

ON THE TRAIL OF A VALENTINE

By LESTER GRAY

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Peace and harmony had descended upon the Briarton district school. Not a single braud was surreptitiously tweaked, nor did the usual feminine titter greet each masculine failure at the board. The reason was not far to seek. It was the work of the little blind god—aided by natural vanity and the desire of excelling. It was St. Valentine's day.

Many an anxious eye was turned toward the canvas mail bag hanging before the teacher's desk. As yet it guarded its secrets jealously, but at the close of the afternoon session it would be opened and its contents distributed. The heads bent so studiously over books were filled with fancies never garnered from their dull pages.

At recess the girls walked in twos and threes, with mysterious whisperings and shy glances. The boys gathered in an awkward group in the vain effort to evince the usual interest in skating and the respective merits of each bobbed. Carson's head towered above them all. The largest and oldest boy in school, he felt that it behooved him to put aside childish things and take up the dignity of manhood. In this spirit he had declared that valentines were "plumb foolishness" and that he, for one, should not send any.

But the boys greeted his remarks with derision. It was all very well for him to talk, but every one in school would send valentines, and every one would get them except perhaps Mely Anderson.

Jack glanced over at the window. Yes; there was the forlorn little figure looking out wistfully. Mely never came out with the others, for she was practically friendless. It was not because she was homely, though the boys made many a sly gibe at her red hair and pale cheeks. But she was a stranger, who in the first shock of orphanhood had come to live with her grandmother. In her grief and shyness she had withdrawn from the first advances, and Briarton, unused to being snubbed, had thenceforth left her strictly alone.

As the bell rang and they fled back into the classroom Jack again glanced at Mely. She was looking at the mail bag, and there was unusual color in her cheek. An unpleasant thought seized him. Everybody thought that they would get a valentine. Did Mely think so?

Jack was tender hearted. Many a battle had he fought to release some tortured kitten or unhappy bird. He was afraid to see the misery in Mely's face when she alone was unremembered. By the time the bell had rung for noon his mind was made up.

It was on the stroke of 3 when the teacher stood up and drew the first valentine from the bag. "Carol Roberts, Helen Wilkinson, Tom Brown," rapidly she read the names, and the recipients, blushing or sheepish, came up to claim their own. Jack Carson had quite a pile, but he still looked anxiously at the bag.

At length teacher held in her hand a box of generous size. "Miss Amelia Anderson," she read slowly.

Mely rose mechanically and walked up to the desk. When she reached her seat again the fingers which opened the precious package trembled violently. The lifted lid disclosed the prize valentine, which had reposed in admired state in the drug store window for the last week. There was a general murmur of surprise.

Mely glanced about wildly. Her blue eyes, shining with joyful tears, encountered a pair of brown ones which sought to evade them. Jack blushed up to his ears. There were unspoken question and answer before Mely sank back in her seat with a little sigh of satisfaction. She knew, but somehow Jack did not mind her knowing.

Yet he had a boy's distaste of "scenes" and so lingered behind the others with the ostensible purpose of helping teacher. But when he came out into the half light of the entry a little figure was waiting for him. Gratitude had overcome Mely's shyness. She stepped forward resolutely. It was Jack who faltered and backed away from the outstretched hands.

"I want to thank you," she said breathlessly, "though the words don't half tell what I feel. I know why you did it. You are a kind, good boy, and I will never forget it."

Jack gazed down into her shining eyes. Why had he never before noticed how blue they were? "I did it because I wanted to, Mely," he said gently. "I was glad to do it." An unusual emotion held him spellbound till teacher's steps on the stair filled him with the horror of discovery and sent him hurrying out into the frosty air.

That was the last St. Valentine's day for Mely in the Briarton school. In the spring her grandmother died, and she went to live with an uncle "in the city," as folks vaguely said. And it was the last for Jack too. He left school and bent all his energies to the farm and the happiness of his widowed mother.

He stamped into the Briarton post office one afternoon in expectation of nothing more exciting than a pile of summer seed catalogues. When the postmaster handed him out a package addressed in a feminine hand he gave a low whistle of surprise. One of the bystanders ventured the surmise that it must be a valentine.

Jack laughed as he said easily: "I guess not. I'm not enough of a ladies' man to receive valentines. But tomorrow is Valentine's day, after all. I had forgotten all about it!"

Something seemed to keep him from opening the package under the eyes of the curious. It was not till he was well out of town that he cut the string and gingerly lifted out a card emblazoned with a wreath of forgetmenots. There was a pretty little verse, and he read it through wonderingly. But when he reached the end he gave a sudden ejaculation. There was a name signed, "Mely Anderson."

His heart beat strangely as he looked down at the wreath of forgetmenots. In their place he seemed to see a pair of blue eyes. Suddenly he realized the cause of his indifference to the Briarton girls. It was Mely.

Mely! He would find her, and then— But he did not even know her address. The package bore the postmark of the nearest city. That was all. But he could not fall. He must find her.

The next afternoon found Jack Carson hopelessly walking the city streets. He still scanned the faces of the passers-by, but the first enthusiasm of his search was gone. He had come in on the earliest train and had made straight for the nearest directory. In vain; it did not hold the name of Amelia Anderson. Inquiry in many quarters had also failed.

And now he was undecided. Should he go home and leave the matter in the hands of some detective agency or should he stay and keep up the search in person? He was passing one of the great department stores. One window was gay with valentines of every size and shape. He sighed as he looked. Mely might have liked one of these. In his gloom even the thought of her brought a lifting of the clouds. He would buy a valentine and send it to her, care of the general post office delivery. Perhaps it might find her.

It took but a minute to find the counter and he was fingering a dainty creation of painted satin and lace when a soft voice asked, "Can I wait on you?"

Jack started and looked down into a pair of blue eyes. It was Mely.

He stared dumfounded. It was Mely and yet not Mely. The angular figure had rounded out, and a neat well fitted dress of black revealed every curve of grace and beauty. Her red hair was a glory, piled up on the top of her small head. A laugh lurked in the corner of her red lips. Only her eyes were unchanged. They met his full of gratitude.

In their depths he found courage. "Mely," he cried rapturously, "I've been hunting for you all day till I was just about discouraged. I wanted," he hesitated, "to thank you for the valentine." The girl's cheeks flamed. "I—I was transferred to this counter the other day, and the sight of all these pretty things made me remember that day in the Briarton schoolhouse. Not that I have ever forgotten it," she added hastily, while her blush grew deeper. "But it made me want to send you a valentine just to show you I hadn't forgotten. So I sent it, and you got it," she finished breathlessly.

He had quite forgotten the probable presence of other shoppers. Fortunately it was late in the day, and the valentine counter was deserted.

"And so I got it," he repeated tenderly. "That's why I came to—to ask you to go back to Briarton with me. I love you, Mely. I've been loving you ever since that day, only I've been too stupid to know it. Can't you find it in your heart to love me a little? The home is all ready, and mother is waiting."

The girl caught her breath sharply. "It's so long since I've had a mother or a home," she whispered. And as Jack looked down into her blue eyes he knew that the battle was won.

Uncle Josh's Query.

"I occasionally get hold of a queer passenger," said a conductor on one of the suburban lines the other day, "but I had always managed to hold my own until a week ago. Then a regular Uncle Josh took my car for the first trolley ride in his life. He sat up in a corner and watched things for a few minutes and then beckoned to me and said: 'Conductor, you look like a smart young feller.'

"Yes, sir."

"Then tell me what makes this car go."

"Electricity, sir."

"That didn't satisfy him for more than three minutes. I saw a doubtful, puzzled look spread over his face, and presently he beckoned to me again and said: 'Conductor, I should say you was about as smart as they make 'em.'

"Yes, sir."

"And I guess you know it all."

"About all, sir."

"I asked you what made the car go, and you said electricity."

"That's correct."

"All right. If electricity makes the car go what in tarnation makes electricity go?"

"He had me there," smiled the conductor, "and I went out of business in half a minute, and the grin on the old man's face was something to be remembered for many days."—Detroit Free Press.

Tragedy of a Glass Eye.

From Odessa comes the story of a tragedy in which a glass eye was a most important factor. Two young people of good position were at the altar to be married. The ceremony had hardly begun when a woman's voice came from the back of the church, crying that the wedding must be stopped, as the bride was blind. The bride fainted and was revived, and the ceremony proceeded. Hardly had the priest given his blessing when the bride fell dead. It seems that the bride's sister was in love with the bridegroom. The bride had a glass eye which she in some mysterious way had concealed from her future husband. Therefore the bad sister went to church to break up the wedding and took the glass eye as a pretext for so doing. As a fitting sequel the bad sister went mad.

CULINARY CAPERS.

What salt is to an egg such is rice to gumbo. No self respecting cook would ever think of parting the two.

For sponge cakes always sift the flour twice, for the oftener the flour is sifted the lighter will be the cake.

Fresh meat must never be salted when frying, for salt tends to extract the juice of the meat and at the same time harden it.

It is recommended to soak ham in sweet milk overnight after slicing it for frying or broiling. The milk is said to make it very sweet and tender.

If the cream for whipping seems rather thin, try adding a pinch of powdered gum arabic, sifting into the cream with a little powdered sugar.

A very good upper crust for a deep pie is made by rubbing a tablespoonful of butter into three tablespoonfuls of flour—pastry flour preferred. Use enough ice water to make a paste.

A very rich fruit dessert is figs a la creme. Steam large figs for fifteen minutes, cut open at the widest end and fill with a mixture of apricot jam and chopped English walnuts. Close the figs, roll in powdered sugar and serve with whipped cream.

The Kitchen Thermometer.

Every up to date kitchen has a thermometer in it nowadays, and it is in almost constant use. There is no uncertainty, therefore, as to whether the oven is just right for the roast, nor when it is proper that the poundcake should be slipped in. The state of the oven has of course a great influence on the amateur cook's efforts. If there is anything in the world that is exasperating it is to make a cake with great care and then to have the oven so hot that the top crust burns before the inside bakes. It is bad also to have the bread bake so quickly that it does not have a chance to swell as much as it should. These catastrophes and many others happened to the amateur cook before the thermometer came into vogue as a part of the kitchen equipment. They couldn't happen now with it hanging within easy reach, all ready to be taken down and placed in the oven for a space. Many of the new cookbooks not only tell how long each dish must be cooked, but they tell exactly at what temperature they must be kept while cooking. This is of the greatest help to the woman who does without the services of a cook.

Women as Wage Earners.

According to statistics of the London county council there are in London 2,334,456 females, of whom 719,331 are wage earners. More than half a million are unmarried. The occupations followed by these female workers are said to cover the whole range of employment. These statistics are remarkable as showing how large a proportion of the work done in the world's greatest city is carried on by women. The suggestion that the entrance of women into so many lines of work is to the detriment of the other sex and of the industrial situation is plainly fallacious. The enlistment of the gentler sex in the ranks of wage earners increases the aggregate production and adds greatly to the total wealth of the world. The drawbacks are not economic, but social. That there should be more than half a million grown women in the city of London unmarried and engaged in daily toil does not argue a normal condition of society. The situation may not be so extreme in our American cities, but is rapidly becoming so.—Atlanta Journal.

Women Grooms.

An American lady is responsible for a remarkable innovation. She took over to England a number of women grooms, and now they have become a fad with wealthy English. The special duty of the feminine groom is to attend her mistress when out on horseback. It is now pointed out that she is much more desirable in that capacity than a man. She is useful in case of illness or accident, and she can wait on her mistress in many useful ways. Besides she serves for company if the latter feels inclined to talk, while the male attendant must, of course, be steadfastly ignored. Women grooms do not care for the horses. If competent they teach their employer to ride, aiding her to mount and dismount. These positions are usually held by the daughters of the riding masters.

Setting Colors.

Before a new print goes into the tub set the colors. The way of doing that depends on the colors. For green, blue, pinkish purple, mauve and aniline reds soak ten minutes in alum water, using four ounces of alum to a tub of water. For the madder tints soak in sugar of lead solution—an ounce of the salt to a gallon of water. For black, black and white, grays and deep purples dissolve a handful of coarse salt in a tub of water and soak about seven minutes. Some blacks are made fresher and more permanent by putting strong black pepper tea into the first suds. It is best to try the color of anything by wetting a small piece in the various solutions and using that from which it comes out brightest.

A Charitable Queen.

Philanthropy is with the queen of Portugal as much a passion as hunting, music or painting. She is at the head of all Portuguese charitable establishments, which she directs in person even to the minutest details. Many and many a time she will quit the palace at some early morning hour unaccompanied, simply dressed in black, and none of the household dare ask whether goes her majesty, for all know she is bound on some secret errand of mercy. Once when a civic guard, recognizing her and seeing her enter one of the lowest quarters in Lisbon, followed to watch over her safety, she sternly forbade him to divulge what he had seen or to unmask her anonymity.

THE PUZZLER

No. 244.—Prefixes.

- Prefix a vegetable to turdy and get a dish.
- Prefix a cloth measure to a knot of ribbon and get a joint.
- Prefix a vowel to the bottom of a thing and get to humble.
- Prefix a consonant to competent and get a piece of furniture.
- Prefix a vowel to a late blooming flower and get a spring festival.
- The five prefixes spell the answer of the first.

No. 245.—Charade.

My finer each animal possessed
That to the ark did walk or run,
And Noah, who was surely blessed,
Could find it, too, among his sons.

My groom, with the odor sweet,
Now fragrant as in times of yore,
In far Arabia's burning heat
The beautiful mimosa bore.

To artisans, indeed to all,
My whole's most useful often proves.
In war and peace, when need doth call,
It strikes whence'er the spirit moves.

No. 246.—Omitted Word.

Insert the same word in all the blanks.

The little — boy was so — that to — him would be worse than to — the ocean with a — current. He simply would not — the letter which one should always —, and instead he drew a picture of a — on the clean page of his copy book, which made his teacher —.

No. 247.—Diagonal Zigzag.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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Crosswords: 1. A climbing flower of fragrant odor. 2. Largeness of dimensions. 3. A merrymaking. 4. A collection of shrubs. 5. Coarseness. 6. Journeying. 7. Fleets of small vessels. 8. Unnecessary trimmings. 9. The body of persons engaged in some public service. 10. Sarcastic.

No. 248.—Picture Puzzle.



A person consulted by many credulous people.

No. 249.—Primal Acrostic.

Primals spell the name of a poet beloved by children.

- One of the smaller planets.
- One of the larger planets.
- A noted American general.
- A noted American engineer.
- A noted English admiral.
- A noted American writer.
- A great American printer.
- The greatest of the queens of Spain.
- A great queen of England.
- An African explorer.
- A great Italian poet.

No. 250.—Geographical Anagrams.

- Lag, seen—A river in Africa.
- Eater, push—A river in Turkey in Asia.
- Ray, tart—A country in Asia.
- Nod, bus—A river in America.

Conundrums Answered.

- Why is bread like the sun? Because when it rises it is light.
- Why are towboats like human beings? Because some tow (toe) in and some tow out.
- Why is a train of cars like a blanket? Because it covers the sleeper.
- What islands are best for picnic goers? The Sandwich Islands.
- What is most like a half moon? The other half.
- When does a burglar become a bird? When he is a robin (robbing).
- What game are baggage masters most like? Checkers.
- What is that which everybody has seen, but will never see again? Yesterday.—New York Tribune.

Key to the Puzzler.

- No. 236.—Word Squares: 1.—1. Feet. 2. Ease. 3. Asia. 4. Team. 11.—1. Flea. 2. Leap. 3. Ease. 4. Apes.
- No. 237.—Illustrated Central Acrostic: Wordsworth. 1. Towel. 2. Crows. 3. Carol. 4. Caddy. 5. Masks. 6. Mower. 7. Ghost. 8. Horse. 9. Latch. 10. Other.
- No. 238.—Added Syllables: Top, top. le. Star, starting. Plan, planet. Troll, trolley. Rack, racket. Wag, wagon.
- No. 239.—A Buried Proverb: Fair play, is a jewel.
- No. 240.—Central Acrostic: Webster. 1. Sower. 2. Friends. 3. Table. 4. Lobster. 5. Latch. 6. Literal. 7. Error.
- No. 241.—Anagram: Preserve, perverse.
- No. 242.—Riddlemerce: Football.
- No. 243.—Separated Words: Pearlash. Vase-line.

Hemming the Napery.

The French hem, or the "damask stitch," will be found most satisfactory for the hemming of table linen. This differs from the ordinary hemming stitch in the way in which it is sewed. Turn the hems same as for ordinary hemming, then fold the hems back and overhand or over and over stitch them. By this manner, when the linen is laundered, it will be very difficult to see a right or wrong side. For napkins the hems should be made narrow as possible, and for tablecloths they should be from a quarter to half an inch in width, but the narrow width is preferable. Only the best grade of linen should be bought if possible. It lasts longer, and the more frequently it is laundered, if done carefully at home, the more beautiful and smooth the surface becomes.

Aspic Jelly.

A quart of aspic jelly may be made of one and a half pints of bright consommé, half a box of gelatin, the white of one egg, half a cup of cold water, two cloves, one slice of onion, twelve peppercorns, one stalk of celery and a saltspoonful of salt. Soak the gelatin for two hours in the cold water. Put the other ingredients over the fire and simmer for twenty minutes after they boil. Add the melted gelatin and strain the whole through a napkin into a mold or dish to harden. Sometimes the juice of half a lemon is added to this jelly.

Cultivate a Still Tongue.

If women would only bear in mind that they may need the world's good word themselves some day they would be more careful in what they say and how they say it. Charity is of thought as well as of deed. It is not restricted to the feeding of the hungry and the clothing of the poor. It is as much needed among the rich as among any other class. The woman who would be a pattern of her sex will cultivate a still tongue. If she would be a blessing to humanity she will temper justice with mercy, and, above all, she will keep her verdicts to herself when she sits in judgment on her friends.

The Uses of Charcoal.

All sorts of glass vessels and other utensils can be purified by rinsing them well with charcoal powder. Rubbing the teeth and washing out the mouth with fine charcoal powder will beautify the former and purify the breath.

Purified water can be immediately deprived of its bad smell by charcoal, and a few pieces of charcoal placed on meat, fish, etc., that are beginning to spoil will preserve them and absorb all the strong odors. A tablet of willow charcoal taken twice daily will purify the stomach and aid digestion.—American Queen.

The Meat Chopper.

If you possess a meat chopper try crushing crackers and dry bread through it instead of rolling them for puddings and scallops. Crush dry cheese instead of grating it for omelets. This is also a much easier way to prepare horse radish for the table.

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