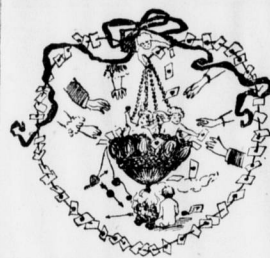


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WIDOW DARBY'S VALENTINE

BY J. L. HARRISON.

The widow Darby, fair, plump, and looking younger than her 45 years, had ridden into town with Jared Kent because her horse had lamed himself that morning, and Jared "happened to be going in," and had asked the widow to ride with him.

Jared was what some of the people of the neighborhood called a "regular born old back." He flouted and scorned womankind most of the fifty years of his life, and had openly set forth his conviction that men were "better off without 'em than with 'em," particularly when it came to "marrying of 'em."

It was a clear, crisp morning in February when Jared rode to the village with the widow Darby seated beside him in his neat little cutter. The sleighing was fine and the air keen and exhilarating.

She had a comfortable little home and a few acres of land adjoining Jared Kent's. She had known Jared all of her life, but not once had she thought of him as a possible successor to Joel Darby.

"Jared will never marry anyone," she had said. "He isn't of a marrying disposition. Some men are that way. It's all they lack to make 'em what God intended they should be. My husband and I used to talk Jared over a good deal, and we did our full share to get him settled for life with a good wife. We used to invite lots of nice girls, young and elderly both, to our house and then have Jared come over to tea and to play croquet with them. He'd be nice and pleasant and all that, but he never came any ways near falling into any of the traps we set for him."

It was an elegant morning, isn't it? said Jared, as he and the widow flew along over the hills and through long lanes in which the snow was drifted almost to the top of the fences.

"Oh, it's lovely!" replied the widow. "So do I. You got much to do in town?"

"No; I'll be through with all of my errands in an hour. I can let something go if you don't want to stay in town that long."

"Oh, that'll be none too long for me. Where shall I meet you?" "I'll be at Smith & Hanscom's dry goods store, any time you say."

It was three minutes after 11 when Jared drove up to the appointed place of meeting. The widow had stepped into the sleigh and he was tucking the robes in around her when she said:

"There, Jared, I'm just like other women; I've forgotten something."

"What is it?" "I forgot to go around to the post-office. I know that there's nothing there for me, because one of the Stone boys brought my mail out last night, and there's no mail trains until noon; but poor old Jared came over just before I left and wanted me to be sure and see if there was a letter for her. Her daughter is very sick out west, and she hasn't had a letter for a week, and she's half wild. I couldn't bear to tell her I'd forgotten to go to the office."

"I'll drive 'round that way," said Jared. "It won't be three blocks out of the way."

glanced at the blue envelope and said joyfully: "O here's a letter for Jane, and it's from her daughter, I know by the post-mark. How glad Jane will be!—well, I declare!"

She burst into a merry laugh as she looked at the big white, embossed envelope. The boy had told the truth when he had gone back to his comrades and said with a titter:

"Who in the land ever sent me that thing?" said Mrs. Darby, holding the envelope out at arm's length. "I didn't even know it was Valentine's Day. If it isn't the greatest idea that I should get a valentine."

"I don't know why you shouldn't," said Jared. "Oh, because I—but I guess some child sent it."

"Maybe not." "No one else could have had so little gumption!" said the widow with another laugh. "Maybe there's one of these comic valentines inside of it—some ridiculous thing about a widow likely."

"Why don't you open it and see?" "I will."

She burst into another laugh as she drew forth a dainty creation of lace paper, tinsel and bright colored embossed pictures.

"How perfectly ridiculous!" she said. "AN HOUR LATER THEY STOPPED AT JANE CARR'S GATE."

"The idea of any one being ninny enough to send an old woman like me a thing like that!" "You're not an old woman."

"I'm forty-five." "Well, I'm older than that, and I don't call myself an old man. Many women around here would be glad to get a valentine like that if the sender really meant it."

"Yes, and if you were the sender." "I'm not vain enough to think that and not foolish enough to say it if I did think it."

"No, I don't think that you are, Jared. But I wonder who could have sent me this. The writing on the envelope is evidently disguised, and—O, here is something inside! Let's see what it says."

"O wilt thou be my valentine forever and forever aye, And wilt thou take this heart of mine, And give me thine to-day?"

There was another verse but before she had read it, the widow Darby cried out: "Jared Kent, that's your handwriting and you need not try to deny it!"

"I'm not trying to deny it. You'll find my name signed in full to the next verse on the other page." This was the next verse:

"If 'twere my answer it to be, My heart with joy will fill, If 'no, I yet shall be your friend, And I shall love you still."

They had reached the outskirts of the town. Jared brought the horse to a stand-still, and said: "Is it yes or no, Lucy?"

She looked at him with shining eyes, and laughing face for a moment. Then she laid one of her mittened hands on the sleeve of the great fur coat he wore, and said:

"I think it is yes, Jared." He turned his horse's head toward the town. "Where are you going?" she asked. "Back to the minister's. It's Valentine's Day, you know, and if you are to be my valentine, I want you to-day."

A VALENTINE. Oh, what have I to offer, dear, What gift or greeting fine, This golden day of all the year, Of good St. Valentine's Day, Have you not all that life can lend— Full many a friend, and true? What is the gift, I can send To you?"

But this I send to you apart, Via St. Valentine, All willingly a loving heart— This woman's heart of mine— Oh, hold it safely, without fear, Be sure that it is true, And does the gift bring joy most dear To you?"

—Theodosia Pickering.

HER LAST VALENTINE.

They knew she was dying—the faded little woman in the faded little bedroom. She had clung to life as long as she could, hoping for an answer to that wistful prayer in her eyes. But the struggle was almost over now; the wistful eyes were growing dim.

"See! I've got something for ye, Liddy!" The little circle of spinsters, relatives and kindly neighbors parted, and good Uncle Silas Peterson came wheeling to the bedside, the snow still clinging to his rough overcoat. He carried a letter in his hand—a coarse and dirty envelope addressed in the crude, sprawling penmanship of a man whom neither life nor education had ripened or refined.

"It's from Orson—Orson, you know," Uncle Silas added, bending over the couch and addressing the dying woman in the tender directness of a nurse to children—and death.

"Orson?" A smile flashed over the aching face, and the woman lifted a feeble hand for the letter. She kissed it and tucked it under the thin shawl that some loving hand had wrapped over her shoulders.

"Shan't I open it for ye, Liddy?" asked one of the women. "The dying eyes said 'No.' 'She thinks it's a valentine from her husband,' whispered one of the neighbors. 'To-day is Valentine Day, you know. Last year I remember her telling me how she wished Orson would send her a valentine—just some little thing to show her that he loved her the way he did when they were first married.'

"Most likely it's a note sayin' he'll stay over night and see the races on the ice, to-morrow," was the guarded reply.

The dying woman folded her shawl tightly around the precious letter. A look of perfect peace lighted her face. "He does love me," she whispered, "just as he used to."

Uncle Silas turned away to wipe the mist from his spectacles. There was a little fluttering sign from the bed. "Liddy" had gone home.

When they drew the old shawl from her shoulders, there, tight pressed against her heart by both thin, blue-veined hands, was Orson's crumpled, dirty letter. They were scarcely able to take it away from her slender, clinging fingers.

"Shall ye open it?" asked Miss Pennington. The women looked furtively at one another, their curiosity struggling with their reverence.

"No," said Miss Daggett, at last. "It's hers—sacred. No matter what it says. She died thinkin' it was a valentine. Let's burn it up, so nobody will ever know."

The ashes of the unread letter fluttered white about the stove for a few minutes, and then whirled up the chimney, as a gust of February wind roared over the house. And the little, worn-out, heart-hungry woman lay smiling, as death had found her.

THE REAL AND THE IDEAL. LAMOROCK, indeed, found the liquor so delicious that he took two glasses. Before they got half through their cigars he noticed with suspicion that the conversation began to slacken, and that his companions showed a disposition to go to sleep.

Bonsfield was the first to succumb to somnolence, and Lamorock even began to feel sleepy himself.

The intruder also began to look as if he would soon follow Bonsfield's example. He vainly tried to look wide awake, but his lids would droop heavily, his head would sink down upon his chin and he would then pull himself together by a supreme effort and try to sit up straight.

"WAS SHEER LUCK." When the great pink diamond of Guzman reached Europe it created widespread interest and took immediate rank with the historical stories of the world. It was compared with the finest gems in the royal and imperial regalia, savants wrote learned dissertations upon its beauties, and the magazines and newspapers spoke of its value in a way that made one's mouth water.

Among others whose envy was aroused by the descriptions of the stone was a Mr. Lamorock, a gentleman who had passed under many aliases in his career and who had only recently been released from Portland.

As he read of the great diamond his eyes sparkled at the thought of its worth. There it was—\$500,000—and you could put it in your waistcoat pocket.

The ex-convict, as he pondered over the subject, knew the task was not an easy one.

Without more ado he wrote a short note to Congleton & Co. the celebrated diamond merchant of Hatton Garden, asking them if they would care to buy some old fancy jewels, and received a reply expressing their willingness to inspect them. After studiously examining the calligraphy of their letter with a magnifying lens he set himself to practicing a number of curves and flourishes on a sheet of paper. An hour's work seemed to satisfy him, and he then indited the following epistle:

"Hatton Garden, Jan. 4, 1896. 'Messrs. Bonsfield Brothers. 'Dear Sirs: As a client of yours desires to inspect your pink diamond known as 'the Light of Guzman,' with a view to purchase, we should feel obliged if you would send it to us. Our Mr. Lamorock will call upon you a few hours after you receive this letter, and will bear a note vouching for his identity. We shall be happy to undertake all risk and responsibility for the stone from the time it is intrusted to the custody of our representative, and we beg to remain yours faithfully, 'Congleton & Co.'"

When this production of his pen and brain had been carefully scrutinized, he composed another short letter, which stated that the bearer was Mr. Lamorock, the representative of Congleton & Co. He then went out and bought half a dozen cigars, four of which he steamed open and unrolled, smearing the interior portion over with a dark, treacly liquid, he rolled them up again with expert fingers and put them into his case.

The first letter he had written he sent by registered post, going down to Bristol by the same train that took the mail. But on his arrival there he waited for three hours so as to allow of its being delivered before calling. He then went to their office, and showed his credentials, the genuineness of which were not for a moment suspected.

The Bristol firm thought it safe that the stone should be under the custody of their own representative, and determined that one of their partners, young Harry Bonsfield, should accompany Lamorock up to London, taking it with him.

They had just seated themselves comfortably and the train was already in motion, when an elderly gentleman with a jovial red face and black bushy whiskers opened the door and bundled himself in.

After the lapse of a quarter of an hour he had talked their reserve away, and proved himself so amusing a companion that they all became quite friendly, and Lamorock, who had grown suddenly amiable, pressed the others into accepting a cigar apiece. The jolly-faced intruder was not to be outdone in hospitality. He opened his hand-bag and with a merry wink produced a flask of curacao, which the intense cold had made particularly acceptable to them all.

Lamorock, indeed, found the liquor so delicious that he took two glasses. Before they got half through their cigars he noticed with suspicion that the conversation began to slacken, and that his companions showed a disposition to go to sleep.

Bonsfield was the first to succumb to somnolence, and Lamorock even began to feel sleepy himself.

The intruder also began to look as if he would soon follow Bonsfield's example. He vainly tried to look wide awake, but his lids would droop heavily, his head would sink down upon his chin and he would then pull himself together by a supreme effort and try to sit up straight.

When the train arrived at Swindon Junction the guard discovered them all asleep, and after trying in vain to rouse them up, the conviction dawned upon him that it was a case of foul play. The three patients were taken out and removed to the hospital, arrangements being made by the police that on their recovery all three should be detained in custody pending investigations.

Harry Bonsfield easily established his identity, and was set at liberty, but the information that the police obtained about his companions, the revolvers they found in both their overcoats, two teltale cigars and two equally damning cigar stumps, the remnants of curacao in the flask and a very suspicious false beard, all these incidents led to their arrest, trial and subsequent conviction.

Scotland yard keeps the flask as a curiosity, for it has two compartments from which the contents can be drawn at the will of the owner by a slight pressure on a secret spring. Both compartments contained curacao; but what was left of one sample was found to be drugged while the other was pure.

The jovial gentleman, like Lamorock, had had his imagination fired by the accounts that the newspapers gave of the great pink diamond. He had wormed it out of a clerk in Mosses Bonsfield's office that the junior partner was taking it up to town, and he thought that the opportunity for which he had waited so long had at length arrived.

When the whole facts were revealed in the police court, the natural astonishment of Lamorock and the jolly gentleman was past description. It beat even that of Harry Bonsfield. All the three actors in this scene are now firmly convinced that one of the incalculable elements controlling man's destiny is sheer luck.

The Kidneys and Blood

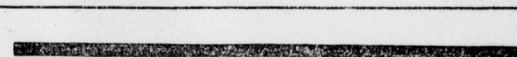
If you want to be well, see to it that your Kidneys and Blood are in a healthy condition. It is an easy matter to learn what state your Kidneys are in. Place some of your urine in a bottle or tumbler, and leave it stand one day and night. A sediment at the bottom shows that you have a dangerous Kidney disease. Pains in the small of the back indicate the same thing. So does a desire to pass water often, particularly at night, and a scalding pain in urinating is still another certain sign.

Dr. David Kennedy's Favorite Remedy is what you need. It will cure you surely if you do not delay too long in taking it. Kidney diseases are dangerous, and should not be neglected a single moment.

Read what P. H. KIPP, of Union, N. Y., a prominent member of the G. A. R., says:—"I was troubled with my Kidneys and Urinary Organs and suffered great annoyance day and night, but since using Dr. David Kennedy's Favorite Remedy I have greatly improved, and that dreadful burning sensation has entirely gone. I had on my lip what was called a pipe cancer, which spread 'most across my lip, and was exceeding painful; now that is almost well. I also had severe heart trouble, so that it was difficult to work; that is a great deal better. I have gained nine pounds since I commenced taking the Favorite Remedy; am greatly benefited in every way, and cannot praise it too much."

Favorite Remedy is a specific for Kidney, Liver and Urinary troubles. In Rheumatism, Neuralgia, Dyspepsia, and Skin and Blood Diseases, it has never failed where the directions were followed. It is also a specific for the troubles peculiar to females. All druggists sell it at \$1.00 a bottle.

Sample Bottle Free! If you will send your full postoffice address to the DR. DAVID KENNEDY CORPORATION, Rondout, N. Y., and mention this paper, we will forward you, prepaid, a free sample bottle of the Favorite Remedy, together with full directions for its use. You can depend upon this offer being genuine, and should write at once for a free trial bottle.



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