sopra, pp. 184-91) dove, tra altre cose, si legge in riferimento alle ultime pagine di Ti con Zero: "Quello che m'interessa è il mosaico in cui l'uomo si trova incastriato, il gioco dei rapporti, la figura da scoprire tra gli arabesi del tappeto" (p. 188) e poco dopo: "In questo momento, il modello del linguaggio matematico, della logica formale, può salvare lo scrittore dal logoramento in cui sono scadute parole e immagini per il loro falso uso" (pp. 190-91).

Per il "carattere psicologico e morale del vagabondare di Marco Polo" si veda i segni nuovi di Casalo Calvi, cit., pp. 172 sgg; a pp. 173-77 Bernardini traccia un breve e interessante rapporto tra il Marco Polo di Calvino e quello de Il Milione; vorrei aggiungere due osservazioni: 1) l'interesse per i viaggi di Marco Polo, negli anni in cui Calvino lavorava alle città è evidenziato dal volume di V. Sklowski, Marco Polo, tradotto e pubblicato in Italia (Milano, Il Saggiatore) proprio nel 1972, a cui è seguita l'ottima edizione (con le miniature a colori del codice Bodleiano 264) curata da Marcello Cucco (Milano, Rizzoli, 1981); 2) il punto di riferimento tra Il Milione e le città è secondo me, espresso da Calvino nel passo seguente:

Altre è la descrizione del mondo cui tu presti benegni orecchio, altra quella che farà il giro dei capanni di scaricatori e gondolieri sulle fondamenta di casa mia il giorno del mio ritorno, altra ancora quella che potrei dettare in tarda età, se venissi fatto prigioniero da pirati genovesi e messo in catene nella stessa cella con uno scrittore di romanzi d'avventura (p. 143).

La citazione appena data è anche d'interesse per il rapporto passato/presente/futuro di cui si è parlato nel saggio. Ed infine vorrei ricordare il saggio di Aurore Frasson-Marin, "Structures, signes et images dans Les villes invisibles d'Italo Calvino", Revue des études italiennes, XXIII (1977), 23-48, dove viene rilevata l'intenzione di Calvino di riscrivere Il Milione (p. 26); da qui l'idea di citare in esergo il romanzo di Borges.

A Home Away from Home: Alfred Mantegani in Australia

Desmond O'Connor

The name of Alfred Mantegani was first brought to the attention of historians of Italians in Australia in 1963 when the Italian-language newspaper La Fiamma dedicated a Supplement to the Italian community in Adelaide, in which Mantegani was presented as the earliest Italian to settle in South Australia. Since then, historians of Australia's Italians have drawn on this newspaper article to add Mantegani's name to the list of Australia's early Italian merchants and professionals (Cecilia 1985, Pascoe 1987) or to categorise him officially as "the first Italian in South Australia" whose presence merited mention in early records (Dennis 1974, Randazzo-Cigler 1987).

Neither of these descriptions of Mantegani is accurate. Mantegani was not a merchant nor a "professional" (at least not in the sense of artisan or businessman that has been suggested), and was by no means the first recorded Italian to settle in South Australia, having arrived more than a decade after the first Italian settler Antonino Giannini. The so-called "early records" referred to by Randazzo-Cigler are a selection of the private letters of the Mantegani family which are held in the Mortlock Library and which were the sole source of information for the biographical notes provided by the author of the article in La Fiamma's Supplement. These letters, in part written in Italian by Alfred Mantegani's relatives who lived in the Italian-speaking Canton Ticino in Switzerland, led the Adelaide journalist to presume that Alfred Mantegani was either Italian or Swiss-Italian by birth. In reality, Mantegani was born in England of Swiss parents.

Alfred's father, Antonio, was born in Lugano on 5 January 1807 and grew up in the village of Morcote (Lugano). According to Swiss historian Mario Medici, the Mantegani family probably originated, some generations previously, from Malnate (Vareso). However, there is no evidence at all to support the suggestion made in La Fiamma that Antonio Mantegani or his family lived in Italy in the early nineteenth century and then moved to Switzerland in 1814 after the collapse of the Kingdom of Italy.
On 10 October 1828 in Mendrisio (Lugano) Antonio Mantegani married a local girl, Teresa Catenazzi, who belonged to a family of artists well-known for their frescoes in the Mendrisio Church of SS. Cosma e Damiano, where Teresa’s brother, don Filippo Catenazzi, was vicar. A couple of months after their marriage, Antonio and Teresa Mantegani left Switzerland for England. The reason for their departure is obscure, though at this time the seasonal migration of Swiss from the Canton Ticino was not at all uncommon (in fact by 1844 more than 11% of the population of Ticino were absent abroad) and some were living in Great Britain alongside an increasing number of Italians, the latter estimated by Sponza as 3,500 in 1851. Most unskilled Italians who arrived in Britain earned their living as organ-grinders and street musicians (mainly Italians from Parma), plaster figure makers (from Lucca), and ice-cream makers and sellers (from any region, including a group, well-known in London, of ticinesi). Skilled workers arrived mainly from Northern Italy. The most sophisticated and most numerous group of craftsmen was from Lombardy, in particular from Como, where there was a tradition of barometer and precision instrument manufacture, and of looking-glass and picture-frame making. Antonio Mantegani, a jeweller and silversmith by trade, arrived with his wife at Dover on 30 January 1829. Enticed probably by relatives or acquaintances, they settled, not in London, but in the town of Wisbech in Cambridgeshire. Here at 140 High Street, Antonio set up shop and carried on his trade, helped in the following years by another ticinese, jeweller Antonio Solca, and by Antonio’s nephews Paolo and Giovanni Mantegani from Morcote who under the guidance of their uncle also became jewellers, watchmakers and silversmiths.

Antonio and his family did not reside continuously in Wisbech in the two decades after 1829. The Alien Register of Arrivals shows that one or more of the family re-entered England in the years 1837, 1839, 1846 and 1848. His residence in Wisbech was probably seasonal, since he owned and cultivated a vineyard at Corteglia, near Mendrisio. A skilful manager of his affairs, Antonio must have become quite a successful jeweller in Wisbech if, as the 1851 census shows, he could afford to keep both a servant and a full-time errand boy on his premises. At about this time he handed over the shop in Wisbech to his nephews and returned for good to Mendrisio, although in 1856 he felt obliged to make one more brief visit to Wisbech ‘perché aveva [= avevo] avuto notizia che Pavolino [Paolo] non andava tropo dritto e se non fosse [= fossi] andato a vedere a quest’ora non so come sarebbe stato il suo caso ma quasi cierto che sarebbe andato nel balone’.

Alfred Mantegani, the eldest of the five children of Antonio and Teresa, was born in Wisbech on 5 October 1829. The record of his baptism, held in the Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation, King’s Lynn, shows that he was baptised on 19 October 1829 and was given the names Antonio Placido Alfred (not Alfredo). Few details have come to light concerning Alfred’s early life. According to his sister Irene, who was also born in Wisbech, he attended school in the Wisbech area, but there is also evidence to show that, like his father, he maintained some contact with Mendrisio and had friends there, and like his father must have been both a British subject and a Swiss citizen since on an Aliens Certificate of Arrival at the Port of Shoreham in 1846 there is a record in Alfred’s own hand stating that he was “Suisse” and had a Swiss passport. In his youth he studied music, as later evidence will show, and exhibited artistic talent both at school in Wisbech and in his late teens when he produced drawings which the family preserved in Switzerland for 50 years, before relinquishing them to his wife and children in Adelaide in 1897.

Antonio no doubt held high hopes that Alfred, his first born, would take up a rewarding profession of which the family could be proud, perhaps as an artist following in the footsteps of Alfred’s uncle Augusto Catenazzi or as a silversmith capable of running the Wisbech business. Antonio’s other children did achieve in their adult lives such social recognition and financial security. Irene (1831-1907) married Mendrisio’s most famous son, Luigi Lavizzari (1814-1875), a renowned geologist and naturalist, who became director of the Ticino Education Department and Ticino parliamentary representative. Today in Mendrisio a monument to him stands in the main square and a street is named after him. According to Alfred’s cousin Giovanni Mantegani, who claimed to have fought in the Second Italian War of Independence, Lavizzari was “a great friend” of Garibaldi. Alfred’s other sister
Savina married Adolfo Corti, the son of the Treasurer General for Lombardy. After their marriage in 1857 they moved to Milan where Adolfo worked as an accountant for the Austrian government. Younger brother Emilio became a lawyer and was subsequently appointed presiding court judge in Mendrisio. The youngest sister Ermentinda died at the age of 12 in 1854.

Alfred, however, was the black sheep of the family. Carefree, independent and rebellious, he rejected any plans that his father had to arrange a relatively comfortable life for him in either England or Switzerland. His decision to come to Australia was made out of a spirit of adventure together with a desire, probably, to get as far away from his father as possible in a totally new country of pioneers where he could show his family that he could make good on his own without either financial help or paternal influence.

Attempts to identify, from available Australian shipping records, the exact date of Alfred Mantegani's arrival in Australia have proved unsuccessful. The Mortlock Library letters show that he was still in Europe in 1848, while the comments made by his father in the first letter from Mendrisio in 1854 (see Appendix) indicate that Alfred had not had contact with his family during the previous five years. Whether or not he came directly to Australia in 1849-1850 is, on evidence presently available, a matter of conjecture. The earliest record so far found of his presence in Australia is in the interstate passenger arrivals published in the South Australian newspapers in mid-January 1852, where he is listed as having arrived in Adelaide on the Asia on 13 January after a voyage from Melbourne of eight days. When the Asia set sail for the return journey to Melbourne 11 days later, Mr "A. Monti" was one of the many passengers on board bound for the newly-discovered Victorian goldfields. Since "Monti" was an abbreviation that Alfred used in later years, it may be that he had caught the gold fever raging at the time and had decided on the spur of the moment to try his luck (again?) at the diggings.

Eighteen months later Mantegani's name appeared in the South Australian newspapers once again:

A GRAND CONCERT IN THE LARGE ROOM, BLENHEIM HOTEL, HINDLEY STREET, THIS EVENING, AUGUST 23, 1853.

Troy Knight respectfully announces to the ladies and gentlemen of Adelaide that a GRAND CONCERT will be given in the Large Room, THIS EVENING (Tuesday), August 23 [...]

Messrs Adams and Mantegani will preside at the Piano. [31]

Mantegani's musical contribution to the evening's concert included the piano duet "Sturm Marsch Galop" with his partner Adams, a piano solo "The Musical Snuff-box", and another piano solo, his own composition, entitled "The Helen Waltz". The advertisement is proof that twenty-three-year-old Alfred had been accepted into the anti-podean society of Adelaide and was making a name for himself: not only was he a "celebrated" pianist (as another advertisement described him a month later), but the piano composition dedicated to "Helen" shows that he was already frequenting a member of one of the most respected families in Adelaide. Helen Thomas, whom he would marry two years later, was the daughter of Robert Thomas, the proprietor of the colony's first newspaper, The South Australian Register. Thomas and his family had arrived in November 1836 on the Africaine, at the very beginning of white settlement in South Australia, and had been present at the official proclamation of the Province in December. Mary Thomas, Helen's mother, recorded her early experiences in a diary, which was later published. Helen's sister Frances Amelia married solicitor and well-known colonial artist John Michael Skipper (1815-1883) and when Frances died in 1855 Skipper married Helen's other sister Mary, despite opposition from their mother. Both Skipper and Helen's brother William Kyffin Thomas spent some time fossicking for gold in Victoria in 1852, so it is possible that Alfred first met his future brothers-in-law there.

From August 1853 until late 1854 Mantegani's name appeared regularly in advertisements in the amusement columns of the Register. In September 1853 "the celebrated Mr Mentegani [sic]" presided at the piano at the Rose Inn, Sturt Street, where a "Free and Easy" was held three times a week. In October he performed the piano solo "Away with Melancholy, with variations" at Miss Blackhurst's Soirée Musicales held at the Royal Victoria Theatre. Between March and May 1854
he was employed as “professional artist” presiding at the piano at the newly-erected Pantheon in King William Street for builder and promoter Henry Edlin who organised a series of “Promenade Concerts” attended at least once by Governor and Lady Young and other Adelaide dignitaries.\(^{39}\) His solo contributions at these concerts included another original composition which he entitled “Pantheon Waltz”.\(^{40}\) Following the temporary closure of the Pantheon at the end of May,\(^{41}\) Mantegani found employment as presiding pianist at the “Adelaide Harmonic Club”, Wellington Inn, Currie Street, where “all the popular Songs, Glees, Catches, and Choruses of the day” were played by “first-rate artists”.\(^{42}\) In October when Totten’s Harmonicons performed at the Royal Victoria Theatre, he “kindly offered his services” at the piano.\(^{43}\)

The recognition that he had won as a pianist, the financial security that he enjoyed, and his imminent marriage into one of the leading families in Adelaide convinced Mantegani that it was time, after five years of silence, to advise his family in Switzerland of his whereabouts and to show them that he had been successful in shaping his own life. In March 1854 he wrote his first two letters, one to his cousin Paolo in Wisbech asking him to send him some goods, including two or more pianos, and one to his family in Mendrisio. While the letters he sent overseas have not survived, his family’s reply, dated 20 July 1854 (see Appendix), gives some idea of the contents of his first letter home. Since he was earning good money in Adelaide, his intention was, he told them, to return soon to Switzerland as wealthy as anyone in Mendrisio. To the great consolation of his parents he announced that he had started to “far judizio” (“get some sense”, “mend his ways”) and in mid-1854 he would marry a “nice young girl from a good family”, whose name he failed to mention, much less her religion. That he might be marrying an Anglican in a British colony was a cause of anxiety especially for his mother who pleaded with him not to forget his religion. His father’s wish was also that he develop a business sense, but he already had doubts about his son’s trustworthiness in asking Paolo to send merchandise to South Australia with only the promise of payment. Alfred in fact continually deferred paying for the goods sent from Wisbech, despite his father’s insistence in subsequent letters,\(^{44}\) and ignored the strong personal plea for payment that Paolo himself added

to Antonio’s letter from Wisbech in June 1856:

Carissimo Alfredo,

speri che il tuo padre trovandosi tra noi, e inviandoti questa lettera, che anzi ti mando in fretta queste poche righe con la piacevole speranza che tanto te, come la tua affettuosa moglie vi trovarete in buona salute. Ma avendo poi di parlarti sopra un affare alquanto più importante, quindi sarà meglio che continuo in inglese. Ever since your first letter which arrived here now two years since (June 12/54) to my surprise I have not heard anything from you. Your letter appeared to be so honest and straightforward, that, though mind you very reluctantly, I made up my mind to forward you the order, after a great deal of expence and trouble but to my regret you have not even acknowledged the receipt of it, and worst of all, neither cash, nor Australian dust has made any appearance at all. I assure you I am very anxiously waiting for it, the smell of which would not only benefit myself, but yourself too, for you cannot suppose by thus acting to establish any credit, and of course I should [be] the last man to send out another order on similar terms. I hope you will therefore give this matter your serious attention and forward the amount without delay.

Since Paolo died, aged 29, just eighteen months after this, it is likely that Alfred never did forward any money to his cousin, although he had promised his father he would do so in the second letter he wrote home in October 1854, which also contained the first note from his bride-to-be and their portraits.\(^{45}\)

Alfred and Helen were married not in 1854 but a year later, with John Michael Skipper as witness.\(^{46}\) The event was reported in the marriages column of the *Adelaide Observer*:\(^{47}\)


Alfred’s third “letter” home was sent several days later. It consisted simply of the cutting from the *Observer*, which prompted his father immediately to reply:

Figlio caro e cara Helen,

Dal *Adelaide Observer* del 30 giugno prossimo passato abbiamo avuto la diletevole notizia del vostro matrimonio. Ma noi tutti di casa abbiamo detto e perché non a mandato una lettera nel medesimo tempo che mandava il newspaper? Sì, e per quel motivo non a mandato una lettera? A noi questa
sarebbe stata di grande consolazione [...] Noi abbiamo benedetto il vostro matrimonio e siamo su la dolce speranza che sarà benedetto anche dal Creatore. Possano i vostri giorni esser tanti e senza dispiacere e quando sorge qualche discordia sia questa elettrica ciò che momentanea [...] 

As always in his letters, Antonio was full of advice for his son:

[...] con la più precisa regola e economia si può far buona figura e anche con puro e si può vivere onorevolmente. Franchelini says always spent little less than your income and you will never be in want. Ricordati di questo che sei ancora in tempo.

Though he found it difficult to write in English, he managed to compose some warm words for his new daughter-in-law:

My dear Helen,

the News of you having become my English daughter has ben to us all and for me particular the highest gratification. I shall now expect from my dear Helen that attention wish I never received from my son, that is to say I shall expect to hear from you at least twice a year so that if circumstance will not allow you to be amongst us at present we may at least have the pleasure of speaking to each other with a leaf of paper. May Alfred's conduct be to the satisfaction of your family and ensure you dear Helen every real comfort in Life [...] 48

Helen in fact in the following year did write twice to her father-in-law, whereas Alfred declined to do any more than address the envelope, much to his father's anguish and frustration:

[La terza in data 15 marzo 1856] era scritta tutta dalla cara Helen meno la direzione che era Alks per far vedere che era vivo. [...] La 4a vostra lettera fu questa ultimamente ricevuta e ancora questa scritta tutta dalla buona Helen anche la direzione per ciò Alfred può essere anche all'altro mondo ciò che non spero [...].49

For Alfred, marriage to Helen brought with it not a means of settling comfortably into middle-class Adelaide society, but rather a renewed and urgent desire for adventure and independence. On 5 July 1855, just ten days after their wedding, Alfred and Helen left Adelaide for Victoria to look for gold.50 Letters from Helen's mother, Mary Thomas, show that at the end of the year they were on the Ballarat
goldfields where Alfred was fossicking in partnership with others,51 but there is no evidence to suggest that Alfred was making any money at the diggings. Whatever their economic situation, they seem to have spent a happy year at Ballarat in 1856. On 15 April their first child Teresa Victoria was born, in August Helen gave her mother a 'favourable account of Ballarat',52 and in the same month she even wrote some verse extolling the joys of gold digging, which she entitled "The Life on Ballarat Flat" as a parody on "A Life on the Ocean Wave":

A life on Ballarat flat
A home on Cresswick's creek
Where nuggets lie so pat
A digger's life I seek.
Like a raw new Chun I seem
On this unchanging shore
Of glittering gold I dream
I stay in town no more. A Life, etc.
Again at my tent I stand
With two or three mates beside
And pick and spade in hand
I'll laugh at fortune's tide.
We'll dig through the yellow clay
Like men whose hearts are free
And in [the?] claim we'll stay
While the sparkling gold we see. A Life, etc.
The gold is no longer in view
And fortune's beginning to frown
But with a stout mate or two
We'll sink a new hole further down.
And the song of our hearts shall be
While seeking a luckier claim
A life on the diggings for me
And may you all say the same. A Life, etc.

H. Mantegani
August 1856.53

With or without gold in their pockets, Alfred, Helen and their baby returned to Adelaide in February 1857.54 Helen remained for over a year in South Australia, whereas Alfred, apparently still unwilling to settle down in Adelaide, returned to Victoria in March, after just three weeks, and stayed there on his own for the whole year.55 When he returned to

164

Archived at Flinders University:
dspace.flinders.edu.au

165
his wife and child in Adelaide at the beginning of 1858, he had probably already been hired in Victoria as an agent for Cobb and Co. coaches. In April the whole family sailed once again for Melbourne, with Creswick as their final destination. Here at Anthony’s American Hotel Alfred was employed by Watson and Hewitt, one of the many firms using the name of Cobb and Co., the coaching line first founded in Melbourne in 1853 by American Freeman Cobb and subsequently developed by other Americans in Victoria such as Cyrus Watson and Henry Hoyt, who was the cousin of Thomas Anthony, the proprietor of the hotel in Creswick.

In this gold-mining town of about 25,000 people “females were a rarity, and the sight of one raised a commotion all along the line of lead”, according to a storekeeper of the day. In such an environment Helen was far less happy than she had been in Ballarat in 1856. In September she wrote to her niece Helen Stark Skipper in Adelaide telling her of her loneliness:

I often think of you all and long to see you for here I know scarcely anyone and it is very lonely for me. I miss your lively faces very much and Vickey wants somebody to play with her. I wish I was in Adelaide again.

Meanwhile, an article in a Victorian newspaper at this time reached Helen’s mother causing her great anxiety, because “Alfred’s name (for I suppose it was him) was mentioned in a way that I was very sorry to see”. But Helen in subsequent correspondence quickly clarified the situation. She assured her mother that Alfred was not the “Greek of the name of Mantegani” mentioned in the “Pleasant Creek Times” as having been involved in an affair in a dancing saloon where a stabbing took place during a fight amongst Italians and Greeks. Alfred’s name was indeed appearing in the newspaper, but in less exciting fashion: from now until April 1861 his name was appended to all the advertisements for Cobb and Co. coaches published in the Creswick Advertiser. This notoriety prompted Alfred once more, after three years of silence, to write to his father and to send him a copy of the local newspaper. Antonio had previously written in January 1860 from Mendrisio asking...
for information and giving his usual paternal advice:

[...] ditemi cosa fatte voi altri, parlate con tutta sincerità del cuore, io sono uomo da mondo piccolo, ma grande nel pensare. Tutti a questo mondo non sono destinati a far grande fortuna. Li più fortunati sono quelli contenti nel suo stato. [...] Voi siete giovani ancora buoni di far grande cose e grandi viaggi, tutto sta se il sole vole voltarsi col suoi raggi verso voi altri, speriamo si cari, speriamo.62

In his letter Alfred told his father of his new position as Cobb and Co. agent in Cresswick, but Antonio expected something more prestigious:

[...] Ricevei pure anche il foglio, the Cresswick Advertiser, del qual foglio trovai tante interessante notizie e fra altre l’avviso Cobb & Co.’s Telegraph Line, etc. etc. Se la tua posizione fosse stata di proprietario sarebbe stato molto meglio. In questi paesi basta 2000 sterlin per poter vivere comodamente bene, il di più sarebbe il vivere da nobile [...]63

Prior to this, Antonio had managed to obtain some news of Alfred’s activities from other sources. Many of the 2000 ticinesi who from 1853 had migrated to Victoria in the hope of making their fortune on the goldfields were returning home in the late 1850s, for the most part without that golden harvest that they had dreamed of.64 Already in 1855, when Alfred and Helen were still in Ballarat, Antonio reported from Mendrisio that “è venuto a casa un certo Torricelli di Lugano il quale mi a detto che ti aveva veduto a Melborn un giorno prima che era per partire”,65 and again in 1856: “Tempo fa è rivato a casa, ciòè a Lugano, un cierto Toricelli il quale dice di avervi veduto a Melbon ma puocho mi a saputo dire di te. È pure venuto a casa uno della Valmagia vicino Locarno. Questo dice che aveva lettera per noi da te consegnata ma che a Londra ha perso questa lettera con altre carte”.66 In 1860 Alfred’s sister, Irene, who was living in Locarno, made her own inquiries, with some success: “Del Locarnese ve ne sono in Australia ed ho domandato a tanti che sono ritornati a casa, se ti conoscevano e difatti alcuni ti hanno veduto e mi hanno detto che stavi bene”.67

Generally speaking, first-hand contacts such as these, which became a network of information crisscrossing the Ticino and woven personally by returning migrants, contributed as much to reducing the distance between Switzerland and Australia and to describing life in far-off Victoria as did the private letters sent home from family members abroad. Despite his complaints about a son who rarely wrote, Antonio was doubly fortunate, since he also had contact with people he had befriended while living in Wisbech:

Con grande mia sorpresa giorni sono ricevui una lettera di Melbourn dal mio antico amico Mr Jos Bishop formerly of Whittlesea. Questa mi a doppiamente consolato primo per aver notizia d’un amico e secondo perché questa mi dava notizie di voialtri. Mr B. mi disse che accidentalmente vi incontrò a Cresswick Creek (Dio lo sa dove si trova), visitò il vostro small but neat cottage, trovò tutto in bell’ordine, una intelligente donna e belli figli. Tutto ciò per noi a datto grande consolazione mentre non abbiamo più avuto notizia da voi altri.68

The cottage here referred to was one of two properties Alfred bought while in Cresswick. In June 1858 he paid £11 for a quarter-acre allotment in Melbourne Road on the outskirts of the town, but it was not built on while he owned it.69 In August the following year he paid £100 for a house for his family, a three-room verandah cottage on a small block in the centre of town, near the American Hotel.70 Helen probably contributed some of her own funds towards the purchases since, as the letters from her mother show, she was at this time receiving income from three cottages that she owned in Adelaide.71

In January 1859, their second child, Alfred Victor, was born. On both his birth certificate and on that of Teresa Victoria the birthplace of their father is recorded as “Como, Italy” rather than “Wisbech, Cambridgeshire” or even “Switzerland”.72 The information, supplied by Helen as informant, is quite surprising and not easily explained. Como, just across the border in Italy and 12 kilometres from Mendrisio, is the city closest to his parents’ village. But it would seem that in Australia Alfred preferred to be known as Italian rather than English or Swiss. Perhaps he thought it would bring him more prestige as a pianist, which was the profession recorded on the Ballarat register for Teresa’s birth. Whatever the reason, there is evidence to show that he had contacts with Italians in Victoria and that he was an active supporter of Garibaldi and of Italy’s struggle for unification: when in 1860 a subscription was initiated in Melbourne by Alessandro Martelli for the purchase and
presentation of a sword to Garibaldi with the hilt composed of Victorian gold, in Creswick the collection of contributions was organised by Mantegani, as an item in the *Creswick Advertiser* reveals:

**GARIBALDI FUND.** Mr Mantegani informs us that he has received a subscription list from the Central Committee, Melbourne, and that he will be happy to receive and forward subscriptions given in support of the cause embraced by the "Hero of Palermo".73

At Anthony's American Hotel, where "Italian, German, French, and Spanish Languages [were] spoken", Alfred was originally employed not only as the Creswick Cobb and Co. agent but also as presiding pianist at the "Free and Easies", which were the most popular form of entertainment on the diggings.74 Then in March 1860, while still continuing as agent for Anthony, he formed a partnership with hotelier John Francis Creati and became manager of the Prince of Wales Hotel, where a second Cobb and Co. booking office was opened. Prospective patrons were informed that "Qui si parla italiano" and that "Monti" was the pianist at the "Free and Easy" each Saturday evening.75 But the partnership lasted only four months. At the beginning of July Helen's father, Robert Thomas, died and Helen and the children returned to Adelaide. On 16 July Alfred dissolved his partnership and publicly announced that he too was returning to South Australia. In his letter to his father in August he also said that "fra alcuni anni" he would be returning to Mendrisio.76 He had, however, to sell his two Creswick properties, for which an auction was organised on 26 September.77 A buyer was found only for the quarter-acre block, which sold for £14.78 so he decided to stay on as agent until he was also able to sell the cottage at a reasonable price. The letter that Alfred wrote to Helen at this time is the only one by him that has survived:

*Creswick, Oct. 2nd [1860]*

My Dear Old Woman,

I received your last all right. Mr Hoyt has just telegraphed to me offering me a billet as Agent at £5.0.0 per week in Geelong. I think I will take it, I shall only give myself one hour to consider about it.

I am actually earning nothing here and they won't increase my salary.

Watson and Hewitt are giving me more work and no more pay. I sold the small piece of land for £14.70. but I could not sell the House. I have been offered £60.0.0 for it. Hoping you are all well. Kiss the children, direct your next to Creswick. Yours truly, [Alfred]79

Alfred did not accept the offer to go to work in Geelong but stayed on in Creswick, while the various coaching enterprises amalgamated into one large organisation called the Australian Stage Company.80 Correspondence between his wife Helen and her niece in Adelaide shows that Alfred returned to see his family in February 1861 and while at home exhibited the first signs of serious illness. "Mr Mantegani is not so well as he was", wrote Helen, "I have sent for Dr Bayer but he has not come yet".81 But with one property still unsold, Alfred recovered enough to return to work in Creswick until April when he finally found a buyer who paid him £120 for the house.82 He promptly left Melbourne by ship and arrived in Adelaide again on 20 April.83 During the next month his health deteriorated rapidly and he died in Adelaide of "disease of the heart" on 5 June, aged 32.84 Almost immediately after Alfred's death Helen had their two-year-old son baptised in the Anglican church. The fact that she had also had their first child Teresa baptised an Anglican as soon as Alfred had left Adelaide for Creswick in 1857 suggests that there had been sectarian tension between the two.85

What Antonio Mantegani wrote in his letter from Mendrisio in August, following notification by Helen of his son's death, is unknown, since the letter is missing from the collection. However, the next letter, written in October, contains a message to Helen from Alfred's mother:

*Cara figlia,*

non potete figurarvi il grande dispiacere che ho avuto per la morte del mio caro figlio Alfredo. Vi ringrazio delle grandi cure che gli avete prestate sempre e durante la sua malattia e vi raccomando i cari figli Teresa e Vittorio dei quali mi ricordo sempre. Io li amo come i miei figli e so che voi siete una brava donna e che avrete per loro gran cura. [...] Dalla vostra aff. ma mamma,*

*Teresa Mantegani*86

This bond between the two families was maintained during the following fifty years, until 1915, first with Alfred's parents and then with Alfred's sisters Irene and Savina. Initially Helen made several requests,
in vain, for financial assistance in raising the children, and even persuaded the Italian Passionist priest in South Australia, Maurice Lencioni, to write to Mendrisio on her behalf asking for funds to buy Teresa a piano.\textsuperscript{67} Subsequent letters, especially those from Irene, showed great warmth and affection and were sometimes accompanied by items that belonged to Alfred in Wisbech or in Mendrisio. Helen, who could read Italian, wrote in English, whereas Antonio wrote in both English and Italian and the other family members in Italian only. Irene was especially keen to maintain and develop communication between the second and third generations of the two families, provided that linguistic barriers could be overcome. "Imparate anche voi l'italiano", she wrote to Alfred's daughter Teresa in 1905, "così scrivendomi vi capirò bene e così i miei figli e non faremo tradurre le vostre lettere e così anche i vostri figli dovrebbero imparare l'italiano".\textsuperscript{68}

How typical a migrant was Alfred Mantegani for the period in which he lived? Charlotte Erickson found in her study of the letters written by English and Scottish immigrants in Nineteenth-Century America that their greatest goal was independence,\textsuperscript{69} and this was certainly Mantegani's desire. She also found that amongst the group of white-collar workers there was a predominance of personal, family and status reasons for emigrating, rather than economic pressures. "I hope that my stay in America has sufficiently proved to my father my ability and desire to earn my own living", wrote one young Englishman who had obtained employment as assistant surveyor for a railroad company.\textsuperscript{70} Wages and cost-of-living differentials, which was the comparison that Alfred's father constantly made, were not the major concern of this group nor of Mantegani who considered long-run prospects and social status in the new land more important.\textsuperscript{71} But if a comparison is made with the 2000 ticinesi who migrated to Australia in the 1850s, Mantegani's situation was quite different: the ticinesi, most of whom were peasants, labourers or artisans, left Switzerland out of economic necessity, the victims of extreme poverty and food shortages at the time, but also of the propaganda of unscrupulous Hamburg shipping agents.\textsuperscript{72}

The observation made first by Lloyd Reynolds and subsequently supported by Erickson, that the emigrant letter was characteristically written by the unassimilated immigrant who as an outsider wished to have contact with home, does not apply to Mantegani.\textsuperscript{73} Rather, Mantegani's attitude to letter-writing was similar to that of his contemporary, the German musician and composer Carl Linger, winner, in 1859, of the prize for composing the music to the \textit{Song of Australia} written by Caroline Carleton (awards, incidentally, that Helen's mother firmly believed they did not deserve, since the poem was a "silly childish production" of which even Alfred would have had difficulty making "anything like harmony").\textsuperscript{74} After arriving in South Australia in 1849, Linger wrote to his mother in Berlin for the first time in 1852:

\begin{flushleft}

\textit{Dear Mother,}

\textit{At last, after three years, I am taking up my pen in order to give definite news of myself and family [...]. On leaving Berlin I told everybody that as soon as things were going well with me here and I found them as reputed, I would at once write. If things went badly, I would not write, and this has indeed been the case [...]}.\textsuperscript{75}

\end{flushleft}

Alfred, too, eventually wrote home not when he felt lonely or disorientated but when he could finally report that he had achieved something, when he could tell his father to address his letters simply to "Alfred Mantegani, pianist, South Australia",\textsuperscript{76} As musician and composer Mantegani was not of the calibre of Carl Linger nor of Neapolitan Cesare Cutole, the runner-up in the \textit{Song of Australia} competition. But he is nonetheless deserving of a place alongside a select group of musicians that also includes Raffaele Squarise and Faustino Ziliani, all of whom resided in South Australia in the Nineteenth Century and offered their musical talent to a culture-hungry colony.

\begin{center}

\textit{***}
\end{center}

\begin{center}

\begin{flushleft}

I am grateful to Paola Niscioli and Sandra Celentano for the help they gave me in my research for this paper and to the Flinders University Board of Research for providing some financial assistance.
\end{flushleft}
\end{center}
Notes

1 “La Comunità Italiana di Adelaide”, Supplement to La Fiamma, October 1963, p. 8.


4 The first Italian to settle in South Australia, Antonio Giannoni, from Rimini, arrived in Adelaide as a crewman on the Recovery in 1839. For biographical information on Giannoni see my “From Crewman to Cabbie: A Profile of the First Italian Settler in South Australia”, Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia, 19 (1991), 8-25.

5 Mortlock Library, Mantegani Letters, PRG 106/1-4 (hereafter MLL). The letters were donated to the State Library of South Australia in 1962 by Alfred Mantegani’s grandson, Mr Ronald Ed Vernon Beever.

6 There are 66 letters in the Mortlock Library’s Mantegani collection. Of these, 38 were written by Mantegani family members in Mendrisio, Wisbech, Lugano and Milan between the years 1854 and 1915, and are nearly all in Italian. Another 27, in English, were written by Mary Thomas in Adelaide to her daughter Helen Mantegani in Ballarat and Cresswick in the period 1855 to 1860. Only one letter from Alfred Mantegani survives, sent from Cresswick on 2 Oct. 1860 to his wife Helen in Adelaide.

7 Information derived from the British census of 1851, PRO: HO 107/1766, where Antonio Mantegani’s age is shown as 51 and his place of birth as “Swiss Lugano Brit Subject”. See also MLL, letter dated 1 Jan. 1860.

8 Mario Medici, Storia di Mendrisio, Mendrisio, Banca Raiffeisen di Mendrisio, 1980, p. 574.

9 Ibid., pp. 561-62. Their marriage record is held in the Mendrisio parish church.


12 Sponza, ch. 3.

13 Ibid.

14 PRO: HO 5/26, Register of Certificates of Alien Arrivals 1829-1832.

15 Information obtained from the Census of 1841 (PRO: HO 107/79/7) and 1851 (PRO: HO 107/1766), and from MLL (various). Paolo and Giovanni were the sons of Antonio’s brother Carlo Mantegani (1796-1886) and sister-in-law Giulia Isella. A daughter, Angiolina (1824-1866), had a son Carlo who in the 1860s emigrated to South America (I am indebted to don Pietro Giubinelli of Morcote for this information obtained from a gravestone at the local cemetery). Paolo Mantegani died, probably in Wisbech, in 1857, aged 29. His brother Giovanni (1829-1904) had a son Alfred Mantegani (1861-1947) who, according to a commemorative inscription on a window in the Wisbech Catholic Church, was “for 70 years organist of this church” (correspondence received from K.A. Tomlinson, Wisbech). When Antonio Mantegani arrived in Wisbech in 1829 there was no local Catholic church, the nearest being at King’s Lynn 20 kilometres away. Antonio apparently contributed to the establishment of the Wisbech Catholic church, which opened in 1854 (correspondence from Michael Farrar, Cambridge County archivist).

16 Antonio is recorded as returning in 1837 (PRO: HO 5/29 and HO 2/25/223) and 1848 (HO 5/32 and HO 2/170/3368). Giovanni entered in 1839 (HO 5/30) and Paolo in 1846 (HO 5/32 and HO 2/144/16).

17 MLL, 1 April 1857.

18 I am grateful to Fr Anthony Shryane, parish priest at King’s Lynn, for this information. The godfather was Antonio Gugeri and the godmother Susana Ground.

19 MLL, letter from Irene 25 Aug. 1897 and letter from Alfred’s brother Emilio 18 Aug. 1897. Attempts to trace his school in or near Wisbech have proved fruitless, since local school records for the 1830s and 1840s have not survived.
20 MLL, letter of 20 July 1854 (see Appendix). He was not present in Wisbech when the 1841 census was taken.

21 PRO: HO 2/145/395. See also Note 7 above.

22 MLL, letter from Emilio 18 Aug. 1897 ([... spedisco una carta geografica che è stata fatta dall’Alfredo quando era alla Scuola vicino a Wisbech] and letter from Irene 25 Aug. 1897 ([Emilio […] spedi pure a parte un rotolo con lavoro dei due emisferi eseguiti da mio fratello Alfred quando si trovava in collegio in Inghilterra [...]. Vi unisco un piccolo disegno e lavoro che aveva fatto nel 1848 il mio caro fratello Alfred. È una cosa da niente, ma che vi farà piacere custodire come memoria del nostro amato padre”). The present whereabouts of these and other items (including a photograph of a family portrait that includes young Alfred) sent at this time from Mendrisio to the Mantegani family in Adelaide is unknown.

23 Augusto Catenazzi (1808-1880) and his father Francesco (1775-1830) were well-known artists (painters) in Mendrisio. Augusto visited the Mantegani family in England in 1831 when he was godfather at the baptism of Alfred’s sister Irene in King’s Lynn and again in 1833-1834 when he painted the family portrait (MLL, letters from Irene 16 Feb. 1898 and 19 Jan. 1905, and Mario Medici, p. 1242).

24 Mario Medici, pp. 1192-1202 and MLL, letter from Irene 6 June 1900. In 1963 all of Luigi Lavizzari’s writings were donated to the Lugano Biblioteca Cantonale. This Lavizzari archive contains some exchange of letters between Luigi and Irene, but unfortunately there are no letters from Mantegani family.

25 Garibaldi was a great friend of Lavizzari and in one particular occasion a dinner in his honour was given at Locarno (on the Lake Maggiore Switzerland) when Irene Mrs Lavizzari sat next to the Great General. Myself I [knew the General 30 years ago when fighting for the Indipendenza Italiana and myself at that time one of [h]is party fighting for the above cause” (MLL, letter to Helen from Giovanni Mantegani, Wisbech 15 Feb. 1876).


27 Passenger Lists showing arrivals of both assisted immigrants and unassisted passengers in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia in the period 1848 to 1852 have been examined.

28 South Australian Register, 14 Jan. 1852, p. 2 and South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal, 15 Jan. 1852, p. 2. His surname appears incorrectly transcribed as “Montegardi”. Four months before, the Asia had brought migrants to South Australia from England. Mantegani was not amongst the overseas passengers listed in the Register on 3 Sept. 1851 (p. 2).

29 Register, 26 Jan. 1852, p. 2.

30 It appears in one of his advertisements in the Creswick Advertiser, 23 March 1860, p. 3.

31 Register, 23 Aug. 1853, p. 2.

32 Register, 27 Sept. 1853, p. 2.

33 See, for example, J.J. Pascoe, History of Adelaide and Vicinity, Adelaide, Hussey & Gillingham, 1901, pp. 590-97, the Register, 5 July 1878, p. 4, and The Australian Dictionary of Biography, 6 (1851-1890), pp. 263-65.


36 “Mary was married yesterday week the 28th of April to John with my consent at last because I saw it was useless to object any longer, but I cannot say with my wishes, unless John were a very different man to what he is, for you know as well as I do that his temper is none of the best and I am sorry to say that I have
seen but little improvement since poor Frances's death. However, we must hope for the best. Mary flatters herself that she will be able to manage him" (MLL, letter from Mary Thomas in Adelaide to her daughter Helen Mantegani in Ballarat, 6 May 1856). Mrs Mary Thomas presumably objected to the marriage also because the Church of England forbade marriage of a man with his deceased wife's sister. See Wilkinson, Introd. p. 9, and Douglas Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*, Melbourne University Press, 1957, p. 486.

37Register, 27 Sept. 1853, p. 2.
38Register, 19 Oct. 1853, p. 2.
39Register, 28 and 29 March 1854, p. 1; 5 April 1854, p. 3 (review of concert); 10 May 1854, p. 3 (review).
40Register, 24 April 1854, p. 2 and 26 April 1854, p. 3.
41Register, 19 May 1854, p. 4. Concerts were again being held at the Pantheon in July.
42Register, 7 June 1854, p. 4 (advertisement for the position); 25 July and 7-19 Aug. 1854, p. 1.
43Register, 14 and 16 Oct. 1854, p. 1, and 30 Oct. 1854, p. 3.
44"Io stava da te caro Alfred at aspetare una lettera e motivo principale erra per sapere che tu avevi ricevuto quelle marcezzia che ti aveva mandato Pavolino e se tu li avessi mandato l'importo di quella come li avevi promesso" (MLL, letter from Mendrisio, 7 Nov. 1855). "[...] Queste due cose per me sono veramente necessarie di sapere, per ciò ti prego quando scrivi di farmelo sapere e spero che non tarderai a scrivere" (MLL, letter from Wisbech, 11 June 1856). "[...] Devo dire che questa [marcezzia] doveva prima di quest'ora esser pagata e ciò stante alle tue promesse, per altro non so cosa dire se tu non li paghi sarà costretto a pagarli io per il motivo che ho dovuto far io Sigurtà" (MLL, Mendrisio, 1 April 1857).
45Information contained in MLL, letter from Mendrisio, 1 April 1857.
46Principal Registry Office, Adelaide, 22/355 and Mortlock Library SRG 94/1/259.
47Observer, 30 June 1855, p. 5.

48MLL, letter from Mendrisio, 7 Nov. 1855.
49MLL, letter from Mendrisio, 1 April 1857. Helen too stopped writing for three years after 1857, which drew another protest from Antonio: "Helen mi aveva promesso in una sua lettera che tutti li anni mi avrebbe dato le sue notizie ma non adempi la sua promessa" (Mendrisio, 11 Jan. 1860).
50They are listed among the passengers for Melbourne on the White Swan (Register, 6 July 1855, p. 2).
51"I hope the hole in which Alfred had a share has turned out well, and produced a golden harvest" (MLL, letter of 23 Nov. 1855 from Mary Thomas to Helen, Ballarat Post Office). "I hope Alfred has been fortunate in his Gold seeking" (letter of 23 Dec. 1855).
52MLL, letter from Mary Thomas, 13 Sept. 1856.
53MLL (PRG 106/4/5).
58John A. Graham, pp. 59, 184.
59Mortlock Library, PRG 242, letter dated Creswick 26 Sept. [1858].
60SERIOUS DISTURBANCE AT A DANCING SALOON. On Saturday evening last a disturbance of a most serious nature took place at White's Commercial Dancing-Saloon, which narrowly escaped being attended with fatal consequences. A quarrel appears to have arisen between some Italians, Greeks, and others,
originating from some hustling among the dancers. From high words the disputants came to blows, and a knife was drawn by one of the foreigners, supposed to be a Greek named Montegena [sic], who rushed from the room. In his course he inflicted two wounds (one, of a very serious nature, in the side, and the other in the thigh) on a man named Thomas Watson. [...] A vast concourse of people were assembled, and they appeared to be greatly excited against the perpetrators of the violence, threats of pulling down the house and lynching the offender being uttered on all sides" (Argus, 22 June 1858, p. 5, quoted from the Pleasant Creek Times). See MLL, letters from Mary Thomas, 9 Aug. and 9 Sept. 1858.

61See, for example, Creswick Advertiser, 13 May 1859, p. 1, 26 Oct. 1860, p. 3, 26 March 1861, p. 4.


63MLL, Mendrisio, 5 Dec. 1860.

64Gentilli, p. 6 and Cheda, I, p. 242.

65MLL, Mendrisio, 7 Nov. 1855.

66MLL, Wisbech, 11 June 1856.

67MLL, letter from Irene Lavizzari, Locarno-Mendrisio 20 Nov. 1860.

68MLL, Mendrisio, 11 Jan. 1860. See also MLL, Mendrisio 23 Nov. 1860, a letter which Antonio sent to Alfred via "un cierto Alessandro Pestoni di Somazzo tagliapieira il quale sta a Melbourne".

69Town Lot 53205, Memorial 104/527 (Registrar General, Melbourne). Today the address is 19 Melbourne Road.

70Memorial 83/812. Today the address is 30 Cambridge Street. All Memorials bear Alfred Mantegani’s signature.

71MLL, letters from Mary Thomas, 1858-1860 (various). Helen’s mother periodically enclosed £5 accumulated from the rent.

72Registry of Births, Victoria, Nos. 4709 (Teresa Victoria - 15 April 1856) and 2639 (Alfred Victor - 13 Jan. 1859).

73Creswick Advertiser, 14 Sept. 1860, p. 3.

74Creswick Advertiser, 10 June 1859, p. 2, 17 June 1859, Supplement. See also Graham, p. 273.

75Creswick Advertiser, 2 and 23 March and 6 April 1860, p. 3. For Creati see Graham, p. 93.

76Creswick Advertiser, 20 July 1860, p. 3 and MLL, letter from Mendrisio 20 Nov. - 5 Dec. 1860.

77Creswick Advertiser, 14 Sept. 1860, p. 3.

78Memorial 104/527.

79MLL, PRC 106/3/6. For some reason Alfred’s signature has been cut out of the manuscript. Helen was four years older than Alfred, which may in part explain the apppellative “My Dear Old Woman”.

80E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, p. 93. See also Creswick Advertiser, 22 Feb. 1861, p. 4.

81MLL, letter from Helen Mantegani to Helen Stark Skipper, 23 Feb. 1861. Dr Frederick Bayer (1815-1867) was a German-born physician who practised in Adelaide.

82Memorial 105/276, dated 16 April 1861. The last time that Alfred’s name is listed in the Creswick Advertiser as Cobb and Co. agent is 23 April 1861.

83Adelaide Observer, 27 April 1861, shipping list, p. 5.

84On the 5th June, at Adelaide, of disease of the heart, Mr Alfred Montegani [sic], aged 32 years", Register, 8 June 1861, p. 2. The death notice also appeared in the Creswick Advertiser, 18 June 1861, p. 2. Despite extensive searches at the General Registry Office, Adelaide, no death certificate has been found. Nor is there a record of his being buried at West Terrace Cemetery, Adelaide.

85Both children were baptised in Holy Trinity Church, Adelaide, Teresa Victoria on 2 April 1857 and Alfred Victor on 20 June 1861.

86MLL, letter from Mendrisio, 29 Oct. 1861.
APPENDIX

[Letter from Antonio Mantegani and family in Mendrisio to "Mr Alfred Mantegani, Adelaide, South Australia" (envelope address)]

li 20 luglio 1854

Figlio caro,
il giorno 15 del passato giugno con grand’ consolazione di tutti di casa abbiamo ricevuto la prima tua lettera in data del primo marzo anno corrente. Soto tutti li aspetti mi a consolato tutti ma principalmente sentendo che sei sano e che cominci a far giudizio e a guadagnarti qualche sostanza. Un’altra parte della tua lettera a interessato tutti li amici ed è quella parte dove hai saputo che entro tre mesi averai preso moglie. Se questo è veramente successo a quest’ora io devo esser padre di una nuova figlia e certamente io sono pienamente contento come sono tutti di casa. Dio voglia che posa vivere sufficienza per vederti uno e l’altro. Tu dice che subito che ai guadagnato £8 per week voi venire a casa ma io ti devo dire che quando ai la metà di questa somma averai molto di più di quello che a the first famey in this place. Il sig. Conte Polini dirimperato a noi dicano che a £5000 di Milano. £4 per week amonta di più di questa somma. Ciò ti servirà per regola che con £250 al £300 per year sarebbe sufficiente da vivere con cavalo carrozza e tutto quello che può necessitare in questi paesi. Se fosse di vivere in un milano cierto sarebbe meglio aver di più, ma di noi questa somma bastarebbe per far la prima figura del paese. Adesso ai cominciato a far giudizio la prova di questo sarà che tu continui a scrivere e conservare una corrispondenza per ciò io sono cierto che questa ti riverà in ottobre. Prima che scada l’anno potrai darmi altre tue notizie. Sarà grato per noi sapere il nome della tua sposa se è grande ho piccola etc., insomma tutte quelle notizie che voi purché siano buone non potrà far ameno che consolarmi.

La satima scorsa ricevei lettera di Wisbech. Pavolo mi fa sapere del tuo
ordine etc. etc. Io li ho già dato riscontro e li ho fatto premura di mandarti il tuo ordine. Come spero che non perderà tempo a far questa spedizione ma sarebbe stato bene se tu li avesti mandato una somma in aconto a questo tuo ordine perché vedo che se tu non li mandi l'importo che doppio che ai ricevuto la marancia viene costretto a spetare quasi 7 al 9 mesi prima che sia pagato e siccome Pavolino non è tanto in scorta per questa tal tardanza li potrò esser un puo d'incomodo. Basta se non ti è fattibile di mandarli un qualche £50 al £60 prima di ricevere li pianos. Li dovrai mandare il tutto subito che ai ricevuto la fatura altrimenti sarebbe per Pavolino un imbarazo.


Un'altra disgrazia è capitata al tuo zio Augusto ed è che l'anno scorso stava in casa suva in un palazzeo nuovo da lui fatto fabrisce in facia alla posta. Là si stava con Savina quando il cade da sotto ai piedi la pietra del poglio che stava su. Savina erra un puoche distante per ciò erra francha, ma il puoero Augusto nel cadere si rompe la gamba sinistra in tal modo che è stato obligato a farla amputare e al presente va con una gamba di legno. Del resto è sano e disposto. Don Filippo va avanti da buon prete, è sano e disposto come è pure il caso della vechia mamma granda. Queste sono le notizie di nostra casa. Altre nuove sono che è già 5 anni che non si fa vino. L'anno 1850 a tempestat d a tal modo che non si è fatto vino l'anno 1851, il 1852, 1853, e questo non se ne fa un bichiere. Motivo del quale che vi è nel uva, e quello che è pegno non si sa quando cesserà questo malle il quale sembra come il malle che vi erra nelle patate e come si dice è lo stesso malle. E siccome li mie fondi non dano che vino almeno questo è il magior raccolto, per questo io sto malle e se non avesi qualche altra risorsa non sapevi come andar avanti. Dio voglia che la cosa si cambi. Quelli di Morcote stano bene cióue tuo zio perché ora è solo. Sua moglie è morta e le due figlie sono maritate e tutti stano bene. Tutti li tuoi amici ti salutano. La Gitina Nesca è maritata con il tuo cugino Antonio Baroffio. La sua sorella prenderà l'avvocato Franchini tuo amico. Ora io voglio terminare e nel far questo ho due cose di racomandarti, la prima è quella di amare Dio, tuva moglie e i tuoi genitori, e la seconda è di aver sott'occhio di farti un uomo cióue esser diligente nei tuoi affari, guadagnare dei soldi e dopo guadagnati saperli a conservare accioché un qualche giorno possi venire a casa con onore tì e la tuva cara moglie che sarà sempre un piacere il potervi vedere. Tuvo padre Antonio Mantegani.

Carissimo Alfredo,
Molta gioia ne abbiamo avuto tutti col ricevere la tua lettera, sentendo le buone tue novelle, e col prospetto della tua fortuna io ti racomando di saperne profitto del momento, tenere da conto salute e danaro, essere onesto uomo per aquisire credito e onore, la fortuna è passagge perciò sappia profittarne e quando la trovi in una discreta porzione viene in patria a godersela tranquillamente. Con tutto cuore ti saluto e ricordali di noi. Tuo zio Augusto Catenazzi.

Mio caro Alfred,
non poi crederi quando è stata grande la consolazione nel ricevere la cara tua lettera e nel sentire il ben stato di salute e che presto avresti preso moglie e che è di buona famiglia e una buona giovane. Spero che a questa orra l'avrai presa. Quello che ti prego mio caro figlio di farli bona compagnia e di rispettarla in tutto che così farà lo stesso anche lei
Carissimo Alfredo,
con grandissima consolazione abbiamo ricevuta la tua lettera. Non passa giorno che io non mi ricordi di te. Ho molto piacere che tu abbi preso moglie e che sia una brava donna. La saluterai tanto da parte mia e le dirai che desidero vederci. Caro Alfredo sta sano, e ti auguro proprio una buona fortuna. Addio, ricevi un bacio, Della tua sorella
Savina

Caro fratello,
Sono qui 4 anni che io sono maritata col Consigliere Dottore Luigi Lavizzari che tu ben conosci. Ho due figli, uno si chiama Silvio e l'altro Emilio. Sono stata un anno a Bellinzona perché mio marito era Consigliere del Governo, ed ora siamo venuti a dimorare a Lugano perché adesso mio marito è Professore nel Liceo qui a Lugano. Io mi ricordo sempre di te, caro fratello, e quando vengono, ci faremo compagnia anche alla tua moglie, la quale la saluterai da parte mia. Intanto ricevi cento baci di miei figli e di me, che sono la tua Aff.ma sorella
Irene Lavizzari
Lugano il 18 luglio 1854

Caro Alfredo,
ti saluto di cuore e sono Tuo cognato

Luigi Lavizzari


Tuo padre