



Spring shall come again, and set
The blossoms on the vine,
The faithful year shall bring
Her Valentine.

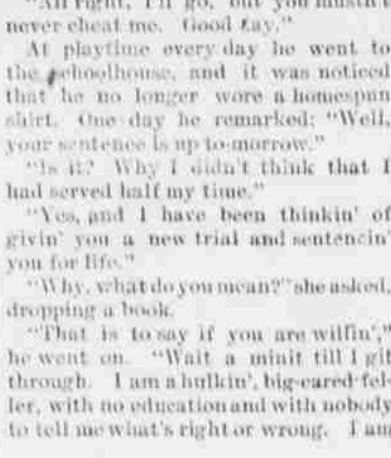
Frank Demeyer German

THE DECLINE OF THE VALENTINE.

OLDEN days, when Valentine
Sought every heart to please,
And put in every happy line
Such tender words as these:
"If you love me as I love you,
No knife can cut our love in two."
But lovers were untrue but once,
And as a punishment,
Saint Valentine some rhyme
About the use of this
"False heart! I cannot call you mine;
You shall not be my Valentine!"
Then things went on from bad to worse,
And till by and by,
Somebody wrote "Heart and soul,
Lies this one out the eye!"
You've got a pile so beautiful plain,
"Till I distract my great brain!"
New pictures were to be used,
Accompany the lines,
And happy truths like this are told
In comic valentines:
"Your face would be a champagne shock;
It's warranted to stop a clock!"
Where are these things? Who can say?
Unless these paper flies
Permeate the valentines away,
They'll be used by ladies,
With every valentine they write
A comic big chunk of dynamite.

body wears, and string 'em on a clothes line just for this thing. I always did hate a snuck, and the man that sent me this here is the worst specimen of a snuck.
Throughout the neighborhood Andy Price's valentine was the subject of speculative conversation. At the school, the sawmill, the blacksmith shop, the post office, the question was constantly asked: "Has he found out yet?" It was said that he was going to send off somewhere and get a detective, and that was the sensation kept alive. Two weeks must have passed. One afternoon a number of men were sitting in front of the post office when Andy came up. "Have you got the detective yet?" some one asked.
"No, and I don't think I'll need him." Andy answered. "My own wife are about as good a detective as I want, and they have been at work. The man that sent that thing is in this crowd right now, and when I go away from here I will be totin' something in my hand and some feller down the road may meet me and ask what I've got and I will tell him that I have just cut off Sound-Son's ears and am going to take 'em home and string 'em on the clothes line. Now don't all get skeered at once."
But they were scared, and all at once, too. Not one among them was willing to part with his ears, and each man stood about trying to look innocent. A man is not at his best when by his expression of countenance, he strives to convince you that he has never been guilty of a mean act, for conscious innocence often wears a sheepish aspect. And Mr. Price, as he stood there directing his gaze from one face to another, was much inclined to scribble guilt to the entire party. Finally, however, he settled upon a squint-eyed fellow named Shaek. And while giving Shaek the boring look of accusation, Mr. Price took out his knife and began to whet it on his boot. "I know of a set of ears," said he, "that would look powerful well on a clothes line."
"For heaven's sake, Mr. Price, I hope and pray you don't mean mine," Shaek replied, blushing and trying to shrink behind the postmaster.
"Well, since you mention it, I believe yours is about the best set I could find. Now, hold on; don't try to run off. If you do I'll shoot you and cut 'em off after you're dead, and that wouldn't look well."
Shaek, with a bellow for mercy, dropped upon his knees and Price strode to him, took him by the collar and turned his horrified face up to the sun. And just at this instant a pleasant voice asked: "Will you please wait a moment, Mr. Price?"
Price looked up and saw the school-teacher standing near him. She was rather a good-looking young woman; she had a sweet expression of countenance; the opinion of the neighborhood was that she always looked as if she had just been baptized.
Price turned about and replied: "I'm waiting, ma'am."
"Mr. Price," she said, smiling, "you are too large and too strong a man to be disturbed over so small a thing as a comic valentine. It was only a joke—and I sent it, Mr. Price."
"You did?"
"Yes, and just for fun, too. And I earnestly beg you to forgive me."
"Well, Miss Lizzie, I ain't makin' war on women. Shaek, you better thank this guilty party for appearin' in time. Well, folks, I ain't got nothin' more to say at present, except that I'm goin' to get even with the person that sent that thing."
Several days later, during playtime at school, Price strode into the room where the teacher sat. "How are you, ma'am?"
"Very well, I think you, Mr. Price. Won't you sit down?"
"All right; but say, I have come down here to punish you for sendin' me that big-eared thing."
"I hope you won't punish me very severely."
"I don't know as to that—don't know how severely you may think it is. But I'm comin' down here at playtime every day for a month."
"Is that the punishment?"
"That's it."
"Why, that isn't severe."
"You may think so before it's over with. But here, now, tell me if you think I've got sich all-fired big ears?"
"Not too large, I like large ears. The most generous people have large ears."

"That so? And you like people that are generous?"
"Of course I do."
"Then I wouldn't mind it if mine was a little bigger. How would that strike you?"
"I think they are large enough."
"All right; if they suit you they shall stay just as they are. When it's time to take in just notify me and I'll haul 'em."
"It's about time now, I think."
"All right, I'll go, but you mustn't never cheat me. Good day."
At playtime every day he went to the schoolhouse, and it was noticed that he no longer wore a homespun shirt. One day he remarked: "Well, your sentence is up to-morrow."
"Is it? Why I didn't think that I had served half my time."
"Yes, and I have been thinkin' of givin' you a new trial and sentencin' you for life."
"Why, what do you mean?" she asked, dropping a book.
"That is to say if you are willin'," he went on, "wait a minit till I get through. I am a hulk'n, big-eared feller, with no education and with nobody to tell me what's right or wrong. I am



"YOUR SENTENCE IS UP TO-MORROW."

a sort of a heathen, and the savin' of a heathen's soul is about as bright a piece of work as can fall to the lot of a young woman. Yes, I am the heathen and you are the missionary sent here by the Lord, and if you want to do the Lord's work all right, and if not, all wrong. The heathen has got a frigate farm, and he's about as apt to learn as any human bein'; you've never seen; and I want to tell you that never-ever-congressman that goes out of this district is educated and sent out by his wife. I ain't but twenty-four years old, and with your help I can make a speech in six years from now that will carry me to the legislature, and then there ain't no man that can keep me out of congress. Now, here, I ain't so powerful, had lookin'; that is if you'll sorter squint when you look at my ears. I've got a big but a misel soul, and that soul is crying in the wilderness and wants you to save it, and if you don't want to save it, why it would rather be lost than to be saved by any other hands. That's the sort of love I give you. Sometimes when I look at you I feel like I want to drop down on my knees and pray, not beggin' the Lord for something, but thankin' Him for something that He's already done. Nobody else ever made me feel this way, and somehow I can't help but think that He has appointed you to save my soul. There, now, you ain't going to cry about it, are you? If I had a thought it would have hurt your feelings I wouldn't have put it on that ground. Hah! what's that? Why, the Lord bless my soul—here, children, don't come in here now. Miss Lizzie's not at all well. Dad blame it I tell you she's monstrous sick. Go on away from here."

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A PAIR OF EARS.

BY OPIE READ.



HE first valentine that found its way into the neighborhood of Scrub Oak East Tennessee, was not of the sentimental order, but was of the comic variety, and was the cause of trouble. Andy Price, a husky fellow and a man, too, who was much disposed to fight even during the best of weather, was sitting about the post office at Miller's store when the mail was distributed. The day was raw and Mr. Price was not in the best of humor. One of his steers had been choked to death by an ear of corn that didn't happen to fit and somebody had poisoned his dog. Indeed, this was no time to be made the butt end of a valentine joke; but when the mail was distributed the postmaster solemnly declared that he had a letter for Andy Price. Price was disposed to doubt this. He looked up from the crackers-box where he was sitting and remarked: "Miller, I have been a customer of yours for more than five years and I don't see why you want to temper with me that way. Yes, sir, been a dealer with you all that time and you ain't never flung me out a letter yet. And I rather think it's to late to expect with you now."
"Ain't tryin' to cut no capers with you, Andy; here's the letter."
He handed over an envelope and Andy took it suspiciously.
He nervously tore open the envelope, being still suspicious, and took out a red and blue colored print, representing an ass with exaggerated ears. His friends gathered about him, gazing in astonishment. "Read what it do say," some one demanded. Then they read the few lines of rhyme, and strangely enough they smiled somewhat to Andy. He was noted for his large ears, loud voice, peculiar gait, and these lines called ridiculous attention to these facts. The men shouted, Andy put the thing on the fire and watched it burn. Then he said: "I'm goin' to find out who sent me that thing, and I'm goin' to whip him if it costs a leg and an arm or two. I've whipped a good many men just and last, but I've always done it like a gentleman would; you boys all know that. I never did stomp but one feller's teeth out and I wouldn't 'a' done that if he hadn't hit me. I never stabbed a man; never shot but one feller and he shot me first; and I want to say right here that I'm going to make it my business and my trade to find out who took this here advantage of me, and when I do find out I'm goin' to whale him till his own mother wouldn't speak to him without an introduction. You may all cut up and laugh as much as you see fit, but I'm goin' to cut off some-



"WAIT A MOMENT, MR. PRICE"

cut 'em off after you're dead, and that wouldn't look well."
Shaek, with a bellow for mercy, dropped upon his knees and Price strode to him, took him by the collar and turned his horrified face up to the sun. And just at this instant a pleasant voice asked: "Will you please wait a moment, Mr. Price?"
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"You may think so before it's over with. But here, now, tell me if you think I've got sich all-fired big ears?"
"Not too large, I like large ears. The most generous people have large ears."

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