

Story of a Valentine



"I can't stand it!" said Major Midgefield. "I can't, indeed! Breakfast irregular, dinner at no particular hour, and everything at sixes and sevens! I'm not used to it, and it upsets my digestion. Besides—there's that nephew of mine! I suppose boys must exist, but they're a prodigious nuisance. I told my sister I'd try six months with him, and I've tried 'em. Now I'll go back to old Mrs. Pry's boarding house, and my second-story front room, with the grate fire and the weather-strips in every window. My six months are up on the fourteenth of February, and on the fourteenth of February I'll go!"

The Major was a stout, short old gentleman, with a shining bald head, a bumpy forehead, light-blue eyes, which always seemed as if they would touch his spectacle glasses, and a frost-white mustache. He was an inveterate old bachelor, with all the subtle ways and habits of old bachelorhood, and had money to leave—at least so said the tongue of popular rumor—and he had also a furtive suspicion that all the ladies were in league against his single blessedness.

"I'll write to Mrs. Pry," said the Major; and accordingly he sat down and wrote, succinctly:

"My Dear Madam: I am heartily sick of this sort of life. Will you take me? If it isn't convenient don't mind saying so. I prefer the second story front room. No piano practice, no cold dinners, no neglect about my shirt buttons—you understand my idiosyncrasies, and will doubtless accede to them. Please let me hear from you at once.

"Yours very respectfully,

"Milo Midgefield."

"I think that expresses my ideas pretty fairly," said Major Midgefield, as he read the letter over, not without complacency. "Yes, yes—pretty fairly. Now, what is that woman Pry's first name? I've got it signed to some of my receipts upstairs, and I do like things to be shipshape and precise."

And, leaving his letter neatly folded on the table, in a shining, smooth



TO MISS ADELA FORRESTER, No-envelope, the Major trotted upstairs to find out whether old Mrs. Pry's name was Paulina, Patience or Parthenia, all three of which names buzzed, like familiar bees, in his brain.

"I know it's one of the three," he said to himself. "But I suppose it wouldn't do to write 'em all down and let the old woman take her choice!"

No sooner had the Major vacated the study than in rushed Master Julius Carey, only son and heir of the Rev. Joseph Carey, and the afforesaid nephew whose boyish peculiarities were so trying to the Major.

"Where is it?" bawled Master Julius, a promising youth of fourteen. "Where is my valentine? Mother wouldn't let us come in while Uncle Midgefield was here, and now I'll have to step lively to catch the post. Where is it, I say? I do hope Uncle Midgefield hasn't been sending it off to any pretty girl on the sly."

"My dear Julius," remonstrated Mrs. Carey, a pretty, faded little woman, with colorless eyes, hair in crimping-papers, and a shabby cashmere wrapper, trimmed with imitation lace.

"It's just like him," said Master Julius. "No fox so sly as an old fox. Oh, here it is! I say mother, can you lend me a postage stamp?"

And, anointing with his tongue the gummy flap of Major Midgefield's brief letter to Mrs. Pry, he addressed it with many flourishes to "Miss Adela Forrester, No. — street."

"Won't she be pleased," said Julius. "I picked out the very prettiest little valentine in the store—Cupid hiding under a wreath of roses, and 'I love you,' in golden letters, coming

out of his quiver. I chose it because it was small enough to go into an ordinary envelope, and she'll never suspect until she opens it."

"Julius," said his mother, "what a goose you are. Miss Forrester is old enough to be your mother."

"Miss Forrester is just twenty," said Julius, "and I'm nearly fifteen, and I've been dead in love with her these three years!"

He scampered off with his letter, and the goodly, untidy matron heaved a soft sigh and went back to the basket of unopened stockings which was the Nemesis of her life, and Major Midgefield came down stairs to the once more deserted study, quite unconscious of the raid which had been made upon it.

"Parthenia—that was the name," said Major Midgefield—"what could have induced me to think it was Patience or Pauline? Now where the very dickens is that letter? Surely I didn't—oh, here it is, poked away under the inkstand. That housemaid has been in here dusting, as sure as I live, and it's a mercy she hasn't thrown it into the grate. Mrs. Parthenia Pry, No. 16 Green court, Foxley street—that's it, and I'll put my initials in the corner, to insure a speedy persual, M. M., with a flourish to the tail of the last M. I suppose my sister will be very plaintive and injured about this decision of mine, but she has only herself and her noisy lot of a boy to thank for it."

And Major Midgefield himself went out to drop his letter into the nearest post-box.

St. Valentine's Day came, bright and sunny, with hard-frozen snow crustling all the streets, and a silver fringe of icicles on all the eaves and tree boughs, and old Mrs. Pry stared hard at the letter which the morning mail brought her.

"It's from Major Midgefield. I know it," said she, fumbling in her dress pocket for her spectacles. "I know them little curly-tailed M's of his'n as well as I know my catechism. I'll bet a cookey he wants to come back, and a good thing for me, too, with my best room standing empty for three weeks. Eh! What? A gilt Cupid with no clothes on to signify, and a lot of green leaves, and 'I love you!' It ain't possible, unless the Major has gone crazy!"

"A letter from Major Midgefield," said Miss Adela Forrester, who was a tall, black-browed beauty, with cherry lips and a good high spirit of her own. "And he wants to know if I will take him."

"Nonsense!" said Mamma Forrester, who was buttering a Vienna roll with the serenest calm.

"Read it for yourself, then, and see," said Miss Forrester, with a toss of her head. "He calls me 'dear madam,' the horrid old bachelor, and dictates as to his room, his dinner and his shirt buttons. By goodness," with a lifting of the jetty brows, "does he think the girls are ready to drop, like overripe plums, into his mouth?"

"Of course, you'll say no," said Mamma Forrester.

"Of course," said Adela. "Then papa must see the Major at once," said the elder lady. "Though if he were only a few years younger, the estate is—"

"I wouldn't marry that horrid old creature if he were the only man in the world!" cried Adela, with emphasis, as she remembered the young passed midshipman now pacing the deck of the Silvestra in the Caribbean sea, to whom her young affections were pledged.

So it happened that Mr. Forrester and old Mrs. Pry both met in Major Midgefield's room at the parsonage of St. Adolphine, on the afternoon of that radiant fourteenth of February.

"I am sorry, Major," said the former, "that my daughter declines to entertain your very complimentary proposal."

"What proposal?" said the Major. "I never proposed to any one in my life, and it is not likely that I shall commence now?"

"Do you deny your own handwriting?" flashed out Mr. Forrester, who was of a choleric disposition, and did not relish his word being doubted.

"I deny everything!" shouted the Major. "Stop a minute, Forrester; here is the respectable female who has just called to see me on business. I'll just see what she wants before we go on with this discussion. Now, then, Mrs. Pry."

But Mrs. Pry was making amazonian efforts to get a letter out of her pocket, and turned very red in the face

at thus being directly addressed.

"I'm sixty-odd, Major, if you please," said Mrs. Pry, "and a widow woman, with a small pension, as never thought of marrying again. And I never supposed as you could demean your dignity by making jokes at my expense!"

"Jokes, woman!" thundered the Major.

"What on earth do you mean? Is all the world gone mad?"

"I call valentines jokes!" said Mrs. Pry. "And, please, sir, here it is, with your own initials on the outside! Cupids and loves and wings, and not a sch of anything else, sir, saving your presence!" with a contemptuous sniff.

"I never saw the thing before in all my life," said Major Midgefield, eyeing it through his spectacle glasses as one might survey some noxious insect.

"Ain't this in your writing?" demanded Mrs. Pry, holding up the envelope.

"Of course it is," answered the Major.

"And is not this your writing?" sternly joined in Mr. Forrester, holding up the letter.

"Certainly it is," admitted the Major. "And that letter and that envelope belong together, comprising a note written by me to Mrs. Pry to engage board at her house once more. If you will observe Mr. Forrester, you will perceive that the letter and the envelope in your possession are in different handwriting."

"Then," gasped the bewildered Mr. Forrester, "how on earth came this letter directed to my daughter?"

"All I know," said the Major, stoutly, "is that I never sent it."

"And to the day of their death no body solved the mystery. The only person who could have done so was Master Julius Carey, who had listened at the door during the whole colloquy, and who took particularly good care that no one should suspect his share in the confusion of letters and envelopes!"

But Mrs. Pry got back her boarder.



"JOKES, WOMAN!" THUNDERED THE MAJOR.

and, to the end of time, Miss Adela Forrester always insisted that she had received an offer of marriage from Major Midgefield.

St. Valentine's Death.

February 14, known to all Americans as St. Valentine's day, is the anniversary of the death of the saint and martyr. It is not clear why the peculiar character of the day observances in the nineteenth century had origin as a mark of respect to him. It is more likely that some such observance obtained long before the advent of the saint and became known by his name merely from the fact that he was put to death on that day. He was first cruelly beaten with clubs by order of Claudius, emperor of Rome, and was then beheaded. His real name was Valentinus, and it was several hundred years after his death that the College of Cardinals at Rome canonized him as saint. There are also two other saints of the same name, Valentinus of Interamna, bishop and martyr; and Valentinus, bishop of Passau. The latter flourished in the fifth century.

Her Valentine.

By John Leighton Best.
Still winter stars are shining,
Still winter sunsets glow,
And still the brooks repining
In crystal confines flow.
But somewhere in the starlight
The vernal beams are met,
And somewhere in the far light
The hope of spring is set.

From winter gloom the glory
Of springtime shall unfold,
The marvelous, sweet story,
The ever new and old;
What time the heart of maid,
What time the heart of lover,
What time the heart of maid,
Turn lightly to each other,
And happy vows are paid.

And must I still be only
The beggar at your gate,
To lie forgotten, lonely,
And vainly for you wait?
Will you not send some token
This longing heart to cheer,
Now winter's spell is broken,
Now springtime's grace is near?

So hear me now confessing
The love you long have known,
That with each day's repressing
Hath only stronger grown,
And speed the message duly,
That one sweet word of thine,
That you will now be truly,
My own dear Valentine.

There are but two religions,—Christianity and paganism, the worship of God and idolatry. A third between these is not possible. Where idolatry ends, there Christianity begins; and where idolatry begins, there Christianity ends.—Jacobi.

LOVE IS BEST

By Florence Hodgkinson

CHAPTER IX.

It was a very happy evening that Beryl spent at Uplands. Mrs. Dynevor's heart went out to the pretty, graceful girl, who seemed so strange alone in the world; Kitty had taken a fancy to her; and when Harold came in for tea the three were as much at home as though they had known each other for months.

"You must let me take you home," Harold said to the little governess, when she came downstairs about eight with her hat on.

"Oh, I could not trouble you, Mr. Dynevor, it is so far! And I am not at all afraid."

"Harold loves an evening tramp, and it is much too far for you to go alone," said Kitty. "Mind you come again soon. Mother wants you to, don't you mother?"

"Yes," put in Mrs. Dynevor. "I shall be very pleased to see Miss Lendon whenever she has time to come."

When they were walking down the broad, shady lane which led from Uplands to Easthill village Harold asked simply, "Do you know you have made a conquest of my mother, Miss Lendon? I never saw her so much taken with a stranger."

"She was very, very kind to me. Oh, Mr. Dynevor, when I saw her and Kitty together I could not help wishing I had a mother."

The voice was so sad it touched his heart.

"I wish you would confide your troubles to my mother, Miss Lendon," he said gently, "she would know how to comfort you. The advertisement offering the reward has not been repeated for some weeks now, and I had hoped you would feel happier."

To his surprise and alarm, he heard her sob. They were quite alone in a little frequented lane. He longed to comfort her, only he could think of no words.

"Miss Lendon," he said, very gently, "like you, I have known troubles—one presses on me now whose weight seems to crush me to the earth. Human friends can do very little to soothe an aching heart; but there is One above who knows all His children's griefs, and sorrows for them. He will comfort you better than any earthly friend."

"I know," she said, simply yet reverently. "Mr. Dynevor, I had better tell you the truth. I can trust you not to betray me to my father, and I cannot bear to come to Uplands and take kindness from you all when, if you knew my story, you would shrink from me in loathing."

An awful fear crossed Harold's heart. What could she mean? Only a little while ago, at the fête, she had assured him she was not fleeing from justice, and he had retorted no one could take her for a criminal. What did her present words mean?

"Whatever you tell me I will keep as a sacred trust," he answered. "But, indeed, Miss Lendon, you are mistaken; nothing you can say will make me shrink from you."

"But I am the child of the two who wronged you cruelly. I am your enemy's daughter—Beryl Lendon."

He started involuntarily. Really the movement was simply surprise, but she thought it was due to aversion.

"I never meant to deceive you or any one," she went on, her voice growing a little firmer as she proceeded. "I ran away from home because my father wrote that he had married again, and his new wife was to have full authority over me. Mr. Dynevor, that woman had lived in the house for nine months, openly as my maid, really as my tyrant. Last January, while my father was away, she—she struck me. I appealed to the housekeeper, who dismissed her. Do you think I could have stayed to see that woman in my mother's place?"

"No one could have wished it," he answered quickly—"no one who loved you."

"I took Mrs. Tanner's situation because it was the only one I could get and the time was all too short. I had only three weeks from getting my father's letter to the day he brought his wife home."

"When I came to Easthill I had never heard of Dynevor Manor. I had not the least idea my father possessed property here, or I should have been afraid to come."

"Mrs. Tanner told me the first night I came to her that the Wiltons, who were her chief supporters here, objected to my name. She said they urged it was a slight to their employer, Mr. Lendon, that a poor little governess should be called by his name. When I found that this Mr. Lendon lived in Elchester square, and his name was Eustace, I knew it was my father, and I was only too thankful to agree to the proposal that I should change one letter of my name, and be known here as Miss Lendon."

"When later I heard my father's story from Mrs. Grey, and the cruel wrong he had wrought you and yours, I felt overwhelmed with shame. Though your sister had urged me to go and see her, I felt I dared not accept her invitation. I should never have come to the Uplands only she fetched me, and all through my visit I felt as though I were deceiving you all, that if you knew the truth your doors would be closed against me."

Harold took the girl's hand in his and held it close under cover of the darkness.

"Do you know what first made my

mother take an interest in you? Your likeness to her sister-in-law, Nina Lendon. You must remember she and your mother were close friends for over three years. My father on his death bed told me he believed firmly that my Aunt Nina had never meant to wrong us. He thought either the will had been extorted from her by undue influence, or—"

"Or what?" asked Beryl eagerly.

"Oh that she was too ill to understand its real purport. I suppose you do not remember her? No, you could not; she died before you were four years old."

"I do remember her," said Beryl, in a very low voice. "You see, she was the only creature who loved me, so I was not likely to forget. She was very ill, and very unhappy; but, Mr. Dynevor, I can't believe she did what people think. She was too gentle."

"It was not a happy marriage," said Harold Dynevor, in a low tone; "from the little we know we always gathered that. My father wondered sometimes if she lost heart after your sister's death."

"I don't know," Beryl felt bewildered. "You see, I only remember her after."

"Do you mean you were away when Lillian died?"

"I think I must have been," she said, in a puzzled tone. "I can remember a little cottage, and a Frenchwoman who took care of me. One day a letter came, and she dressed me up in my best, and took me a long railway journey, and then I saw my mother. She was in black, and she cried when she kissed me, and said she would never part with me again while she lived. My bonne went home, and after that I had an English nurse."

"And you are Beryl Lendon?"

"Yes. Will you tell your mother and Kitty? I am sure they won't betray me."

"I am sure of that, too; but I do not mean to tell them. I do not see that what you have confided to me need go any further. If you are the child of our enemy, at least he has treated you no better than he has treated us. I am positive if my mother knew the truth she would only feel more kindly towards you. Come to us when you can; you will always be welcome."

They were at Woodlands, and, with a close pressure of the hand, he released her.

He found his mother alone when he got home again. She had been searching among old treasures, and had unearthed an album containing photos of bygone days. It was open at the picture of Mrs. Frank Dynevor as she was when she came home a bride.

"I wanted to show it to you, Harold," said his mother, "just to prove the resemblance is not all my fancy."

He looked at it thoughtfully.

"It is a very strong likeness," he said gravely; "but I hope it won't prejudice you and Kitty against that poor little girl. I think if ever a human creature stood in sore need of friends it is Mrs. Tanner's governess."

CHAPTER X.

Five thousand pounds. The sum seemed to burn itself into Harold Dynevor's brain as the summer ripened. He did not actually know that Mr. Lendon meant to foreclose, but he could not doubt Mr. Proctor's warning. He felt that if five thousand pounds were not forthcoming before the 25th of December his mother must leave her lifelong home, and he himself go forth into the world a ruined man.

He had more than one long conference with the lawyer about raising the money. Mr. Proctor thought a private lender would be the only source whence he could obtain it. He said that at a forced sale the Uplands would fetch very little in excess of the actual sum needed; but he thought any one who knew the property might be inclined to offer six thousand for it, on the understanding it was to be redeemed. The one thousand could be paid back at once, the other five remain at interest.

"Only so very few people have capital to dispose of," he concluded, "and those few seem to fight clear of land. I am making inquiries among all likely investors. Don't you think General Craven would consider the speculation?"

"He can't. His daughter is to be married in the autumn, and he'll want all the ready money he can find."

The general, indeed, when sounded on the subject, took what seemed to Mr. Proctor a very hard view.

"You know, Proctor," the old soldier declared, "I've no liking for Eustace Lendon, and I'd not mind thwarting him; but I think for any one to enable the Dynevors to remain at Uplands would be to do them a cruel kindness. It is openly reported Lendon is coming into residence when we leave. It will be far and away better for Mrs. Dynevor and her children not to live, so to say, at his gates. I think it is a blessing in disguise that they will have to go."

"And I don't!" said the lawyer stoutly. "Think of the years the place has been in Mrs. Dynevor's family! Think how hard her son has worked to keep it up! If he leaves Uplands, Harold goes out into the world penniless."

"He'd be sure to get a good berth as land-agent to a nobleman."

"Such posts are not so easily picked up. I think you take a very unsym-

pathetic view of the matter, General."

"Bother it all," said the old soldier irritably, "I suppose I had better tell you the truth! I like the Dynevors, they're the pleasantest neighbors I ever had, I think Harold's a son to be proud of; but, Proctor, I've got only one boy, and I haven't much money to leave him. Allick will have to make his way with very little except his pay. Can't you see I don't want him to marry Kitty Dynevor, a nice girl and a good one, but without a penny to her fortune?"

Beryl saw a good deal of the Dynevors in August. Woodlands broke up for the holidays, Mrs. Tanner and the twins went to spend a fortnight near their old home, and Kitty came over to Easthill-on-Sea, with her mother's orders to bring back Beryl for the time of their absence.

"You are to be sure to come unless you have a better engagement."

"I have no engagement, and I couldn't have a better one; only shall I not be in your way?"

"We want you, and we mean to have you!" retorted Kitty. "I told Harold about it, and he said it was a famous idea. I think you fascinated him that night when he saw you looking so forlorn at the railway station, for you are the first visitor we have had to stay in the house for years."

Mrs. Dynevor's welcome was almost motherly in its goodness, but it was Harold's greeting which went straight to Beryl's heart. She happened to be alone in the oak parlor when he came in, and as he took her hand he said gravely:

"Remember, no one here knows your secret—no one ever will know it from me; but if they learn it from another source they will be content, as I do, to remember you are Aunt Nina's child, and forget you are Mr. Lendon's daughter."

Beryl had been at Uplands just three days when Easthill was thrown into a commotion. Mr. Lendon, the great man of the neighborhood, had arrived and was putting up at his agent's house while he transacted some business connected with his property.

"Will he have the effrontery to call here?" Mrs. Dynevor asked her son.

"I should say not. If he does, send Kitty in to interview him. She is capable of freezing him if she tries."

"I wonder if he has brought his wife and daughter?" hazarded Mrs. Dynevor.

"No," retorted Kitty, who always knew everything. "His wife is not well, and his daughter is at school. Perhaps she prefers it to her step-mother's society, but she is the same age as I am, and I should certainly resent being kept at letters."

"Poor little thing!" said Mrs. Dynevor gently. "I wonder if she is like her mother? What is her name? Did we ever hear her?"

"It was never mentioned in Aunt Nina's letters," returned Harold. "She always spoke of the children as 'Pet' and 'Baby,' not that she wrote often, poor thing!"

Beryl was in the room, and naturally heard these remarks. She almost forgot herself, and contradicted his last words, for she knew that Lillian had never been called "Pet." It was her own name in babyhood, and had not been given up till she went to the Burgesses, when, by her father's wish, she was always called Beryl.

No, Lillian could not have been "Pet." Try as she would, the girl could not recall any fond abbreviation of her sister's name. When she was brought home after Lillian's death no one ever spoke of the dead child except her mother, and she always said "your little sister." Mr. Lendon took no notice of Beryl at all. Her mother's maid had returned to England, as she had lately heard, to take service with the family at Uplands. Lillian's nurse had also left the Lindons, but of her movements Beryl knew nothing.

(To be continued.)

NEW BREAD AT PARIS.

From Fresh Flour and Greatly Increases Nutrition.

Among all the exhibits of bread and bread-making at the Paris exhibition the one which interested me most was a system of milling and baking combined. It is well known that all food substances when ground to a fine powder have a tendency to become oxidized. As is the case with coffee, which is the best when freshly roasted and freshly ground, so it is with cereal flour, which is never so aromatic or so nutritious as at the moment when it is first made. The Schweitzer system, in regard to the milling operations, is a return to the old system of millstones, with the exception that corrugated steel grinders take the place of the millstones of the olden days, says the Paris Messenger. These grinders are so accurately adjusted as to admit of the making of the finest flour, while avoiding actual contact of the two grinding surfaces. The simplicity of the apparatus, the cheapness and the ease with which it can be installed commend this system particularly for domestic use and for the supply of villages and small communities. Nevertheless, it is capable of being operated on an extensive scale, as is demonstrated by the large establishment at La Villette, Paris, where more than 100,000 pounds of bread are made per day from flour not more than 24 hours old. Chemical analysis shows that the flour made according to the Schweitzer system has more than twice as much phosphate material as that made by the ordinary roller process. The importance of this fact in respect to nutrition should not be lost sight of, and we must admit that nutrition, not whiteness of color, is the principal object of bread-making.