

A VALENTINE

(Written for the Herald.) A sweetheart have I, a maiden with eyes bright as the stars and as blue as the sky. Her hair is as white as the snow beyond; she is just eighteen and a perfect blonde; she owns fully half of this heart of mine. But yet I won't send her a Valentine.

THE WRONG MAN.

BY THE HON. MRS. A. MONTGOMERY. Author of "Miss Una Fenwick Forest."

CHAPTER XI.

Madeline's sojourn at Charlotte was her first introduction to the aspect of a country or a city during the war. The look of constraint on every countenance; the few women and the many men, hurrying to and fro; the accumulation of cases, sacks, bales, casks, and all the unpicturesque objects of the commissariat, that represents so truly and so nakedly the fact that there are thousands upon thousands of mouths to be fed, and that the individual consumers are all massed together, under the will of one man, struck her with awe. The facts that thousands are going to die, and thousands are to be destroyed in turn; and individual anguish, bodily suffering, broken hearts at home, "a nation's glory," and souls lost and saved at the cannon's mouth, at the point of the bayonet, with hardly time to name a name, are all represented by those rolling barrels, those casks of biscuit, and those sacks of rice. Miles of slow trucks, filled with the dark red looting oxen, are being driven to the slaughter, and faster waggons full of blue and red immortal men, are carried along for the same purpose. Here, too, she saw for the first time that sad and yet light- a large ambulance full of wounded, no matter whether friend or foe, all tended by gentle women, all nursed with equal care, science and refinement. Here she first mastered her natural horror for the sight of wounds, and the many painful aspects of a great hospital. There was a great stress of work at that time, and more hands were wanted. Therefore, Mother Francis Xavier remained to fill up the vacancy, and Madeline took her place in the pious labor. She was little addicted to self-contemplation, and was happily free from the habit of making pictures of things; but, and then sitting in devout contemplation of the same. Nevertheless, it did sometimes cross her mind to remember the selfish facility with which her friends at Verney had consented to her setting forth on an indefinite journey through the war-country, attached to two nuns whose duties night at any moment carry her into scenes, not to say difficulties and dangers, which, if her poor anxious father had foreseen, would have made his hair stand on end. She herself had hardly realized all that might lie before her when she set out on her journey; not that for a moment she shrank from it, or wished herself otherwise engaged. And as circumstances had brought her into this position, her only desire was, if possible, to make herself useful; while she withheld from her father any descriptions which might alarm him for her health or her safety.

distance the desolate road, down which no noisy, busy trains were passing, traversed the level plain, and seemed to lead nowhere. On one side of the road was a single line of tall poplars, statelyly waving their equal tops in the morning breeze; or standing like a black wall in the shades of evening. On the bright moonlight nights their shadow fell across the road. Madeline had to take, and enveloped her in its cold gloom. But when the sun shone bright, and there was just breath enough to fan the little leaves, she loved to see them all dancing together up the great height of the stately stems, and showing, as they did so, the paler green of the under-side, like a dappled light and shade. Here and there a scarlet poppy would give a speck of brightness to the scene, but except the fragments of red bricks that had been dropped from the carts when peaceful building of new houses had been the order of the day, and which had subsequently got crushed down by the heavy waggons into red stains on the clay soil, making Madeline's vivid imagination think of the red wounds she saw on her way to tend, there was but little cheerful coloring in the flat monotonous scene.

It happened one day that more than one of the ladies who devoted themselves to the ambulance, had been prevented from attending, by some slight indisposition or some domestic occurrence, while at the same time there was a press of work amongst the wounded men. Mother Francis Xavier and the sisters were obliged to remain there through the night. This decision was not arrived at till late in the evening, and Madeline was not included in it. She had just finished her last offices among the men she had specially under her care, when Mother Francis came up to her, looking a little anxious, and explained to her that she would have to go home by herself. Madeline was not disturbed by this announcement, merely remarking that in that case she had better make haste.

for an hospital. Military regularity, discipline, and perfect discipline, with surgical skill, is all I require, and all I admit of. The test is a mistake, and only retards the real business of the place. The priest of the village came to see a man who was dying, but he was told that it was not the hour for visiting, and that he could not be admitted. All he would do for the lady was to let her climb the hill where his hospital tents were pitched, and see what a perfect condition of rule and order he had established.

Madeline shuddered. "What did the lady think of the place?" "I think she thought it rather cold and sickly. But it was very evident what the doctor thought of her and her companions. Those who could walk followed them about on their crutches, delighted to tell of their wounds, and where they got them, and all about it, and charmed for once to get a little of that kind of gentle sympathy which only women give. The French in particular seemed to need it, and cling to it." "What became of the ladies?" "Oh! when they found they could do nothing, they left the town; but not before a good old woman belonging to the place had entreated them to use their influence if they had any, to let the men get more of the consolations of their religion. But then you see that could not have been done without letting in people at odd hours; and in that hospital you had to get well used to that of a drum."

of poplars, across the drawbridge, and the agonizing moment of doubt as to whether that awful sentinel, whose spiked helmet gleamed in the faint moonlight of a clouded sky, will let them pass, or will not rather point his terrible bayonet at them, while his those invaluable papers which have hitherto opened all doors to them and cleared all obstacles. Besides, can he read? He looks very grim in the dusky night, and there is an alarming echo to the loud "halt" with which he makes the night air ring.

At length Pearson steps before a house and almost as the rest, and whispers "Here we are!" He says gently the door opens a little way; a faint light gleams at the end of the passage at the top of the stairs; they eagerly press through the opening, and are welcomed by a large-built, dark-browed Jewish nation, whose black locks are in all the disorder of a sudden call from deep sleep, and who is sitting in a short colored petticoat with a bed gown over it, and a yellow handkerchief flung over her rosy shoulders. They pass up the uneven stairs, with their heavy, worn-out, carved banisters, and enter a little parlor. Here the husband, shading a lamp with his hand from his dream-laden and blinking blue eyes, welcomes them. In a voice gruff with sleep, he asks them to sit down, and to get up to bed, and make the most of the few hours before them. Still they must linger to answer the questions their hosts put to them, and listen to their impressions in return. They had two sons in the war, and their hearts were kindly disposed towards those who might possibly support their beloved soldiers, or others dear to them, for the sake of the common cause.

in the service of humanity, was noble and dignified. The whole party were crowded into a second-class carriage, and Madeline and Mother Francis had some opportunity of watching their escort and its leader. Two or three of the young men were evidently gentlemen. Not so many of the party, and least of all, the rabid-faced leader of the group. Arrived at Novost, Madeline declared herself too weary to accompany the nuns to the village of Gortz, until it should be decided if they were likely to be detained there to nurse the sick.

Madeline was roused at four o'clock by the little daughter of the house, a girl of eleven, who had begged hard to be allowed to get up and see the strange ladies. She dressed by lamplight in the chill morning air, and then found all the party, including their hosts and the still sleeping husband, assembled round the table in the parlor, with a clean table-cloth and steaming coffee. By the time they left, the pale dawn was streaking the eastern sky with faint hues of yellow light, deepening into red and orange. The sentinel offered no opposition to their crossing the drawbridge, and as the sun arose above the horizon, all began to awake and stir, to chat and sing, and stroll about the town. They had mounted again into the leather-lined compartments of their uncertain railroad conveyance, and were slowly steaming along the road towards Nancy. After making such early efforts to be off, it was disheartening to see so soon again deposited at a station, and they lingered for some time at the hotel. They were to find there was a chance of getting further. Every room was occupied, and the general appearance of dust and disorder showed the demands for food, and service of all kinds, were too numerous and hurried to allow of any time spent in cleaning or making things comfortable. There was none of the cheerful activity of a busy hotel, and from the staff of a conquered country came a dreary, and the most of the old Curé administering to the needs of the victorious soldiery.

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