will summarize the key points that have been discussed throughout the book.

The book is crafted in an easy-to-understand language and is complemented by engaging illustrations. This book is highly recommended for anyone seeking to gain a comprehensive understanding of Agony Column.

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Agony Column Introduction

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