HER VALENTINE

By Grace Duffie Boylan

ANNE STACEY sat with her back to the light of her existence and the chandelier. But the respective luminaries remained equally indifferent, the one obscured by his evening paper and the other by a pink-tissue shade. So she lifted her pretty foot to the glow of the fire—the only glow that seemed in evidence anywhere—and engaged in her long-practised game of making the best of things. But the play went dully this night, although the coals arranged the usual pictures for her to gaze into and the castle-building materials were all at hand. Now and then she glanced at a big bowl of violets which stood on the table near her, and in her expression was a curious blending of indignation and triumph. There was silence in the room, except for a slow-pulsed clock, which struck the quarter-hours reluctantly, and the occasional rustling of the turning pages of the newspaper.

She felt strangely lonely. The girls had gone out, wearing their violets pinned in the fur and laces at their bonnie throats. The fragrance of the flowers at her side swept up with the memory of the lines which had come as a valentine to little Jeanne:

This thing I know, my dear,
My love for you, my dear,
Will last for aye!

"But it doesn't, Jeanne, child," she whispered sadly. "It does not last any longer than the dew lasts on the roses. But it is so sweet to be deceived!" She sighed. And again her eyes fell on the violets.

"Who in the world could have sent them to me?" she murmured. "And the verses! Impertinent, of course. But rather dear. The writing looks a little familiar, too; but I can't place it." She drew a little note from the dainty little rose-colored bag which swung from the ribbons at her waist, and scanned it by the firelight. A half-pleased smile crept up to her eyes, as she read:

These tender flowers are sent to you by one
To whom you are the starlight and the sun.
Their fragrance bears a message fond and true
From out a heart that beats alone for you.

"How dreadful!" murmured Anne Stacey, but with commendable forbearance. "I must show it to Dick!"

She rose determinedly, just as there was a sound of a sliding paper and a snore. She turned back and sat down, and the little foot on the fender tapped impatiently.

"Asleep again," she said, "and it is only half-past eight! Another tiresome evening ahead of me. Oh, dear, I don't see why I ever married him! A man so absorbed in business has no right to marry. He is so tired and dull when he comes home that he never talks. I believe I am getting so I dislike Dick, anyway. I just won't try to tell him about the flowers and note. He doesn't take the trouble to tell me anything. I wish I knew who sent it—that's what I wish!" Her cheeks were flushed now, and she looked resentfully at the form in the big leather chair. "I won't tell him a word," she repeated — then called sharply: "Dick!"

Stacey started up, dazedly. "Eh? Yes. All right! What is it, mamma?"

"It's St. Valentine's eve!"

"The deuce it is! I thought it was morning. What's up?"

'Nothing. The same old nothing."

There was a pause, after which another gasp and snore was followed by an apologetic: "Did you speak, mamma?"

"I only said it was St. Valentine's eve."

"Oh, yes, so you did." (Yawn.) "Who was the old duffer anyway? Been reading about him for the club?" (Yawn.)

Mrs. Stacey ignored the question so coldly that Stacey dimly realized that something ought to be said or done.

"This," he began insinuatingly, "this isn't an anniversary of any kind, is it? We were not married or anything on Valentine's day, were we?"

"If I had to ask such a question as that I'd keep still about it!" announced Mrs. Stacey. Her husband retired behind his paper. This was no time to discuss racial peculiarities of language.

"The girls have each received lovely big bunches of violets."

"Bully for the girls! Who sent 'em?"

"We don't know. Jeanne's came with a valentine—poetry, you know."

"Well, of course," said Stacey, "that is harder to bear. Know who wrote it?"

Mrs. Stacey shook her head. "No. But it is beautiful. She will always remember it."

"Will, eh? Can't get it out of her head, I suppose. Something like that 'Blue - trip - slip-for-an-eight-cent-fare' business."

Mrs. Stacey gave wifely inattention to his joke. Her mind seemed fixed on other subjects. Finally: "A woman always remembers such things. And sometimes they make dangerous food for hungry hearts."

The man behind the paper became conscious of a meaning in his wife's tone. He looked over the top of the sheet, to see that her gaze was fixed upon a bowl of violets on the stand before the fire. She went on:

"You never sent me a valentine, Dick. But some one else has. I wasn't going to tell you—when you were asleep—"

"Well, I'm glad you didn't then. But what about it now?"

"There isn't anything more about it. At least I only know that I received a valentine and a bunch of flowers, and I don't know who sent them. I wish I did, because I am tired of being left alone and neglected and—so there!"

"Why, mamma! Why—"

"You needn't 'Why' me!" The pitcher of patience indeed had been broken at the fountain. Mrs. Stacey was royally angry and in tears. "What do you men think women want in this life? Do you think we are satisfied with food and fire and clothes? I tell you we want love and attention as much as we do when we were young girls! And if husbands are too busy or too indifferent to give these things, some other men will!"

She stopped, with shamed sobbing. Stacey had risen and now stood beside her chair. "What did he say, Anne?" he questioned quietly.

But she shook her head miserably.

"What did he say?" He reached down and took her slender hand in his broad palm. His little ring glimmered upon it in the firelight.

"I can't tell you. You—never would understand—or appreciate—such tenderness. You—you never have—time—"

"What did he say, dear?"

"Oh, Dick. If only you had made love to me—if you ever—ever had—"

"Tell me what he said. You can't? Then let me tell you."

He knelt down beside her and her wondering eyes saw tears upon his bearded cheeks. But he reached over and took the bowl of violets in his hand as he said:

These tender flowers are sent to you by one
To whom you are the starlight and the sun.

"Dick! You? You?" She threw her arms around his neck. Her cheek was upon his cheek, her eyes seeking his eyes, as he continued:

Their fragrance bears a message fond and true
From out a heart which beats alone for you.

Then there was silence in the little room where a man knelt with his wife in his arms and the quick-pulsed clock called blithely the quarter-hours as they ran away with the eve of St. Valentine.

Electricity and Gas.

In spite of all that electricity has threatened and performed, there is hardly an importaot industry which has made greater progress during the past decade than has that of gas production. By a series of remarkable innovations gas-making renewed its youth and laid the foundations for a long and successful career.

At the Nation's Capital

Interesting Bits of Gossip Gathered Here and There in Washington—Lodge and Taft Have the Laugh on Secretary Bacon—Mysterious Noise Disturbs Dignity of the Senate.

WASHINGTON.—President Roosevelt and a horseback ride the other Sunday resulted in Assistant Secretary of State Bacon being temporarily laid up for repairs. Mr. Bacon had a badly bruised leg as a result of being unable "to sit his horse," as the president explained. He was confined to his home for two days as a result of the ride.

Mr. Bacon, who frequently goes into Loudoun county, Va., to ride behind the hounds and who during his Harvard days was a crack polo player, was invited by the president to take a ride with him. Mr. Bacon was glad that the president suggested riding, as on a previous occasion the president took him out for a walk and after traveling over the country roads about 12 or 14 miles wound up the day by fording the Chesapeake canal without removing his clothing. Mr. Bacon to show his gameness followed the president and they both had to walk home in wet clothes.

Both had good mounts and after a dash over the beautiful roads of Rock Creek park the president and Mr. Bacon turned into open country. The president does not particularly like to stick too closely to the roads and it is his habit to turn into ravines and through woods, vaulting his horse over fallen trees, rocks and occasionally a fence or two. They were cantering along when, in making a sharp turn, Mr. Bacon's horse became frightened at something. It bolted and Bacon was thrown to the ground.

The president chaffed Mr. Bacon considerably about his having forgotten how to ride and suggested buckboards, coupes and other things as perhaps more to Mr. Bacon's style of riding.

When Mr. Bacon reached home his injured leg was paining him so much that a physician was sent for. He could not leave his room for many hours and until he was driven to the White House. He limped as he left the carriage. The president was much concerned until he was assured that the injury was slight and that Mr. Bacon was suffering only from soreness.

CONGRESSMAN HAS UNPLEASANT ALLIGATOR HUNT.

A mammoth alligator nearly made a meal of Representative James McKinney of Illinois while he was on the Isthmus of Panama with some of his colleagues of the house during the Christmas holidays making personal investigation of the canal zone.

After looking over the big ditch it was determined that the party should have an alligator hunt. The members started out in launches armed with magazine rifles. They sneaked up on a sandbar where a lot of alligators were sleeping and discharged a volley. The alligators which were not too badly hurt wriggled back into the water and disappeared. A count was made of the dead and 12 were found.

Representative McKinney and Capt. Shanton, who is connected with the canal work, entered their boat and started off on a hunt by themselves.

Looking ahead, they saw an alligator that seemed bigger than a freight car coming lazily out of the jungle toward them. They could not go back to their boat and to jump in the river would be suicide, as the water was fairly alive with alligators.

"We've got to kill that alligator," said Capt. Shanton.

As the alligator approached both men emptied their rifle magazines into him and the beast died within a few feet of them. Representative McKinney and Capt. Shanton were congratulated on their escape, but Mr. McKinney declined all invitations to join in another hunt.

CAUSE OF AMBASSADOR M'CORMICK'S RETIREMENT.

Robert S. McCormick, ambassador at Paris, who will leave the diplomatic service soon, will retire because his conduct at St. Petersburg during the Russian-Japanese war met with the disapproval of President Roosevelt and not because of any activity on his part in marrying Miss Patterson, his niece, to a Polish nobleman.

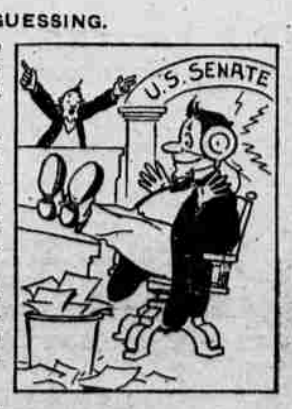
Miss Patterson is the daughter of one of the owners of a Chicago newspaper and her marriage three years ago to Count Gyzitski was approved by her parents. This match had nothing to do with the retirement of Ambassador McCormick.

While stationed at St. Petersburg Ambassador McCormick espoused the cause of Russia in its war with Japan. During hostilities he was granted leave of absence and returned to the United States. Upon landing at New York he found the sympathy of the country was with Japan. This displeased the ambassador and in an interview he reprimanded the American people, who, he declared, were ungrateful in sympathizing with Japan, as Russia was the friend of the United States and had threatened to send a fleet of warships to the assistance of the United States during the civil war when Great Britain was preparing to assist the confederacy.

This interview was disapproved by President Roosevelt, who favored the instant dismissal of Ambassador McCormick. The president was induced, however, to allow Mr. McCormick to remain in the service, but he was transferred to Paris without being consulted. This action was taken after Secretary Hay had summoned Ambassador McCormick to the department here and administered a severe reprimand.

Secretary Hay allowed Ambassador McCormick to remain in the diplomatic service for one year. This was extended a year and now a successor has been chosen—Henry White, now ambassador at Rome, who will succeed Mr. McCormick at Paris in March.

STRANGE BUZZING SOUND HAS SENATORS GUESSING.



As an elephant is frightened by a mouse, so has the dignity and poise of the senate been disturbed by a "buzz-z-z-z-z-z-z" not unlike that of a bumble bee in a clover patch.

All through the shower of White House messages the safety valve of the nation has continued to maintain its reputation for calmness and unruffled composure. Even when the president's epistles clattered like hail upon the clerk's desk, and there was no sign of a let-up, the senate continued unruffled and seemingly unannoyed.

But the other day the "buzz-z-z-z-z" proved too much for senatorial nerves. Several complained. They could not find it. It seemed to come from everywhere, and from no place in particular.

Every engineer in the capitol was called in, but in vain. Electricians and plumbers were defied by the mysterious sound.

Next morning it continued. The mystery deepened, the annoyance of the senators became more evident. Then an astute page made the big discovery.

It came from the desk of Senator Pettus of Alabama. A search showed that a new device to enable the senator to hear proceedings of the senate was the cause.

The senator's ear equipment resembles the head gear worn by telephone girls, and is connected with a small storage battery which fastens under the coat.

In laying the apparatus away in his desk, Senator Pettus placed the ear piece and the battery in contact. The result was the buzzing sound.

Valentine Baskets.

For the Valentine day luncheon oranges make pretty baskets. To make them cut a slice off one end of each orange about a third of the way down to its circumference. Remove all the pulp of the orange from the basket and with a sharp knife scrape out the bitter white lining. Throw both the basket and its cover into ice water, and put the orange pulp in the ice box. When ready to serve, stand the baskets in a pretty glass dish, propping them up against the sides with the circular pieces cut from the top. Fill each orange skin with pink ice cream and lay a red candy heart on each basket, tie with red ribbon with a red heart attached to each ribbon.

American Missions Abroad.

The American Board of Missions now has 29,386 stations and outstations, 6,750 men and 6,039 women missionaries, 70,735 native laborers, 73,849,908 communicants, 1,120,802 under instruction, and an income of [illegible] 748.

SELDOM THINKS.

Ethylene—Cholly sent me a lovely valentine and a note saying his thoughts are all of me—

Ernest—That signifies nothing; he doesn't think oftener than once a month.

Uncanny Charm.

Lady Violet Greville has a story of a woman who had a little Japanese charm given her. Every time she wore it some mischance happened, and she generally fell ill. Her son at last took the jewel to the keeper of the Japanese curios in the Paris museum and requested to be informed what the charm represented. "This," said the expert at once, "is the emblem of sickness." The woman never wore it again.

Poem Born of Imagination.

As to the poem, "How They Brought the News From Ghent to Aix," Browning said that there was not the slightest historical foundation for it. It was written while he was making a Mediterranean voyage, and the longing to escape from shipboard and take a gallop on horseback inspired him with the idea. The distance from Ghent to Aix is too great to be made in the time described by any horse but an iron one.