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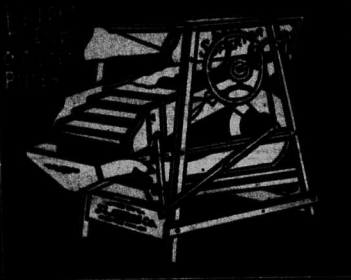



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pale, and bet Joe Jackson a pound of chewing tobacco on Jack.

Then we started in on Bill's pile. One by one old Mosey counted them out. Ninety-five, ninety-six, ninety-seven—sure as life it was a tie! They had killed the exact, identical, same number, and the game was no farther ahead.

Bill looked at Jack, and Jack looked at Bill. They shook hands and went out to the stable, intimating that we needn't follow, and we didn't.

Presently out comes Bill's driver. They hitched him into the buggy and started for Mirandy's place.

I wasn't there at the finish—Bill drove too fast—but Jake Cathers had crawled into the back of the buggy, being small, and he told me.

The boys never said a word during the trip, but drove up to the gate, tied up their horse, and shook hands again, and went into the house. Jake crawled out of the buggy and sneaked over to the window where he could see and hear all that passed.

The parson was there, looking very happy, and with him old Mr. Blewett,

the parson over at Mud Flats. Mirandy wasn't in sight, but her mother was, and the boys asked to see Mirandy. Her mother smiled a little and then called Mirandy down. She came down the stairs, looking as sweet as a peach in a new dark gray dress, and the boys straightened up for business.

"Mirandy," says Jack, "you know Bill and I have been courting you steady since you came to the settlement. We've tried to decide between ourselves which one should have right of way, and now we want you to take your pick, and the other fellow will be best man."

"Boys," says Mirandy, "I'm sorry I can't fall in with your idea—I married the parson about an hour ago, and I'm afraid I can't settle the matter for you. And, boys," says she, "the next time you try to settle an affair like this you had better ask the girl's opinion first."

Well, it staggered the boys, Jake says, but they braced up, shook hands with the parson, kissed the bride and helped eat the wedding cake.

And next year, when old Mr. Blewett christened the parson's twins, Jack and Bill were godfathers.



THE SNOW MAN ROMANCE

A snow man made love to a pretty snow drift.
Way down in the orchard where all was quite still.
He stretched forth his arms in a pleading of love.
But this little snow drift was haughty and chill.
The snow man loved on in his own patient way
Until the cold snow drift was softened and won't.
Then, suddenly, burst through the dark clouds
O'erhead
A heat that was called by the South Wind,
The Sun!
It melted the man that was moulded of snow.
It thawed all the pretty snow drift in a day!
And gladly their lives did the two lovers join
To sing in a river, forever, away!

An Unsentimental Valentine.

If I met you face to face,
Maiden fair and full of grace,
I should bow and doff my hat,
Say "Your servant," and all that.

While I watched your pretty ways,
I could only smile and praise;
And you'd never dream your lover
Could a flaw in you discover.

But I'm bolder, Lady mine,
Hid behind St. Valentine;
And I'll count you one, two, three
Faults that I can plainly see.

Once I saw a tempest rise,
Clouding o'er your pretty eyes,
When a guest came to the door
Who was old, and sad and poor.

Once I saw you turn away,
With a cold and fretful "Nay,"
When your little brother came
Begging for some childish game.

Once I saw you sit at ease,
With your book upon your knees,
While your mother, patient saint,
Did your work without complaint.

Ah! my pretty Valentine,
Ere I ask you to be mine
I must know that lovely face
Shines with more than surface grace.
That your captivating art
Does not hide a careless heart.

Lest when tresses brown grow white,
Eyes grow dim which now are bright,
Age and trouble grow apace,
Stealing beauty from your face,
I should bitterly repine
Choosing you my Valentine.

—Elizabeth P. Allen.

Gold and Love.

You may ask what man that you will
Which he the greater will prize,
Gold he's made or Love he creates,
And the man says Love—and lies.

For he gives to the Love he's won
The gift of a few waste hours,
Nor watches to see it increase,
Nor cares if it loses its powers.

While he gives to the Gold he's made
The strength of his virile years
To watch that his store grows big,
As he strives, and gloats, and fears.

So the Gold is safely hoarded,
And the Love just wasted dies;
And you ask which is the greater,
And the man says Love—and lies.

—Brooklyn Life.

Pickle.

When the moon rose over the sea,
The sea with its breast of blue,
We trod the sand, hand clasped in hand,
And the spell of your love was true.

When the stars shone over the sea,
The stars with their fickle beams,
You said farewell, and the witching spell
Prolonged for a time my dreams.

When the sun rose over the sea,
The sun with its piercing eye,
My dream was o'er, for the love you bore
Was lost in the night's good-by.

—Lurana W. Sheldon, in New York Herald.

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