Sir Florence Shelley

And

His Artistry

By:

Emily Ball, Catherine Burr, and Alex Ueckert

The Details:

* It was a letter to Tom Taylor to Percy Shelly.
* Was written in 1871
* Found in 1964 at Sotheby’s Lot

The significance of the item:

* The adoption of Bessie by Percy and Jane
* The understanding of the plays and their placement in history
* Getting to know Tom Taylor a little more

Characters of the story:

* Percy Florence Shelley
* Jane Shelley
* Bessie Shelley
* Tom Taylor
* Palgrave Simpson

Quotes

* “I send you “a Fairy tale”[[1]](#footnote-1) which I have written & which is devoid of slang – that was according to order – what is worse than the absence of slang in your eyes I’m afraid – there is also an absence of fun – But our audience will be pleased with it in the way we shall manage it I really think.”
* The time of some of our family is a great deal employed with the arrangements connected with the approaching marriage in February[[2]](#footnote-2) — so that when I write to ask questions with respect to the Easter performances I cannot always get a hearing.

The Questions:

* Why do you think Percy Florence decided to pursue theatre and playwriting as opposed to writing poetry like his mother and father?
* Percy Florence and Tom Taylor decide to not use slang in their play to maintain a theme of propriety. Do you think this has anything to do with their lack of popularity as playwrights? Or do you think it is just more difficult to become lastingly popular as a playwright in general?

My dear Taylor

Since I wrote to you we have had to consider many matters. The time of some of our family is a great deal employed with the arrangements connected with the approaching marriage in February[[3]](#footnote-3) — so that when I write to ask questions with respect to the Easter performances I cannot always get a hearing.

We have such a heavy programme so far as it is fixed that this time we shall not be able to give Two Loves and a life. We settled some time ago to do “Caste” and before I wrote to you had cast the play–as also the “Lighthouse” (Wilkie Collin’s)[[4]](#footnote-4) in which Palgrave Simpson will act – This is also filled.

I send you “a Fairy tale”[[5]](#footnote-5) which I have written & which is devoid of slang – that was according to order – what is worse than the absence of slang in your eyes I’m afraid – there is also an absence of fun – But our audience will be pleased with it in the way we shall manage it I really think. All the music is to be original.

I had written the thing for particular people, & ~~th~~ can therefore only offer you Altafash on the Doctor[[6]](#footnote-6) – which last part I think I could make some fun of if I had to play it – which I can’t do as I take the [singing] part of [Sebastian].

It remains to choose a fourth piece – to be played the same night as Caste – and this we cannot decide upon – we had intended to have Domestic Economy[[7]](#footnote-7) but we want if possible (in order to give some of our company good parts who will take small ones in the other pieces) to substitute some other piece which might be termed a ‘consolation piece.’ Do you think you could advise? something to play about an hour or so. Whether we can give you a part you like to take or not, I hope you will not fail us at Easter —

Will you be so good as to give my compliments to your wife, and beg her to accept a song which I forwarded by this post. It is set painfully high, and I only discovered this after I had engraved it.

We are going to London on the 26th according to present arrangements –

Believe me

My dear Taylor

Yours very sincerely

Percy Shelley

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)