

# The Porcelain Valentine.

By Clarissa Mackie.

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MISS LEAFY BEAN stared into the window of the stationer's shop, surveying the long lines of valentines that hung in festoons from end to end. There were all sorts of valentines from the humblest penny post card, with its crudely colored picture and amorous verse, to the huge affairs of satin and lace, with doves and cupids and bleeding hearts painted thereon.

Miss Leafy looked them over carefully. There was not one that would answer the purpose she had in mind. She entered the shop and asked in a firm, rasping voice for what she was seeking.

"Comic valentines?" repeated the clerk, with astonishment in his sheep-like eyes. "Yes, ma'am—of course, ma'am," and he drew a box from beneath the counter and displayed for Miss Leafy's inspection a varied assortment of hideous and coarsely colored caricatures. If he expected to see the little old lady shrink at the sight of the lurid pictures he was disappointed, for she put on a pair of steel bowed spectacles and surveyed each one critically—indeed, one might say with the eye of a connoisseur.

"I will take this one," she said finally, opening her slim purse. Then she hurried toward the door. As she passed through she met another woman a little younger than herself. They exchanged stiff bows of recognition. Miss Leafy blushed a little and clutched the envelope containing the comic valentine within the folds of her skirt.

She stepped out along the quiet street toward the Old Ladies' home with primly stepping feet and a soft swing of her ample cashmere skirts. She wore a rusty velvet cape, with a high collar turned up around her withered chin, and she carried a large milk muff. Beneath the narrow brim of her small bonnet her nose shone very red with the cold, and the sting of the sharp wind brought the tears to her weak eyes.

When she reached the home, which was a fine, imposing structure set in handsome grounds, she turned into the flagged path with renewed energy and was soon snugly ensconced in her own half of the room she shared with Ellen Drake. It was a large room, with polished floor and several large windows, two on the front and two on the side. The apartment was divided by an imaginary line drawn diagonally from the door to the front corner, thus affording each occupant

two windows and the use of the door. A rug placed in the center of each diagonal space, small iron beds, dressers, comfortable rockers and tables formed the furniture, while a large coal stove in the center of the room radiated warmth and cheer to every corner.

Miss Leafy removed her bonnet and cape and hung them, together with the milk muff, within her tiny closet. Then she seated herself at the table and drew out the comic valentine she had just purchased. She adjusted her spectacles again and looked long and curiously at the picture. She did not smile or otherwise exhibit any evidence of amusement. There was the light of an indomitable purpose in her eyes and in the set of her thin lips.

The picture portrayed a hideous woman, with mincing gait, wearing an enormous bonnet, from which hung multitudes of varicolored feathers and ribbons. Her dress was trimmed with buttons, buckles, fringes, bows and streamers, while about her shoulders was draped a lace shawl. She held a tiny parasol above her bodicized head. Beneath were lines of doggerel verse:

Hold up your head, you think you're so fine!  
You are nothing but clothes; you haven't a mind!  
Your silks are but cotton; your hat is a sham;  
You're a smiling deceiver abroad in the land!

Miss Leafy nodded her head approvingly. "That's Ellen Drake to the life," she said slowly. "She thinks she's fine, and she expects every one else to think the same. She's a smiling deceiver, for she pretends to be pleasant to every one, and she treats me like the dirt beneath her feet. A-pretending that shawl is real lace! How comes it that Ellen Drake can wear lace shawls any more'n I can? I'll stick to it that mine is real lace too. I ain't going to take no back seat for Ellen Drake if her pa was a schoolteacher!"

Here Miss Leafy ended her soliloquy, and, folding her hideous valentine to fit a long envelope, she inclosed it and sealed the flap. Then with a scratchy pen dipped in rusty brown ink she printed the letters of Ellen Drake's name.

"There!" she ended triumphantly. "I'll just drop that in the letter box at the corner so she'll get it the first thing in the morning. After she learns

what folks think of her mebbe she won't hold up her head quite so high!" She affixed a stamp to the missive, and, throwing a kilted shawl about her thin shoulders, she hurried out to the corner of the street and posted the letter.

Ellen Drake was late. She did not return to the home until just as the occupants were sitting down to their evening meal in the long, cheerful dining room. She left her wraps in the hall and took her seat beside Miss Leafy with a grim nod that belied the pleasant twinkle in her mid blue eyes. She was a small, plump woman, with faded blond hair and a round, rosy face and smiling lips that disclosed rows of even white teeth. These teeth were at once the envy and despair of Miss Leafy Bean's heart. Her own had gone long ago, and she was now reduced to a toothless underjaw, while an ill fitting plate of obviously false teeth adorned the upper one.

"Cold out, Ellen?" asked old Mrs. Brown from across the table. "Yes," replied Mrs. Drake, "it's dreadful cold. Looks like snow." "Been buying valentines?" continued Mrs. Brown, with a snickering laugh that was echoed down the table in diminishing cadences.

"Some," returned Mrs. Drake spirit-edly. "I always buy valentines. I believe in 'em!" "Believe in 'em! Valentines are only for young folks a-courtin' and snick-jeered Mrs. Brown.

"Valentines mean love," continued Ellen Drake soberly, "and old folks want love just as much as young ones do—and a sight more, I'm thinking. It don't make no difference if you're a hundred years old, if you get a valentine with hearts and posies on it and doves and flowers and a pretty verse to it it warms you all up, not quite the same as when you was sixteen, but almost!" She uttered a mellow laugh that warmed more than one of the feeble, disconcerted old women gathered there.

"That's so," assented Miss Piper in her shrill treble. "I remember my first valentine." And so each one told a story about some valentine she had received in the old days—some message of a love that came so readily and all unsought in the golden old days. And as they told their stories withered cheeks reddened, faded eyes brightened and fretful voices took on softer cadences until, when they rose, there was a warmer unanimity of feeling among them, and when they parted for the night they strayed off in groups of twos and threes, still telling of the old days, the golden old days, when love was everything, when love was king.

All save Miss Leafy. She had maintained a stony silence during the tender reminiscences that had arisen like a cloud of incense about her, a cloud that hovered about, but did not encompass her. She withdrew herself from it, just as she withdrew from their playful question-

ing, with a grim shrug. She went to her room alone and sat down on her side of the glowing heater, with her skirts turned back over her knees and her feet on the hearth; she stared through the crack of the stove door at the ruddy coals; in them she saw pictures of the past. There were old days, but never golden days. She remembered bitterly that she had always been small and lean and homely. She never had a valentine. She never had a lover. She never had married. She had cared for her parents, who had lived to a ripe old age, and when they died she had sold the place and with the proceeds had purchased life-long comfort in the home. That had been her life—always lonely, with a heart hungering for love and kindness, which, when offered, she could not recognize, but fought off with shy suspicion.

When Ellen Drake arrived and was assigned to share a room with Miss Leafy the newcomer had sought by every art known to her genial little soul to win Miss Leafy's regard. Perhaps she might have done so had not an unfortunate thing happened. Mrs. Drake in unpacking her garments displayed to Miss Leafy's admiring eyes a black lace shawl. "It's real lace," said Ellen simply. "It belonged to my grandmother."

Leafy Bean bit her lip and looked with covetous eyes upon the real lace shawl. She fingered its filmy texture, and then she said carelessly: "I've got one just like that, only mine's white. I'd show it to you, only it's in the bottom of my trunk. I'll get it out some day. Mine's real lace too."

"I'd admire to see it," said Ellen Drake heartily, and Leafy had crept away to bed with a resentful heart and a very guilty conscience, for Leafy Bean never had a lace shawl in her life.

All the year that followed Ellen Drake's arrival at the home Leafy Bean had maintained a frigid demeanor toward that lady. This was harder to understand, because the women occupied the same apartment and a more

amicable relation would have resulted in much happiness to both of them. It is true that Ellen Drake strove for this, but after awhile she tired of repeated rebuffs, and so day after day the women would sit on opposite sides of the pleasant room in perfect silence. Sometimes one or the other would have visitors or they would meet in the living room downstairs, but there was generally silence between them, or, at best, a veiled hostility.

Because Ellen Drake dressed tastefully from the remnants of a once well stocked wardrobe Leafy Bean had nurtured a bitter jealousy which culminated in the purchase of the hideous valentine. And now Leafy was thinking how, the first thing in the morning, Ellen would receive the valentine. Perhaps she would not toss her head and flaunt her finery in the face of—

Just then the door opened, and Ellen Drake came in. She drew a rocking chair close to the stove and sat there for a few moments in silence; then, with a visible effort, she said in a conciliatory tone:

"Leafy Bean!"

"Well!" said Miss Bean sourly.

"I got a valentine today," pursued Ellen, with some hesitation.

Miss Leafy swallowed hard. "Already!" she uttered; then she bit her lip in vexation.

"Well," continued Mrs. Drake slowly, "it's this way, Leafy: It's not a regular valentine. It was a letter from a lawyer saying that my fourth cousin, old Abe Harmon, had died out west somewhere and left me \$500. So I call it a valentine," she ended, with a quiet laugh.

Miss Leafy snorted bitterly. "You can buy lots of clothes with \$500," she said, with firm emphasis.

"Oh, I ain't quite so dressy as that, Leafy," laughed Mrs. Drake good naturedly. "What I want to say is that I've got an idea"—She hesitated

again as though in doubt as to the reception of her idea by her taciturn roommate.

That lady was lost in a painful reverie. It was only another evidence of the injustice of fate that Ellen Drake, the possessor of a real lace shawl, should become an heiress. Leafy was glad she had sent the valentine.

"OF COURSE I MEAN IT."

"I was thinking, Leafy," pursued Ellen Drake, "that maybe you'd like to get some teeth of that new dentist. He puts in porcelain teeth just like mine for \$40, and I was thinking you might as well use some of my money and have the teeth now. I ain't got any particular use for the money, and you can pay it back from your knitting a little at a time."

There was silence. Mrs. Drake leaned back in her chair as if glad the announcement was out and prepared for a stormy reception of her proposal. Miss Leafy stared hard through the crack in the stove door. The coals glowed redly, then they changed to a ruddy blue, and there was a sharp sting behind her little brown eyes.

Presently she spoke, and her sharp voice sunk to a quaver as she asked: "Do you mean, Ellen Drake, that you're offering to lend me some of your \$500 so I can have porcelain teeth like yours?"

"Of course I mean it," said Ellen heartily, "and, what's more, I'm going to use some of that \$500 to have a good time with before I die. We'll go to concerts!"

"We?" murmured Miss Leafy, aghast. "Of course, you and me, and perhaps we'll ask some of the others, too, and maybe we'll have doings in our room some evening. Oh, I'm going to take a sight of comfort with Cousin Abel's valentine!" And she laughed a cheery little laugh that seemed to open up some long choked spring in Miss Leafy's bosom, for she burst into bitter sobbing and flung her hands before her little homely face.

"Leafy Bean! I do declare! Whatever is the matter? Crying because you're going to have new teeth?"

"Tain't so," sniffled Leafy. "I'm crying because I'm a liar!"

"A—a—what?" gasped Ellen Drake. "I'm a liar—and much worse!" repeated Leafy, with stern emphasis. "Ellen Drake, when I said I had a lace shawl like yours I was lying. I never had one, and it wasn't real lace!"

"For the land's sake! Well—what of it? They're out of style anyway."

"I'm worse than a liar," repeated Leafy gloomily. "I sent you a funny valentine through the mail. Now, I guess, you won't offer me no teeth," she said, with a defiant smile.

Ellen Drake stared. Then she threw back her head and laughed. "Oh, Leafy Bean, did you send me a funny valentine?" she chuckled. "I am glad," she continued merrily, "I GOT A PORCELAIN VALENTINE."

"Because, you see, it will make a lot of fun. They will all laugh, and it will do them a sight of good, and it won't hurt me a mite. Well, it's all right now, Leafy. And you'll go tomorrow and see the dentist about your teeth?"

Leafy Bean laughed shamefacedly. "I expect I got what you'd call a porcelain valentine," she said.

## HE OBEYED ORDERS.

A Young Recruit's Rapid Rise to Title and Power.

One day a young recruit was standing guard before the door of the entrance to Peter the Great's private chambers in the palace of St. Petersburg. He had received orders to admit no one.

As he was passing slowly up and down before the door Prince Menschikoff, the favorite minister of the czar, approached and attempted to enter. He was stopped by the recruit.

The prince, who had the fullest liberty of calling upon his master at any time, sought to push the guard and pass him. Yet the young man would not move, but ordered his highness to stand back.

"You idiot!" shouted the prince. "Don't you know me? You'll be punished for this!"

The recruit smiled and said: "Very well, your highness, but my orders are peremptory to let nobody pass."

The prince, exasperated at the fellow's impudence, struck him a blow in the face with his riding whip.

"Strike away, your highness," said the soldier, "but I cannot let you go in."

Peter, in the room, hearing the noise outside, opened the door and inquired what it meant, and the prince told him.

The czar appeared amused, but said nothing at the time. In the evening, however, he sent for the prince and the soldier. As they both appeared Peter gave his own name to the soldier, saying:

"That man struck you in the morning. Now you must return the blow to that fellow with my stick."

The prince was amazed. "Your majesty," he said, "this common soldier is to strike me?"

"I make him a captain," said Peter. "But I'm an officer of your majesty's household," objected the prince.

"I make him a colonel of my life guards and an officer of the household," said Peter again.

"My rank, your majesty knows, is that of general," again protested Menschikoff.

"Then I make him a general, so that the beating you get may come from a man of your rank."

The prince got a sound thrashing in the presence of the czar, and the recruit, who was next day commissioned a general with a title, was the founder of a powerful family whose descendants are still high in the imperial service of Russia.

## SIMPSON'S PLUCK.

An Inventor's Weary but Successful Fight Against Great Odds.

Charles Goodyear is not the only inventor who might turn his face to the wall to die saying of the tardy recognition of his efforts, "I die happy—others can get rich."

Goodyear's efforts to introduce the use of vulcanized rubber were no more tragic than the stories of a dozen other inventors. There was a man named Simpson in Missouri who discovered that gutta serena was a nonconductor of electricity. He borrowed money of one Amos Kendall to make his application for a patent. It was rejected over and over, rich companies fighting his claim. But he had "sand"; he never weakened. It was just after the civil war that he made his last fight. He had no money—not a dollar—but he started from St. Louis for Washington afoot.

He would not beg, but made his way half across the continent by sawing wood, hoeing corn or doing any work that came to hand. In one place he robbed a scarecrow of a pair of pants and a hat, leaving his own more ragged garments in their place. In Pittsburg he had to work as a truck driver till he could earn enough to repair his shoes and take him on his way. And all the time he believed stubbornly in himself and in his invention. His own words were:

"When I came over the tops of the Alleghenies I saw the sun rising, and I knelt down and thanked God for my life and asked him to let me get my patent. He promised me on the spot, and I never had a moment's doubt after that."

Arriving in Washington, he got a living as a day laborer on the stone foundation of the patent office, and from that vantage ground he fought his claim through the office and the courts and got his patent. The Western Union Telegraph company gave him \$100,000 down for the privilege of using it—Exchange.

## Odd Cures For Rheumatism.

Cures for rheumatism are almost as old as the complaint itself. In the midland counties of England it was formerly considered that the right forefoot of a hare, worn constantly in the pocket, was an amulet against rheumatism, while the Dutch peasantry still cherish a belief in the preservative virtues of a borrowed or stolen potato. Stranger than these, however, was the remedy discovered by a servant girl at the village of Stanton, in the Cotswolds, who contrived to be confirmed three times, in the belief that confirmation was an infallible cure for rheumatism.

## The Cowcatcher.

While the visitor told how he had ridden thirty thrilling miles on the cowcatcher of a locomotive five-year-old Lorda listened attentively. As he concluded she asked, "Did you catch the cow, Mr. Blank?"—Chicago News.

Where there is much pretension much has been borrowed. Nature never pretends.—Lavater.

## THE WORD "ALPHABET."

It Comes Through the Greeks and Hebrews From Phoenicia.

When we speak of our A B C's as our "alphabet" we are using a word hoary with age, that, as far back as we can trace it, came from the eastern shore of the Mediterranean sea, thousands of years before the Hebrews went up there and took possession of the land of Canaan. Back of the people who occupied that land before the events of Exodus were written we are not able to trace the word, for we have not sufficient knowledge of them or of their etymological history before we find them in Canaan.

It has been only within recent years that we have been able to know that the word "alphabet" came to us from the Phoenicians. Before that we supposed that it came to us from the Hebrews, through the Greek. As we say "A B C" the Greeks say "alpha beta" (the first two letters of their alphabet), which when it reached us became "alphabet." This we supposed had come to the Greeks from the Hebrews, who called their first two letters "alph" and "beth," but since then we have found that both the Greeks and the Hebrews got the word "alphabet" from the same source, which was the Phoenicians.

The people of Phoenicia had the same letters, "alph" and "beth," which have suffered but little change in sound down to our A and B. Alph meant simply an ox, the sign of it being a conventional ox's head, with the lower part of the face turned slightly to its right, and beth meant a house, which was pictured by the rude outline of a primitive dwelling, which had a superfluous line added to distinguish it from other characters very like it, as we place a tall on a Q to distinguish it from an O. So the first two letters of our A B C's were originally an ox and a house and gave the name of all of the twenty-six letters which we call our "alphabet."—New York Herald.

## Kissing the Book.

"Kissing the book" is a rather late development of the mere touching of the gospels with the fingers, which dates from the sixth century. It is likely that the kiss was originally intended not to increase the solemnity of the oath, but to signify reverence and affection for the book. The kiss appears to have come into fashion toward the end of the sixteenth century and would seem, from what George Fox says of it, to have been a Protestant innovation. According to him, the unreformed method was simply to hold the gospels with three fingers above the book, typifying the Trinity, and two fingers below, typifying the twofold destruction of body and soul that an oath taker invoked upon himself if he swore falsely.

## Politics and Poker.

A man who dips into politics occasionally may be compared to a man who engages in a poker game occasionally. He is liable to run into a professional and be worsted. The safe rule is to keep out of politics and poker.—Atechison Globe.

## She Threw Him Over Twice.

"Why have you thrown over Mr. Pitcoe?" "Oh, I could never marry a man with a crooked leg." "What made his leg crooked?" "I ran over it with my motor car."—Success Magazine.

## Florists' Stand

FINE EASTER FLOWERS

Open Thursday, April 1st, in the display window of Strauss Bros.' Music Store, on Main Street.

Complete assortment of Potted Plants, Cut Flowers, Lillies and Decorative Plants of all kinds.

Come in and see the exhibit and brighten your home for Easter.

Well, Did You See That

## BEE-LINE

At Robinson & Mundorff's

Well, if you have not, it will not cost you anything to have a look, so just step in and look around. Of course, we sell bee supplies and try to keep a complete line of "Root's" goods on hand. This month we are going to give our customers the benefit of a SPECIAL DISCOUNT, so we would appreciate your order at as early a date as possible.

Rea Bee & Honey Co.

# TO THE FARMERS

GENTLEMEN:

We have bought our seeds this spring from the Albert Dickinson Co., of Chicago, an old reliable firm, and handling their Ace Brand, OF CLOVER SEED the best re-cleaned on the market. We can recommend it and will stand over it and invite you to call and examine it before buying. \$6.75 per bushel—and we will put it up against anything on the market.

Faithfully yours,

Reynoldsville Hardware Co.

# J. R. HILLIS & CO.'S MONEY SAVING SALE

# Of Furniture And Carpets

Commencing March 1st

We have more than 100 Rugs to choose from.

\$15.00 Go-Carts at \$12.00.

Call in and see our large assortment of Brass and Iron Beds.