

are so in contrast with the brief and hurried phrase: of the modern letter, one can hardly help but wonder what model sort of husband he was, this writer of the old letter with the great seal.

Fashion has carried the style of letters through many stages of show and expense, and at last has brought it back to almost the severe plainness of fifty years ago. Crests and coats-of-arms and undecipherable monograms have had their day and have gone to take their places beside the great wax seals. It was in the wax impression that crests and shields and armorial bearings first made their appearance on letters, and for some years he was a very obscure gentleman, even in America, who had not some device to affix to the backs of his letters. With the introduction of the envelope and its gummed flap the wax disappeared, and stationers were kept busy embossing the designs of the seal upon the tops of letter-sheets. There were great coats of arms in many colors and gold; crests, always with some appropriate Latin motto; first in the left hand upper corner of the sheet, then in the middle of the top. Birds of the air and beasts of the field were made to do duty as family tokens, till scarcely a living thing was left untouched from the Lion of the tribe of Judah down, save only that one animal with prominent organs of hearing. Then followed the era of initials, immense W's and R's sprawling over half the page, sometimes embossed, oftener printed in colors, and nearly always with vines and flowers climbing in an impossible way over the character. Initials were succeeded by monograms, the more intricate and undecipherable the better. After the monograms came a deluge of crests. Every artisan and petty tradesman bloomed out with a crest if he could afford to have the die engraved. After the crests, chaos in the form of lilies and roses, sunflowers, and all the gorgeously colored flowers of the garden. This was only a reaction. Zoology had been exhausted, and fashion took to botany. Then