



HE daintiest bit of a girl is she, With dusky violet eyes, That, smiling, she raises unto me,

As I toss, and dandle her, on my knee, Or, with head on my breast, she lies.

She's a broad, white brow, unwrinkled, set In an aureole of gold; And her lips, like a red, red rose, dew wet, Or a bunch of fragrant mignonette, Do enchanted sweetness hold.

Of her teeth, I've never a word to say, For in sooth, she has none yet, But there will be pearls "of the purest ray" By her fairy adomment brought some day From the sea, in a silver net.

No circlet of diamonds weareth she, She's a princess, ne'ertheless; No gown of silken embroidery Hides her tiny figures' symmetry, But a simple, snowy dress

Fallth softly down to her woe, wee feet, And down to the dimpled hand That, with infantine grace, she lifts to meet The lips she knoweth so ready to greet It with kisses, as tenderly sweet As were ever in demand.

O, baby Louise, you have won me quite, With your eyes, that like twin stars shine; By your face, with winsomeness all alight From its perfect chin, to its brow snow white, So I choose you "My Valentine."

—Sarah L. Morris, in Inter Ocean.



HERE was an unusual fluster in the little town of Patten.

Joseph Jennings was coming home again. Years ago, when the old red schoolhouse was filled with the boys and girls of the town, February 14th was as great a holiday as could be made of it with school in session, and somebody had a party, or some one got up a ride, or there was a grand popcorn frolic. In fact, there was always something going on that day, if all other days in the year should be dry as dust, though that could never be the case with forty girls and boys to make them lively. The excuse for this extra fun on the 14th was that it was Jo Jennings' birthday, and they must celebrate it; and when any of the parents tried to remonstrate the ready argument was that they didn't celebrate other birthdays, because nobody was ever born on a day they could celebrate, and with such a good reason what could be said further? All the girls sent him valentines, and all the boys wished they could change places for just that one day. As he grew older the custom remained the same, for he was, and had always been, a great favorite in the town. The mail bag which came in on the stage that night fairly bulged with the number of missives directed to J. J. Jennings. To be sure some of the girls had married and left the town, but all who remained kept up the custom.

Everybody called him Jo, and as he came back year after year seemingly unchanged in his love for the old home, and just as cordial with all the old friends, they decided that travel could never make him other than the kind-hearted friend he had ever been.

Always impartial in his treatment of the young ladies of the place, he took one to the picnic, another out driving behind the fat, black pony, still another on the harbor excursion, and a different one up the mountain after blueberries.

Everybody called his mother Aunt Judith, because she was such a lovely old lady they simply couldn't help it. A face sweet and beautiful in its youth only grew more sweet as the years made wrinkles and drew lines here and there. The eyes, always sympathetic, only filled with a deeper light of love as time fled. The hair, in earlier years a rich crown for the erect figure, only laid itself in more caressing waves about the face. Truly she had grown old gracefully. As an invalid, she was cared for by her eldest daughter, Martha, who had already sent away a lover because she would not leave her home just now.

She did wish Jo would marry and bring his wife home to live. That would make all clear. Martha could be happy, and she knew for herself she could love anyone of the village girls whom he might choose for a wife. Why didn't he care for some one? The year before something had happened! They had all sent valentines according to the usual custom. There were eighteen of them. The next morning, down at the Corners, Jo was talking to Jimmie Hazen, and Jimmie asked, carelessly: "How many this time, Jo?"

"Eighteen splendid ones; but I don't s'pose one of the senders can make a biscuit to save her life."

Of course Jimmie mentioned it as a good joke to his sister Ruth, who had black eyes and a lively temper of her own, and she told the other girls, considering it anything but a joke, and that was what caused all the flutter. Now Ruth couldn't make biscuits, and she had always thought Jo just a little better than ordinary mortals, and to have him come down to biscuits, and then to throw out such a remark as that to her brother! He probably meant to have Jimmie tell her.

Ruth told the girls at the next social, and, with her eyes flashing, declared she wished she could bake, but she couldn't, and she hated dough; but if she could make biscuits she'd make a

bushel and another him. So now! She cried at home, and thought it very unkind of Jo, and declared she wouldn't send another valentine as long as she lived. But when the summer came and the girls, not forgetting the fling at their lack of ability, took to refusing him when invited to picnics or other places of amusements, Ruth was sorry, and yet glad, for she couldn't stop liking him all at once, even if she tried her best. So when the anniversary came again she decided she would just send as always and not mind what had probably thoughtlessly been said.

No one knew why the daughters of the several households were so anxious to learn to make bread, but it was a fact that every girl in town suddenly developed a desire to relieve her mother of the biscuit making. And yet, not every one; for little Ruth Hazen declared she couldn't and wouldn't, and stuck to the china painting which she sent regularly to Rockland, and which brought her more money than carloads of biscuits would have done.

Valentine's day brought only one valentine for Jo, and he opened it wondering if his friends had forgotten that it was his birthday, or whether they thought it time to drop the old custom. He wondered who had remembered him. The roses looked like some he had every year, half blown and always pink. Ruth Hazen always wanted a bunch of the blush roses by the door, and he remembered so well how she buried her face in the last ones he had carried to her—yes, it must have been Ruth. Puzzled and a little troubled at the dearth of valentines, he knew not what to make of it. Then Grace Eames had refused to ride with him last summer, giving a good reason, of course, but one that he knew could have been laid aside.

After supper a rattling wagon drove to the door, and its driver, after knocking, left on the step a bundle directed to "J. J. Jennings."

"There, that's the Conant's wagon, I know; and this is Jennie's valentine."

The bundle contained a dozen of the lightest biscuit ever seen, and this rhyme:

A valentine I dared not make, But biscuits by the dozen bake.

Another knock, and another parcel was deposited; another dozen biscuits so like the first that they might have been made by the same hands, and this rhyme:

You told the saint I didn't know how To make a good biscuit; Just look at this, now.

Sixteen dozen biscuits in sixteen different bundles were spread on the table

good deal. Yes, she would go, and as she pinned on the jaunty black hat with its red wing, and tucked her hands in a wee muff, she thought to herself there might be some chance to explain why she hadn't done as well as the rest of the girls.

There had been little snow this year, and the ground was hard and smooth. Only a few drifts by the roadside and in the fields, and these were fast going in the bright sunlight. The black horse was in high spirits, the air was clear. Jo's headache drifted away. Ruth was so pretty to look at, and his mother liked her so well—

"You haven't heard a word I said!" "Well, when I get old and feeble, I want to have a few of my senses left, and so while I had such good use for my eyes I thought I would let my ears rest."

Ruth laughed, but she would not look at him again, for she had seen the love in his eyes when she did look, and she decided that the view toward the hills was better for her than the one so near at hand.

"Did you know I had but one valentine this year?" with a peculiar emphasis on the "one."

"Didn't you have more last year?" "Yes, year before last I had twenty, and last year eighteen, and now this year I am narrowed down to one."

"Why, didn't the girls—"

"Yes, seventeen of them did. Sixteen thought I had got beyond the age of romance and now ought to live on the solids of life, but the seventeenth still thought I might cling to a little of the romance. I am glad there is one who still holds to the old custom. It isn't nice to think one is dropped out of the old life."

"Oh! I am sure the girls didn't mean—"

she stopped, for though she might explain the meaning of the biscuit, could she explain the one valentine?

"Cousin Albert told me I shouldn't always have so many valentines, and he was right. But it is only the end of a lesson that I have been a long time learning. Martha says a man can have but one valentine. Now that I have really come down to one, I find that I have never had but one. That I have looked for yours first, and last night when I thought what it would mean if you stop sending each year I could hardly wait to see you and ask if you would come yourself as my valentine. Ruth, I love you dearly; I think I always have."

Ruth still kept her eyes on the far-away hills. But her heart was as full of joy as her eyes were full of tears. Now she could say what she had been trying to ever since they started. "I

pony to walk leisurely into the open door of the barn, he led Ruth into the sunny sitting-room where his mother sat in her cushioned easy-chair, and said: "I have brought home a valentine, mother. One I am going to keep," and while she drew the blushing face down to hers with her thin, white hands and kissed it, Jo went out hurriedly to look after the pony and whisper in her ear that he was so happy. Meeting Martha on the way he stopped to tell her that Ruth would stay to dinner, but his face must have been a very telltale one, for he might just as well have said that she was to stay forever, and Martha shook hands with a hearty "I'm so glad, Jo."—Mrs. N. A. M. Roe, in Good Housekeeping.

#### ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.

Something About Its Origin and the Ceremonies Connected With It.

Among the many names of saints who have been canonized by the church in past ages, two stand out prominently as having received the wider canonization of the human heart: St. Nicholas, the patron of childhood, and St. Valentine, the patron of lovers. Yet in the case of the latter it is difficult, if not impossible, to trace any connection between the good bishop of the third century and the rites that have been so widely celebrated in his name. St. Valentine was an Italian priest who suffered martyrdom at Rome in 270, or at Terni in 306. Historians differ as to the date. Legend amplifies, by dwelling on the virtues of his life and the manner of his death, and tells how he was brought before Emperor Claudius II. who asked why he did not cultivate his friendship by honoring his gods. As Valentine pleaded the cause of the one true God earnestly, Calphurnius, the priest, cried out that he was seducing the emperor, whereupon he was sent to Asterius to be judged. To him Valentine spoke of Christ, the Light of the World, and Asterius said: "If he be the light of the world he will restore the light to my daughter, who has been blind for two years." The maiden was brought, and after Valentine prayed and laid hands on her she received her sight. Then Asterius asked that he and his household might be baptized, whereat the emperor, being enraged, caused all to be imprisoned and Valentine to be beaten with clubs. He was beheaded a year later at Rome on February 14, 270.

History having little to tell concerning the man, makes amends by dwelling at length on the ceremonies observed on his day. They trace the origin of these to the Roman Lupercalia, celebrated in February, at which one practice was to put the names of women in a box to be drawn by the men, each being bound to serve and honor the woman whose name he had drawn.

The church tried to turn the existing custom to religious ends by substituting the name of saints, to whom a year's devotion would be paid. Possibly the change may have been instituted on the day made sacred by the martyrdom of the Roman saint, hence his connection with these observances.

But changes came, and dead saints were neglected, for living sinners perhaps, and the old Roman custom somehow was transplanted to merrie England, where lads and lasses met on the day of the Italian priest's martyrdom to choose their valentine by lot or otherwise. An old custom was to throw open the window early in the morning, and the first person seen would be your valentine for the year. The eager swain would insure the right man being in the right place on that morning.

But it is historically and physiologically true that the man clung more to the maid he had chosen than to her who had chosen him, if the persons were not identical. To meet this difficulty a gift canceled the obligation of personal service.

A modern legend tells that in this nineteenth century the good St. Valentine, with Peter's leave, revisited the earth, thinking to find youth and life and love the same as in days of yore. But he found the girls too busy with music and science and philanthropy to receive him, and he came to the conclusion that they were "nothing if not pedantic," and "anything but romantic." Yet the spirit of St. Valentine will linger, for love is never out of date, and his fidelity marks him as the fitting patron and pattern of lovers for all time.—Florence Wilson, in Ladies' Home Journal.

#### Pronunciation.

Good old Deacon Thayer, who was school trustee in the town of Mendon, Mass., once said, when addressing the village school: "A correct pronunciation is of the utmost importance in this world and the world to come. But how many people have it? We heard three words mispronounced the other day by persons far more than ordinary culture, and the errors are all common ones. Before 'desuetude' was dragged from its own desuetude by the president, few persons pronounced it correctly. Very many persons habitually rhyme 'squalor' with holler, and hardly anybody pronounces 'paresis' correctly."—Boston Gazette.

#### He Wanted to Find Out.

A little boy whose experience with elevators had been a very limited one was brought to the city a few days ago by his mamma, and in the course of two or three hours' shopping the little fellow was taken up and down in different stores a good many times.

Finally the two went to an office building, took chairs in a rather small room and waited.

"Where are we now, mamma?" asked the boy.

"In Uncle Rob's office."

He glanced around the rather contracted quarters, and then asked:

"When does it go up?"—Pittsburgh Chronicle.

#### Use.

He—I wish you would let me be your valentine.

She—I wish you were my valentine.

He—Darling!

She—Because I could then send you off to some one.—Truth.



"I HAVE BROUGHT HOME A VALENTINE."

before nine o'clock, each bundle containing a scrap appropriate to the day and the unusual gift.

Jo lay awake nearly all night trying to think what he had brought this avalanche of bread upon him, and finally concluded it must have been that little speech of his about the girls not knowing how to make biscuits. But his mind kept returning to Ruth's valentine, and by and by he decided that a man didn't need but one valentine, especially if he had plenty of bread. So, toward morning, he dropped asleep to dream of being shut up in a tower and not allowed anything but biscuits to eat or sleep on, and the only thing he could see for miles were fields of biscuits in all shades of brown, which he was told he must eat as fast as they ripened. Then he saw Ruth, with her hair flying wildly about her face, and, when he looked closely, he found that what he thought hair was only hundreds of valentines, and when he tried to take them off her head she suddenly turned into a plump biscuit, and the astonishment awoke him, to find that the sun shone, and also that his head ached.

"I wish you'd go over to the mills this morning and see about that grain," said Martha, when he came down complaining of such a dismal headache. "The air'll do you good, and you can take Ruth along. You go right by there."

Ruth's eyes were red when she came to the door, for she had secretly shed tears that she had not tried to learn bread-making, so as to have had her dozen with the rest which she knew must be reposing on the pantry shelves in the Jennings house. She had told herself a hundred times she didn't care, but it didn't alter the feeling in the least, and she knew every time she repeated it that deep in her heart she did care a

have felt so badly that I couldn't send when I found you didn't like valentines."

"But I do."

"Well, you said you didn't s'pose one of the girls could make biscuits, and we declared we'd like to smother you in them."

"That explains it. I couldn't think what I had done to bring down a flood of that kind. Well, I was overwhelmed if not smothered."

"But I can't make biscuits and—"

"If you could see the stacks at home, sixteen dozen of them, you wouldn't wonder that I say with emphasis, I'm glad you can't!"

Ruth turned with laughing eyes: "Then I needn't apologize?"

"No, indeed. I like valentines better than biscuits, but I guess it needed just that to show me that I did."

"Sixteen dozen! What are you going to do with them all?"

"Take you home with me to help eat them. You haven't answered my question yet."

"I'm too young," but a bright blush was on the face turned again to the hills.

Jo laughed, liking her shy ways, yet sure that he had seen favor in her eyes. He wished he could surprise her into turning this way again. "Yes, I think I am too young. Why, I'm only thirty; but we can both be growing older as fast as we can, and by next June we shall be old enough."

He insisted that her aid was necessary in consuming these biscuits, so they stopped to tell Mrs. Hazen. What she could have seen in his face I cannot tell, but she went into the house with the remark that it "wouldn't be the last meal Ruth would eat in the Jennings house."

He lifted her from the carriage with a mute caress, and, leaving the black

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