

Little Prince Valentine.

(By Rosa Graham, in the 'Independent'.)

'No valentines?'

It was St. Valentine's Day, and it was Peggy who gave this doleful cry—Peggy curled up on the window-seat, with eyes just ready to drip over from their weight of tears. The long day almost she had sat there, listening, with beating heart, to the postman's whistle; waiting eagerly till he, or some private messenger, should bring her her valentines.

She would have them, of course, (she had always had as many as she was years of age); all marvels in satin and gold and lace, as they had been heretofore. This year she would have eight; and happy Peggy had thought of little, day and night, for a week past but those eight sweet valentines.

Not till the big clock in the hall struck four, and the sun suddenly popped down behind the tall buildings opposite, did Peggy even begin to doubt. They would come, of course. She would be gladder for the long waiting, and they, perhaps, the prettier for the delay. But—four o'clock?

Peggy started in sudden fright. Four o'clock, and no valentines! Where were they, and what could it mean? Four o'clock and the night coming on, when the postman and messenger would go home to sleep, and no door-bells would ring any more.

'No valentines?'

It was a despairing cry, and despairingly, indeed, she pressed her hands to her aching heart, while her eyes dripped over; and the tears, one, two, twenty, now dropped fast down her cheeks. One moment; the next an expression of wrath lit up her face.

'They never, never was so late before,' she cried, 'and there just ain't any at all a-comin'. That's all there is about it, Peggy Grey. I just know one thing, if that's the way there's going to treat me, I won't sit any more. I'll never sit for valentines as long as I live again. It's the meanest kind of a way to know somebody's goin' to sit, and to disappoint 'em so. Oh! I'm so tired—so tired—so tired; and all—just—for—'

But Peggy, vexed as she was, could say no more. There would come no valentines. She was sure of that. And the excitement over, she found herself so weary from the long watch that she could only open her mouth and yawn, and yawn, and yawn. Suddenly her head bobbed sideways. Something black passed before her eyes; then, as suddenly again, something white and dazzling fluttered down into her lap.

A shower of snowflakes, Peggy thought. One tapped her nose sharply as it fell. She raised her hand, to ward off the others; and the next minute found herself sitting in the window-seat, with her lap full of valentines.

Wherever did they come from and whatever did it mean? Peggy at first rubbed her eyes disbelievingly; then she stared round the room, out of the window, and, lastly, up at the ceiling, as if expecting to see a hole there, through which they had tumbled down. Then she shook her head. She did not know; she could not think at all, at all.

Slowly she gathered up the valentines. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and a queer one at which despite her bewilderment, Peggy frowned a bit—nine. But this first natural bewilderment speed-



GOOD-NIGHT.

ily yielded to the joy the reality awoke. She had her valentines after all, come what way they did; and, with a merry cry, she broke the seal of the prettiest one. Such a radiant face as Peggy's when—

'Within the blue eyes peering,
See gilded sprites uprearing,
Border of roses gay;
Prettier still, midway,
Nestling where scroll half-folded lies,
Lace-wreathed, a group of maids, whose eyes
Down-pointing, mischievous, yet wise,
Curious Peggy
Follows; reads pensive there:
Naught to my mind so fair,
Peggy Grey, or entrancing,
As small maids always chancing,
E'en though their own sweet way
Lacks to them every day,
Good-natured still and pleased to be.
This sometimes, Peg, we note in thee.'

'That's Uncle Hal, of course,' murmured Peggy, stopping to blush, again to frown a bit. But the lovely maids and the roses soon cleared her face, and she proceeded gaily to undo the rest.

Two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight—what a lucky maid was Peggy! How her eyes brightened and her cheeks glowed,—

'As well they might, for, rich in grace
Of tender words, in gorgeous lace,
In gold and satin, wreaths and vines,
Were all this maiden's Valentines,

All radiant in waxen hearts,
In laughing Cupids and in darts,
Save one—'

Save one! Peggy, in her joy, had quite forgotten it. As if it realized it was a queer one and quite out of place in such gay company, Number Nine had slipped in among the folds of Peg's apron, and it was not until that happy maid gathered up her valentines the second time that she shook it out to view.

With a deeper frown, she took it up again. The plainest of white envelopes; not a rose, not a leaf; nothing to relieve its plainness, but the scrawling address that spelled her name 'Peggy' and two blots of ink above. Had any one dared send her a comicer? Peggy's eyes snapped as she tore off the wrapper. She made ready to scowl fiercely at the ugly face she quite expected to see within. She saw, instead, a plain paper, with a simple vine painted around it, and beneath the words:

'I send this valentine to Peg
Because I love her.
'Daisy Gregg.'

Peggy read the words and smiled. 'Oh, I remember!' she thought. 'Tom Tyler threw beans at her, and I took her part, and she's seemed to like me ever since.'

But, somehow, Peg did not seem to care much for the love of Daisy. She folded up the valentine, threw it aside, and began