

Letter #11: Henryk Sienkiewicz¹ to Julian Horain²



Exiles, Adventurers, Artists: Letters from Polish California, 1836-1901
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¹ Polish journalist and author; awarded a Nobel prize for literature in 1905;
see: <http://culture.pl/en/artist/henryk-sienkiewicz>

² Julian Florian Horain, Polish journalist; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Horain.pdf>

February – Sunday – God knows what the date is; I don't. 1877³

Dear and respected friend!

I see that you're a true Lithuanian, the kind of whom Wincenty Pol⁴ says:⁵

He's as soft as wax, when people treat him right
But if people ever start a fight,
He won't forgive, though sunk in death's long night



What the devil! What did I step into over there? Didn't I write a compliment in your album, addressing you as an old "man of letters," not just as a fellow man? Didn't I regularly lose all of those many newspapers sent to me, thereby demonstrating that I am indeed a literary man, unconcerned about creating an impression that I'm better organized than anybody else? Didn't I stand in for Ludek's⁶ father [i.e., "you", Horain] here, taking him to the girls in Anaheim, which Ludek himself can speak to you about? Finally, did my second-to-most-recent letter make you angry? *Unde irae?* as Tacit says.⁷ Could some backbiter have done *iniuria*⁸ to me in your estimation?

4	Julius v. Horain	47				+ Russia
5	Thaddeus	9				"
6	Ludwig	7				"
7	Michael	6				"
8	Wladislaw	3				"
9	Paul		3			"

Horain family, 1871 (Julian, Thaddeus, **Ludwig [Ludek]**, Michael [Michał], Władysław, Paweł [Paul])

³ Written in Anaheim, California and sent to San Francisco, California

⁴ Wincenty Pol (20 April 1807 – 2 December 1872); Polish poet and geographer

⁵ Cited from *Song of Our Land*, playfully drawn from the original: "He melts like wax... But when somebody confronts him"

⁶ Ludek (Ludwig or Louis) was Horain's son; he died in 1888 on board the steamer, *Granada*

⁷ Latin: "Whence this ire?," cited from the *Annals* of Tacitus

⁸ Latin: An injustice/slander

If it was the letter – you, especially, as a literary man, should know how to judge another who, for style's sake – for some metaphor, metonymy or synecdoche⁹ – would make a butt of his own father. In the interest of our guild,¹⁰ we shouldn't judge such things by the common measure. If someone in San Francisco has been defaming me – Good heavens! – go to Warsaw, where the most respected people will say that: 1) I'm a spy, who's paid in Russian rubles; 2) I'm an arsonist; 3) (nearest to the truth) I violated underage girls, from two-years-old to fifty; 4) I'm either a pickpocket or a bank robber; 5) I'm an habitual drunk, suffering from *delirium tremens*;¹¹ 6) (*Well . . .*) I'm addicted to gambling at cards . . . and all of the other *et caeteras*¹² that crop up with the lovely particulars above.

Many of my devotees and supporters, especially the old maids, who *extra ordinario modo*¹³ fall in love with my creations, will speak again to the contrary. Don't worry, there'll be those from whom you'll hear either of these versions or both. As far as I'm concerned, I'll say this much: that each side has half of the truth – and in the meantime, I see no cause for our relations to be agitated. If you don't want to live with me as a semi-arsonist, half-drunk, etc., I call out with Holy Severyn the Apostle, *Noricum: vide caeteros amicos tuos et omniam societatem*.¹⁴ Who are you going to live with besides the captain¹⁵ – whose virtue regarding women is also dubious?

⁹ Figures of speech: calling a thing by the name of something else; calling a thing by the name of something that it's associated with, or one of its parts. [Polish equivalents, with native Polish roots, are given in the original footnote for these English words having Greek roots]

¹⁰ Both Sienkiewicz and Horain were journalists and authors.

¹¹ The DTs. A syndrome associated with alcoholism distinguished by muscular delusions and trembling, from which it gets its Latin name

¹² Latin: "And so on"/"etc."

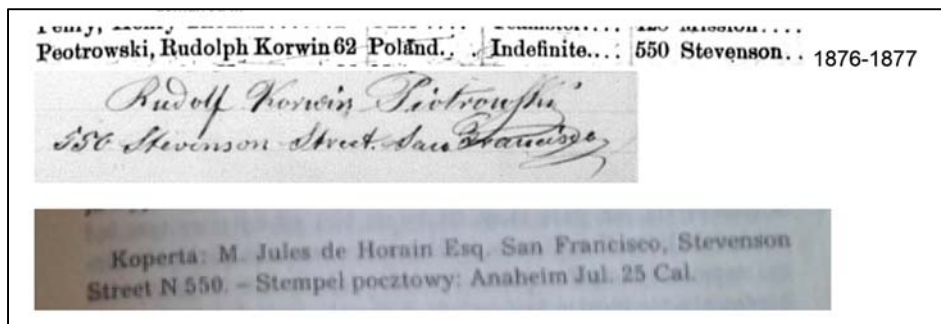
¹³ Latin: "Beyond the usual measure"

¹⁴ Latin: "Look at some of your friends, and at the whole society;"

St. Severyn (died 482) was an abbot, founder of many cloisters, and an apostle of the Norici, who lived along the Danube.

¹⁵ Captain Rudolf Korwin Piotrowski; born in Poland; lived in the former mining town, Sebastopol, Sacramento County and in San Francisco; co-founder of the Polish Society of California; served as Commissioner of Immigration; see:

<http://www.polishclubsf.org/Piotrowski%20in%20City%20Directories.pdf>



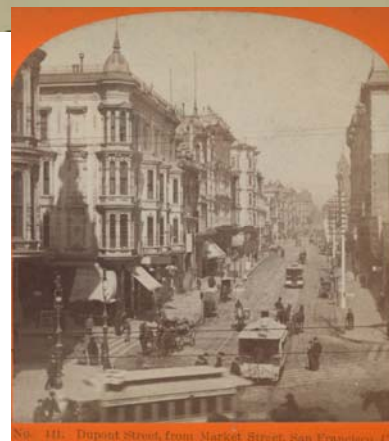
Captain Rudolf Korwin Piotrowski and Julian Horain shared an address in 1876-1877 in San Francisco

But I doubt it could have been any *precax lingua*¹⁶ that brought my virtue into question – so probably it was anger – *ira*, of which I think, in *tirocinium linguae latinae*,¹⁷ it says that *ira furor brevis est*.¹⁸ Give yourself a break with all of this. As God is my witness, I always looked, and still look on you with half of that hatred and half the wishes for grave illness, a host of devils, a rotten liver, death by choking, and worse luck at preferans¹⁹ than I'd wish for other literary men. This means something. As I see it, my response has always expressed the very ideal of beauty, genius, talent: these are lofty attributes. – How is it possible to become embittered against me like this? – and where? – in San Fr[ancisco], Cal. – [and] from whom? – a stationer, with whom I went to Mount Diablo²⁰ or the general²¹ on Dupont-street,²² etc.?



Mount Diablo

Kelch George, barkeeper W. Krzyzanowski, dwl N s Market nr Dupont



¹⁶ Latin: "Impertinent, shameless language"

¹⁷ Latin: "A handbook of the Latin language"

¹⁸ Latin: "Anger is a short-lived frenzy"

¹⁹ Preferans is a Russian card game that became popular in the 1830s. Here, Sienkiewicz uses technical jargon from the game to express his ill wishes towards all literary hangers-on. The footnote in the original explains the meaning of the underlined word: *Nazwa totus określa się w preferansie zebranie wszystkich dziesięciu lew,* to wit, Sienkiewicz condemns these people "to never take all ten tricks" at preferans.

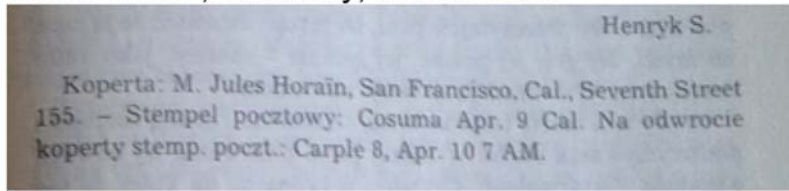
²⁰ Mount Diablo is a peak east of San Francisco. Sienkiewicz and Horain visited Mt. Diablo in May of 1876.

²¹ Włodzimierz Krzyżanowski (1824–1887) arrived in the United States in 1846. He joined the Northern side in the American Civil War, and because of his notable contributions, a year later he was promoted to the rank of general by President Lincoln. He founded The Society for the Assistance of Polish Immigrants [*Towarzystwo Pomocy dla Polskich Imigrantów*]. He was the author of *Memories from a Sojourn in America: 1861–1864*, published in Warsaw, 1883 [*Wspomnień z pobytu w Ameryce*].

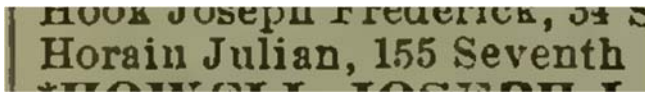
²² Krzyżanowski reportedly stiffed his Polish friends when his San Francisco saloons (The New York Casino and The Louver) went bankrupt. He lived, for a time, in San Francisco on Market Street near Dupont Street, now Grant Avenue.

1877

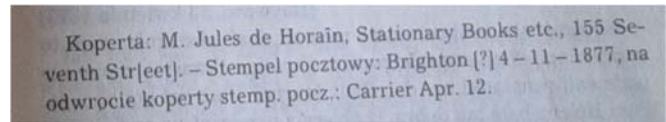
Horain Julian, 155 Seventh
Horain Julian, stationery, 155 Seventh



San Francisco City Directory, Booksellers and Stationers



Were I not a philosopher, I would turn this over to a "jury" (the word's pronounced, *dziury* ["holes" in Polish]), for example, Sara or Henriette.²³ The guilty are called upon to mend their ways.



I no longer want "The Newspaper,"²⁴ even though *The Ram's Head*, an outstanding work by my favorite author Litwos,²⁵ is supposedly published there.²⁶ I don't want it first of all because I just don't, and second because I, together with my one-handed trunk, my travel bag strapped across one shoulder, a sheepskin cap, etc., etc., will probably soon make a sunset exit from the San Francisco firmament.²⁷ I'll tell you a little secret: farming, hauling manure, cleaning George's stall (that's our team horse), partridges, bumpy rabbits,²⁸ and various other idyllic pleasures beginning (in theory) with getting up to meet the day, and ending with the use of burdock²⁹ leaves in that place where others use [toilet] paper – all of this has brought me to such a state of boredom that *vomitandus sum*,³⁰ or to put it differently, "simple REVULSION,"³¹ as the Polish girls in Saint Petersburg say – naturally-ROOTED

²³ A reference to Henriette, a fictional character in the French historical drama *The Two Orphans* (a romantic play). Alice Dunning Lingard (July 29, 1847 - June 25, 1897) played Henriette. M'lle Sara (Sarah Wright, active late 1860s-early 1880s), was an English dancer who joined the Emily Soldene comic opera company. See newspaper clippings below.

²⁴ *Gazeta Polska* (*The Polish Gazette*)

²⁵ Byline/pen name that Sienkiewicz used

²⁶ In *The Polish Gazette*, Numbers 5–17 (1877), *Charcoal Sketches: An epic collection entitled, What Happened at the Ram's Head* was being printed at this time. [This is Sienkiewicz at his best – a satire on village life in Russian-occupied Poland – first published in California under his pen name, Litwos]

²⁷ The San Francisco Bay Area

²⁸ What this alludes to was made clear by Sienkiewicz in *Travel Letters* [*Listy z podróży*], where he wrote, "The rabbits prick themselves constantly on the cactus plants, flies lay their eggs in the wounds, and then blisters arise, filled with water and pus" (*Works*, vol. XLII, pp. 233-234).

²⁹ A stout handsome plant, with large, wavy leaves and round heads of purple flowers. It is enclosed in a globular involucre of long stiff scales with hooked tips, the scales being also often interwoven with a white, cottony substance.

³⁰ Latin: "I want to puke"/"to vomit"

³¹ Sienkiewicz is playing with words. In the original text, the Polish *prosto odwrócenie* ("a simple reversal") sounds a lot like the Russian *просто отвращение* ("simply revulsion," which in Polish would be, *po prostu obrzydzenie*). This is an example of how Poles who'd been living in Russia would mix up the meanings of certain false cognates between the two languages – using a Polish word to mean what a Russian word that

Polish women who can be RELIED UPON but not TAKEN IN.³² It may be as an effect of this tedium, combined with my temperament, that the personalities of the other colonists seem to me less compatible than they did earlier, whereas Miss Luedtke's [sic]³³ legs and arms appear even more enormous.

Rudolf Luedtke	w 7 56		1	Matchmaker				Poland
- Malwina	w 7 42	wife	1	Keeping House				Poland
- Olga	w 7 32	daughter	1	at home				California
- Oscar	w 7 18	son	1	Matchmaker				California
- Edmund	w 7 18	son	1	at home			1	California
- Laura	w 7 7	daughter	1	do			1	California
- Adolph	w 7 6	son	1	do				California

Luedtke family, 1880 census, Anaheim, Los Angeles County, California

Jam satis,³⁴ etc. I'm so brazen that, even in a dream, I wouldn't feel ashamed of my inconstancy. I wrote to Warsaw, asking them to send 200 dollars – by my reckoning just a part of what I've earned, and what is due to me. I'll settle my accounts and fly. If the money still hasn't come in two weeks, I'll write to ask the captain³⁵ for a larger sum, and I'll write another letter at the same time to "The Newspaper," asking them to send everything. Then it will be as God wishes. I'll stay in San Francisco for as long as my resources permit, making a bank deposit of only what's needed for travel. – For travel? Where? I don't know; one can write as a correspondent from anywhere. You must be having some good fun now

sounds just like it meant: i.e., not in the actual sense of the Polish word itself. Sienkiewicz's bilingual wordplay here underscores, with a different sort of flourish, his REVULSION towards the communal scene in Anaheim. Because the interplay of cognates between Polish and Russian is impossible to duplicate in English, SMALL CAPS have been used to mark the words in this passage that Sienkiewicz plays with in this manner. The INTENDED MEANING has been translated in every case, not the ironically employed, dictionary sense of the Polish word.

³² The locutions used by "rooted" Poles – meaning Polish residents in Russia who use certain Polish words to mean what their false Russian cognates mean – is based on the tacit interplay of certain words that sound the same in both languages yet have different meanings. Aside from the word "rooted" itself (*korzenne*), at play here are the Polish verbs *położyć się* and *polegać* ("to lie down" and "to rely upon"), with the former being used to mean what the false Russian cognate, *полагаться*, of the latter means; also *nadąć* (to swell) stands for the Russian cognate, *надуть*, which has the slang meaning of *nabrać, szukać* ("to trick / deceive / take in"). Thanks to Prof. Julian Krzyżanowski for this information [with a good bit added by the English translator].

³³ Likely Olga Luedtke, the daughter of Rudolf and Malwina Luedtke from Prussian-occupied Poland. In 1877 Olga was 19. Rudolf Luedtke was a resident of San Francisco in the 1850s. He was naturalized in San Francisco in 1854. He lived in Anaheim, Los Angeles County, from the 1870s onward. See: <http://www.PolishClubSF.org/Luedtke.pdf>

³⁴ Latin: "Enough already"

³⁵ Captain Rudolf Korwin Piotrowski; co-founder of the Polish Society of California in San Francisco; born in Poland; lived in Sebastopol, Sacramento County and in San Francisco; served as Commissioner of Immigration for the State of California; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Piotrowski%20in%20City%20Directories.pdf>

with the Muscovites there [in San Francisco], and as for a bit of preferans-playing, "simply MUDDLE ONWARD."³⁶ I gave my word that I wouldn't play (the piano). Do you often see the Bielawskis,³⁷ our Diva,³⁸ the captain?³⁹ I look forward to seeing all of them. Be so kind as to give my special regards to each.

Hugs.

Litwos

SOURCE:

Letter from Henryk Sienkiewicz to Julian Horain. Letter number 11, in: Henryk Sienkiewicz. Listy. Tom 1, Cześć 2 [Vol. 1, Part 2], Warszawa [Warsaw] 1977; referenced online: <http://www.henryk-sienkiewicz.eu/index.php?id=listy&r=1877&akcja=pokaz>

NOTE: The editors and translator have revised or augmented some of Maria Bokszczanin's original footnotes.

Translated from the Polish by **Bob Lamming**, with **Elżbieta Kieszczyńska** (Clifton, New Jersey) and edited by **Bob Lamming** and **Maureen Mroczek Morris** (San Francisco) with **Roman Włodek** (Kraków) and **Lynn Ludlow** (San Francisco). English summary translation kindly proffered by **Anna Samborska** (San Francisco). Translation commissioned by Maureen Mroczek Morris.

³⁶ [S]imply MUDDLE ONWARD" is another play on words. The original Polish, *prosto przeleźć* ("simply to make one's way through/up/across"), mimics a Russian noun, *прелесть*, which conveys through *просто прелесть* the sense of, "simply delightful." *Delightfulness* reflects the injunction at the beginning of this sentence, to "have some good fun . . . with the Muscovites"; hence, the tongue-in-cheek interplay of meanings between *having fun* (not a cognate) and *muddling through* is complex.

³⁷ Kazimierz (Casimir) Bielawski: Surveyor; co-founder of the Polish Society of California in San Francisco; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Bielawski.pdf>

³⁸ Helena Modrzejewska (Modjeska); see: <http://culture.pl/en/artist/helena-modrzejewska-modjeska>

³⁹ Captain Rudolf Korwin Piotrowski; see footnote "35"

1876

Family name HORAIN	Given name or names Julian
Address	
Certificate no. (or vol. and page) Vol. 14, P-292	Title and location of court US CC SF
Country of birth or allegiance Russia	When born (or age)
Date and port of arrival in U. S.	Date of naturalization Nov. 1, 1976
Names and addresses of witnesses Rudolph K. Piotrowski Wladimir Krzyzanowski	

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Immigration and Naturalization Service. Form No. 1-IP. 14-5000
National Archives

Witnesses: Rudolf Korwin Piotrowski and Włodzimierz Krzyżanowski
 Naturalization of Julian Horain

US CC SF = United States Circuit Court, San Francisco

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