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H. P. MOORE, Editor and Proprietor.

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Also agent for The Union Insurance Co., of England.

Poetry.

THE FUNNIEST VALENTINES BY THE FUNNIEST PEOPLE.

There was a young fellow named Allen Tyne
Who proposed to the lovely Miss Ballantyne;
When the lady said "Yes,"
He said "Well I guess!
Miss Ballantyne's Allen Tyne's valentine!"
—Carolyn Wells.

"I'll send her a present," said he,
"On the 14th of February!"
And—but no! it is best
To leave out the rest,
For that Valentine came C. O. D.!
—Walter Pulitzer.

A Scotchman whose name was Iddiles
Had a maiden great'y he called "Sweet;"
When she said "Oh, be mine,
Be my sweet Valentine!"
He just shinned up her long neck and kissed her.
—Ellis Parker Butler.

"Dear Lady, I cannot," he said,
"Make valentines out of my head,
So I've licked and stamped glad
On my rival, who could;
He's quick, and I sent him, though dead!"
—Burgess Johnson.

Oh, you would I fondly purloin,
That our hands and our hearts we might join;
Oh, maiden of grace,
Whose beautiful face
Smiles so tender and sweet on the coin.
—R. K. Munkittrick.

Said Colt to his collean so fine,
"Regorry, I'm your Valentine,"
But she said, "You're a liar—
"You're Dwyer McGuire,
"D'ye think, me dear sir, that I'm blin'?"
—Charles Battell Loomis.

Thurb once was a lovable Saint,
Who answered each amorous plaint;
And I thought, till to-day,
When your smile came my way,
The old fellow was dead—but he ain't!
—Gelett Burgess.

A hip-po-po-ta-mus named Amos
Was loved by a chorus girl famous;
All the other girls sighed
As they looked on, and cried,
"Please tame us a hip-popo-ta-mus."
—Tom Masson.

Select Family Reading

The Old Folks' Valentine

By Annie Hamilton Donnell.

FATHER and Mother were acting strangely. It was not that they were sober, for they certainly smiled oftener than usual, but the smiles seemed to come hard. Their eyes did not join with their determinated old lips. It was Mig that noticed it first,—it was always Mig that noticed things first.

"They're both well," she mused thoughtfully, "what is it that's troubling them, Elin?"

"Troubling them!" laughed matronly Elinor, softly; "I guess you didn't see Father playing with the baby this morning!"

"Yes, I saw him."

"And Mother combing Little Step-and-Fetch-It's hair and telling about the Tangle Family, did you hear them both laugh?"

"Yes, I heard."

"Then what are you talking about, you silly child! Did they look or sound as if anything was troubling them?"

"Yes'm, they looked and they sounded," persisted Mig. "Eyes speak as loud as dear old mouths. I saw their eyes. But I can't make up my mind what the trouble is; it's puzzling me no end."

"Perhaps they need a change, and next week is John's turn,—they'll have a fine time over there. John and Jess are lovely to them."

"No loveller than you and Loren—and I. We're good to them, Elin. It isn't that."

A soft, purry sound from the baby's crib sent Elinor away precipitately, but she hesitated an instant in the doorway to throw back cheerily over her shoulder: "Don't you go worrying, little sister, Father and Mother are all right!" But Mig worried.

The two households, separated only by a matter of blocks of well-to-do city houses, were to share between them the two old people. John, the son, and Elinor, the daughter, claimed each a six-months' share. And the "baby," Margaret, hovered between the two homes. She was twenty-eight and earning her own living independently, but to Father and Mother she was the baby still—and would always be. It was she who had stayed longest with them in the home nest, back in the hills, and whose flitting had brought about the great change in their lives. After Mig came to the city, it was decreed in family council that the old folks must come too. They must not be left alone on the old farm—the idea, when two homes were waiting for them with open doors! They could be so much more comfortable and happy,—and surely it was time for the busy old hands to rest now. Father and Mother had done their share of work. Let them take their ease now and be waited on by the children they had waited on so many patient years. Let them get away from the lonely old place, out into the world, and have a chance to watch men and things in their declining years.

It had taken time and a deal of coaxing and reasoning, and gentle insisting. But in the end the children had won. The old farm had been sold and the old folks had come to live in the city. They had been here ten months. Every luxury that love could suggest had been theirs. The sunniest rooms, the warmest in winter, coolest in summer, were delegated to Father and Mother.—Little conspiracies were entered into for their entertainment and pleasure.

"They shall forget all their humdrum old life and take a little comfort at last," the children said, enthusiastically. And the "baby" declared it with threefold zeal, Mig did every thing threefold.

It was February now, and people were beginning to talk of spring, and to make spring plans. Father and Mother, up in Elin's beautiful south chamber, had none to make. Other people made their plans for them now. But in the old days—

"This time last year, we were plannin' the spring work, Mother," Father said, wistfully. "You recollect, don't you, how you made a little drawin' of the flower beds you was going to have? An' we looked over the seed catalogues together—"

"Oh, the seed catalogues!" groaned Mother, softly. "Amos, do you suppose we'll ever send for any more, an' set poring over 'em evenin's? I don't suppose so, do you, Amos?"

Father's reply had the effect of a gentle explosion in the quiet room.

"I've sent for none," he said, shamefacedly. "Don't say anything, Mother; I couldn't help it. I reckoned mebbe the pictures would be a kind o' comfort to us. The colored ones mebbe that look so life-like. I had 'em come to the post office, so's—so's—" he hesitated, and Mother nodded hastily. She understood why he had them come to the post-office. They were two old conspirators together.

"There'll be colored roses an' sweet peas," she murmured. "Mebbe we can smell the sweet peas, Amos! We always had a double row along under the kitchen windows, don't you know? An' pansies in the little square beds further out,—I don't suppose you remember those great purple ones, do you, Amos? Two or three of 'em used to fill a saucer."

"Yes, I remember 'em," answered the old man, but rather absently. He was remembering his rows of garden peas and early corn. His face, like Mother's, was intense with yearning. He got up and paced the floor restlessly. At the window, the third beat, he gazed out at the broad avenue and rows of city houses. His faded blue eyes gazed far... and farther beyond the paved street, out into rutty country roads, winding between bare gray fields with the promise of spring in them, on to a little farm house with red-roofed barn. Mother left her knitting and came to the window and saw them over his shoulder. The quiet room grew quieter still. What broke its stillness was a sob, and neither Father or Mother knew which one sobbed it.

"Amos, 'tain't any use tryin' to hide it any longer,—we're homesick for the old place," Mother whispered. "You thought I didn't know you was, an' I thought you didn't know I was. But both of us knew all the time, Amos."

"Yes, Mother."

"I kep' seein' it in your eyes an' you kep'—"

"Seein' it in yours, Mother. We're pretty well acquainted with each other's eyes. Well, the children don't know—that's one good thing. I've laughed harder'n I ever, so's they wouldn't suspect. They're good children, Mother."

"Amos Luce," Mother's mild old face put on severity; "Amos Luce, you needn't stand there tellin' me my children are good children! If the Lord was to send a committee of angels to pick out the three best ones in the world, they'd pick out my John an' Elinor an' the baby!"

"They would certain!" echoed Father, heartily. Then again his face clouded to sadness. "But they don't know,—they don't know," he added, with a sigh. "They can't sense how it feels to have the spring comin' on away from the old place—Mother, the sap will be runnin' pretty soon!"

"Don't father!"—when Mother was strongly moved she said "Father" instead of "Amos."

"Out in the maple grove," dreamed on the old voice, wistfully, "an' you a' me won't be there, Mother. Not this year,—we've always he'n there when the sap was runnin'. You recollect the year the baby was a matter o' two or three, an' went taggin' out there, an' nothing would do but she must fill her little tin dipper! An' the way she took to the taste of it an' reached out her little hands for more—'Little teeny more, daddy!' she says—"

"An' got it!" laughed Mother, softly, the tears trailing over her wrinkled cheeks. "How you do remember things, Father!"

"Don't I!" delightedly. "She had on a little blue striped dress—"

"Pink, Father," interrupted the other old voice gently. Mother could remember, too. "An' it was checked in 'little mites o' checks. The baby always looked becomin' in pink. You used to say, 'Make pink ones,' Mother—make pink ones,' when I made her little dresses. The other children looked best in blue. I wish Elin would let me make her baby a little blue dress,—she's the image o' Elin. An' it don't seem natural for a baby to wear white dresses for every day."

The click of Mother's knitting needles were the only sounds in the room for a while. Father's newspaper did not crackle, and he turned no pages. Somewhere downstairs a little voice was singing nobly, and Elin's wholesome laugh drifted upward. It was Father broke out again first.

"An' it's going to be an early spring!" he cried. It was like a lament. An early spring, and he and Mother not there,—for to Father it did not seem to occur that the spring would come, too, in the city places. The sap would run early,—the snow patches under the fences would soon be gone,—little green shoots would come out on the elms, and the children would be going by with pussy willows in their hands. Spring would come to the old place, and the old folks would not be there to welcome it. There had been no spring like that for fifty years.

Last year they had stayed until May, and Mother had planted her sweet peas. The early potatoes had been in, and the garden peas. They were both remembering now how things had looked on that dreary day of Decision, when they had yielded to the children's importunities.

"You came in from your plowin'," Mother said suddenly, but her voice sounded mournfuller, as if she had been talking a long time. Her thoughts were continuing to spoken words and there was no need to tell what had gone before. "You had been breakin' up the corner of the old meadow lot that morning, and John and the baby had been out there reasonin', it all out with you again, an' Elin had been reasonin' it out with me. I guess we were kind of worn out that day, Father. Then you came in from your plowin' an' beckoned to me, an' I read it in your face an' you read it in mine. We knew it was comin' then. The children were so tickled, Father! The baby picked up her skirts an' danced round like little Michen—Father, oh Father, don't you wish you could see that little kitchen again! Same days I hanker so to roll up my sleeves an' make you a batch o' cream o'-tartar biscuit on the old kneadin'-board! Over by the sunny window, with you leanin' in on the sill an' laughin' because I'd got a dab o' flour over one eye! You said I always got floury makin cream-o'-tartar biscuit," Mother's laugh broke in two sortily. "They were good, Father," she sobbed softly.

"They warn't ever anything like 'em," groaned hungry Father. "An' with some o' the sap b'iled down"—it was odd how the homely farm speech came back to them when talking of the old farm,—"and some o' your sweet butter,—well, the Queen o' Sheby wouldn't ask for anything tastier! I don't suppose Elin'd let you mix up a batch here some time, Mother?" There was entreaty in the upward trend of his voice. But Mother shook her head sadly.

"Elin wouldn't refuse of course, but they wouldn't taste o' home. Besides, I couldn't make 'em without the old kneadin'-board,—they don't use kneadin'-boards here; they knead out on marble-topped tables. An' they use new fangled bakin'-powders. It would not do, Father. If you want me to make you a batch o' biscuit, you'll have to take me home first."

Little feet outside stopped at the south room door and little fists pommelled the panels. It was Step-And-Fetch-It come calling.

"It's me, Gramma! It's me, Grampa! I've come a-visitin'." And the door opened to admit a diminutive person of six, with a smiling face.

"I'm tired of being an opera—did you hear me being one? It's quite hard work when you have to do all the singing, so I've stopped, and now I'm a visitor. I hope both o' you are well and 'joying yourselves, I am, thank you. It's nice weather, isn't it?"

"Bless her little heart!" murmured Mother under her breath. How much she looked like her baby long ago! Little Step And Fetch-It looked so much like Auntie Mig—and the times she used to play "making calls!" For a minute the weight of homesickness lifted from the gentle old heart, and Mother settled down to enjoy her caller.

"Let's talk about valentines," the caller said cheerfully. "You know what valentines are?—with angels and hearts and lace on? I always get a lot, don't you?"

"I never got a valentine," smiled Mother.

The child's laughing face sobered to bewilderment, then horror. "Never got a val— "Didn't you ever, Grampa?" she demanded;

"Never," smiled Father.

It didn't seem possible, but of course Gramma and Grampa always told the truth. A lump gathered in Step-and-Fetch-It's tender little throat.

"I'll give you some o' mine," she cried, "the laciest, angel-est ones! They tuck 'em under the door, you know, and run, or else the postman brings 'em. P'raps—p'raps the postman'll bring you one of your truly own this Valentine Day! You never can tell what's a-coming. What kind of a picture would you rather have on yours? They have hearts mostly, but sometimes pictures."

Mother, thus appealed to, considered thoughtfully. When she answered, she was smiling, but there were sudden tears in her eyes. "I'd like a picture of a little farmhouse on mine," she smiled, "with a double row of sweet peas under the kitchen window, an' pansy beds further out."

"What kind of a picture would you rather, Grampa?" persisted the child. And Father smiled, too, but his voice was unsteady as he answered:

"One o' mowin' fields an' apple orchards," he said, an' mebbe an old fellow plowin' in a corner,—in a checked shirt an' a straw hat. Not a turrible old fellow, but jest old enough to plow straight!" Father laughed tremulously.

With a sudden toss of his white head, he turned upon Mother. "He ain't turrible old, Mother, that old fellow plowin' there in the corner of the old mowin' field! He can stan' up straight as any o' 'em—an' he can plow enough sight straighter! He's got a heap o' work left in him, if they'd only let him do it. They'd ought to left him there on the old soil, —it hurts old folks to transplant 'em."

"Yes, yes—oh, yes, it hurts," sobbed Mother, in sudden woe.

Light steps turned away from the door and went back down the hall on tip-toe. Auntie Mig had come upstairs for little Step-and-Fetch-It, but she went back without her. At the door she had heard Mother's "Order for a Picture," on her valentine, and Father's "Order" for his. Not a word escaped her lips—not a trouble in the soft old voices. She knew now what was the matter with Father and Mother. They were homesick. Under their brave, determined smiles were two old hearts breaking for home. It hurt old folks to be transplanted.

"Mig, what in the world? You're cryin'!" Elin exclaimed, as her sister reappeared in the sitting room. She was filled with instant mother-alarm. Something had happened to little Step-and Fetch-It.

"I'm crying because I'm so glad I found out," was Mig's enigmatic and sobbing response, accompanied by a sudden descent into the soft embrace of the couch pillows. There she sobbed luxuriously. Elin, bending over her in a state of utter bewilderment, was divided between concern for Mig and concern for the little Step and Fetch-It.

"It's Father and Mother," sobbed Mig, in muffled wise. "We've treated them awfully, Elin!"

"Margaret Luce! Sit up this minute and let me feel your pulse! You're raving crazy!"

"I have been—I'm sane enough now." Mig sat up and shook Elin feebly by the sleeve. "But I haven't been one whit crazier than you've been—and Loren and John and Jess! We've all been crazy as loons!"

"I'm going to telephone for a doctor!"

"You're going to sit down on this couch beside me and let me have it out! Then there'll be two sane ones, anyway. Elin Cleveland, what were we thinking of to transplant Father and Mother?"

"Your face is burning red and your eyes fairly snap—"

"It was cruel, Elin, cruel! And here all this time we've been trying to be lovely to them, and they've been lovely to us and smiled when they wanted to cry. What do you suppose they're doing upstairs now—this minute? I know they are because I heard them—they're sitting there talking about the 'old place' in the dearest, shakiest voices, till it would make even a lunatic cry! I know because I cried. You're crying too, this minute! I wish John and Jess and Loren were here, crying. Then when we'd all got through, we'd go to work and see what could be done to remedy the mischief we've done. It's got to be remedied, Elin. Father and Mother mustn't break their hearts longing for—for sweet peas and kitchen windows and—and a chance to plough up the old farm!"

"Oh, no, no!" sobbed Elin, too.

"If you had heard them"—

"It's bad enough to hear you! Mig, we three will go over to John's tonight. All of us together ought to see a way out."

"John's turn" for father and mother came the next week, and the old people walked slowly from one pleasant home to the other, and settled quietly down in the new rooms. They said nothing about the longer journey they yearned to take.

The absence of Gramma and Grampa on Valentine's Day was the cause, doubtless, of little Step and Fetch It's bench of promise. She forgot all about sharing her laciest, angelest valentines with the poor old people, who had never had a valentine. But it did not matter so much, since Father and Mother got one, in spite of fickle little memories.

It came, of course, on the 14th. The postman brought it as far as the front door, and John's nimble little wife, Jess, ran all the rest of the way with it. They heard her come running up the stairs and along the hall.

"A Valentine for Father and Mother!" she announced at the door, and then retreated precipitately.

It was a very long envelope, and did not suggest valentines, except for a hasty pencil sketch in one corner. Five bleeding hearts joined hands and seemed to come dancing triumphantly down the white expanse. The incongruity between the dancing and the bleeding was apparent only to the unexcited. Father and Mother did not notice it.

"Open it, Father, open it!" quavered Mother.

It was a deed of the old place, made out in their joint names. The old place was theirs again!

"Know all men by these presents" —nothing lacey, no angels. The words were stilted, long words, but what they said to Father and Mother sent their old hands together in a light clasp and tears of joy into their eyes.

Suddenly out of the pregnant silence came Father's voice: "The seed catalogues, Mother! They must be down there waitin',—we'll look 'em over this evenin'! I'll go right down to the post office—we'll pick out what we want for the spring plantin'!"

"An' the sweet peas an' pansies, Father," Mother trilled. "We'll pick out the sweet peas an' pansies!"

THE WOES THAT ARISE FROM WHISKEY.

Judge McAuley, of Kansas City, in committing a "plain drunk," gave utterance to the following: "If I had my way I would not only close every saloon in the county Sunday and week days, but I would stop the sale of intoxicating liquor in any shape or for any purpose whatever. This may be far reaching, but the sentiment is justified by the sights and experiences in this court room. Ninety-five per cent. of the cases tried here are the direct results of whiskey, the ruined men and women, the broken families, the griefs and tears all aired in this court are enough to turn one's hair gray."

Lame Back.

This ailment is usually caused by rheumatism of the muscles and may be cured by applying Chamberlain's Pain Balm two or three times a day and rubbing the parts vigorously at each application. If this does not afford relief, bind on a piece of flanned slightly dampened with Pain Balm and quick relief is almost sure to follow. For sale by all druggists.

THE BIRDS OF ST. VALENTINE.

Sure the Winter is not ended!
What the twittering in the trees?
Trees so black and sharp and naked,
Yet are bird-notes on the breeze.
See, the window panes still frosted,
No Spring yet—the blade to pierce!
Still they hear the spring sunshine
Of the old St. Valentine.

Yes, the pigeon soft is cooing,
Cooing to his little mate,
And the rooks more gently cawing,
Maggies, too, less proudly prate;
Robins, wrens and small birds calling
Singing, wooing, yet they wait;
Soon again their nests will twine
For the day of Valentine!

Heralds of the gilded time coming,
For their hearts hath hope and faith;
Love the wintry hour lightening,
And to us their message saith:
Soft, though grey the heavens are lowering
On wings of hope and faith and love,
Sphere human and divine
Come, as does St. Valentine!

ROMANCE OF A CHURCH ROOF.

A story is told of a certain couple of Syracuse, N. Y., who were on their way to Milan Cathedral, Italy, to be married. They were not rich, but they are determined to be married in the costliest house of worship in the world, which also is one of the largest.

Neither a religious feeling nor a desire to be married in a famous place caused them to decide upon it as the spot for exchanging vows, says the Chicago Tribune. It was because on the roof of the Cathedral Jones saved Miss Brown perhaps from a death which would have been one of the oddest deaths on record. For Miss Brown was lost in the forest of spires and statues that cover the three acres of roof, lost in a petrified forest of rare marble. Seperated from her friends with whom she was travelling, with darkness coming on, the girl, who had waited entranced by the beautiful sunset view grew alarmed, and, in panic ran up and down stairs and ladders of rock until, when near the foot of the great spire on which the image of the Virgin stands, she slipped and fell.

Half an hour later, when the last rays of light were causing the rare marble to glow red, the girl recovered her senses to find herself in the arms of a handsome, sun-browned young man.

The man was Jones. He, being among the last to decend from the tower of the Virgin, had heard her cries for help, and, running through the forest of sculpture and the maze of towers on the roof, had found her unconscious at the foot of a flight of stairs down which she had plunged.

Jones, half carrying, half supporting the injured girl, had managed to reach the stairs that lead down into the interior of the vast cathedral, only to discover that they were left alone and that to escape that night was out of the question.

The night fell, a perfect Italian night with the stars hanging like ripe russet apples in a field of deepest purple. Below them they could see the north, outlined in black against the night sky rose the Alps, and to the south, stretched miles and miles of plain dotted with lights of villages and hamlets and farm houses.

The noise of the city, the hum of night life, came up to them like the hum of bees. They were alone, together, surrounded by ghostly images, sprys of most delicate marble.

As fellow-countrymen in distress they became friends, and during the night, while she slept wrapped in his coat to shield her from the dew, Jones watched and, when she awakened, they talked in whispers, overawed by the beauty of their surroundings.

When early in the morning they climbed to the upper gallery of the center spire, he helped her because of her sprained ankle, they had an experience which few, if any, ever have enjoyed.

The two, hand in hand, as if they had known each other for years, descended and astounded the guide who came to open the roof doors, by their appearance. Instead of upbraiding the guide for locking them upon the roof for the night Jones pressed money into his hand silently and descended.

Jones saw her afterwards at Venice, and then in Paris. In fact he changed his route and before they parted in Paris he had received permission to call on her at her home on the North Side in Chicago.

That was three years ago. Jones, who is the manager of a big mercantile house in Syracuse, lost no time in travelling to Chicago, and after his first visit they were engaged.

The discontented man always has his harp on the willows, except when some one is willing to listen to him; then the old strings do service until he succeeds in making every one around him unhappy. It is not new hopes that many of us need, but new temperaments and dispositions.

The easiest way to fall off the Christian path is to sit down in it.

Undue consciousness of the intellect usually rises from an unrecognized sense of an aching void.

BABY'S BEST FRIEND.

Baby's Own Tablets have saved many a precious little life. There is no other medicine to equal them for stomach and bowel troubles, colds, simple fevers or teething troubles. They are good for children of all ages—from the new born babe to the well grown child. And the mother has the guarantee of a government analyst that they do not contain opiates or harmful drugs. Mrs. John C. Gildart, Prosser Brook, N. B., says: "I have proved that Baby's Own Tablets are a great help to mothers, and are baby's best friend. They act almost by magic and I will always keep them in the house." The Tablets are sold by druggists or by mail at 25 cents a box from The Dr. Williams Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.