

said she with affected tenderness; but he looked from her to me, and still said, 'Will.'

"It was plain James Weston would not be old Moneybags much longer, and Dr. Hill bade us prepare for the final change.

"Job Bromley *had* prepared. That evening I had gone down-stairs to get my supper, leaving Keturah in the room, when the lawyer's clerk came home with a seedy-looking companion.

"The two went up into the sick-chamber, and something impelled me to follow. My list slippers were noiseless; I crept into the little dressing-room, the door of which was ajar. I saw a parchment produced, and a pen, and the old man raised to sign. I thought also I heard a distinct 'No, no,' and then he fell back—dead.

"'It's no use, Job; he's gone, and his moneybags with him; you've left it too late—just like you,' cried Keturah in a temper.

"There was a blue-bottle fly buzzing in the window—it was the middle of August.

"'Stop,' said the stranger, 'let me catch that blue-bottle,' and after some dodging he caught it, and for what do you suppose, Mrs. Chappell? He *put the fly in the mouth* of the dead man, and held it shut, saying as he did so, 'Now put the pen in his hand and guide it, and we can swear he signed it *while there was life in him.*'

"I shrank with horror as I saw this villany perpetrated, and the other man's signature affixed, whilst the fly released went buzzing over the room, and then bells rang, and a great wail went through the house; but the young one who fled to me for comfort, and sobbed upon my shoulder, was the only true mourner.

"The funeral came and the will was read. James Dudley had not been wholly excluded; they had been too cunning for that; but the will set forth that his mother had offended in her marriage, and that he, James Weston, had taken an oath to dis-

inherit her offspring. The testator, however, left a charge upon his heirs and executors, his beloved nephew and niece, to educate his grandson James, and article him to a solicitor, as he had himself been articulated, with a small sum for maintenance till the youth was twenty-one, when he was to have £50, and no more.

"I told Dr. Hill that I was sure the pen was put in a dead man's hand, but he said it was preposterous, and bade me hold my tongue. I was dismissed, and being myself afraid of any publicity of my own name, I weakly let the matter drop, stifling conscience with the thought that it was no business of mine.

"Then my own cares drove all others out of my mind. I came to London, where I soon got a good connection, and I began to save money. At last it came to my ears that the Bromleys were purse-proud and arrogant, and had not even fulfilled the provisions of the sham will for poor James Dudley. My conscience stung me; I felt as if I had been a partner in the fraud to rob the orphan of his patrimony, and I went to a magistrate for advice.

"He gave me a hearing, and then referred me to a respectable solicitor, who took the matter in hand.

"To make a long story short, James Dudley was looked up, criminal proceedings were threatened against the Bromleys, a search-warrant obtained, and in the recess behind the bed another will was found, properly drawn up and attested, in which old Moneybags left to his nephew only the money he had already defrauded him of—as witness several forged cheques enclosed with the will. Of course the latter will would have set this aside, had it been genuine. That it was not, was proved by the abrupt flight of the Bromleys, and the confession of their fellow conspirator, who was brought to book.

"James Dudley is now a rich man, and if he does not make good use of his wealth, Mrs. Chappell, never trust the discernment of  
MARY MARBURY.

## BUYING VALENTINES.

BY A VALENTINE-SELLER.



**C**F the making of valentines there is no end. Every month in the year busy fingers are preparing these "trifles," which are scattered to the four corners of the earth in the month of February—a busy time for the retail dealers, when

regular "stock" must be put aside, and more solid stationery huddled away into all the spare corners;

'tis the little god of Love ordains it, and with what patience we possess we sell our valentines.

Certainly I should not relish the idea of selling (retailing) valentines all the year round, and there is no telling how soon, through the abuse of a custom which is beginning to be an infliction on many people, society may discard valentines altogether. Already we have Christmas cards, and New Year's wishes are scarcely exhausted before St. Valentine steps in, and February's wooing days are scarcely over when Easter cards come on the counter. Whitsuntide, Michaelmas, and Martinmas may have, in time, their peculiar blessings, to be proclaimed by the makers of cards and sachets. But this is mere conjecture. Just now we are selling valentines, so for the nonce imagine yourself standing beside me, and obtain a glimpse of a few of my customers. *Place aux dames.*



No sooner are the first valentines exhibited in my windows than those dear, gushing young girls of a sentimental turn, who abound everywhere, come popping in two or three times a day on one pretext or another, each time expressing their opinions on the relative merits of the new season's valentines.

Here is one of the gush tribe—a young lady with a pair of deep blue eyes peeping from underneath a thick fringe of light brown hair. She has all the pet descriptive terms at her immediate command; thinks my selection is "admirable," "the valentines are so sweetly pretty," "so exquisitely scented," "so delight-



"THINKS MY SELECTION IS 'ADMIRABLE.'"

fully worded," &c. She turns them over and over with her dainty ungloved hand; reads one particular verse a score of times, and inhales its fragrance so frequently that you wonder I do not tell her that she will take all the scent out of it. By-and-by she deliberately places it aside, and wonders audibly if she "had not better choose some-

thing else quite different; this is scarcely the thing." Here's for the game of patience! After a prolonged search for an impossible combination of beauty and elegance, strength and delicacy, and cheapness withal, she finally decides to be satisfied with the one she first selected.

There is another young lady just coming in—a bright, winsome face, and eyes sparkling with anticipated enjoyment; straightforward she is, and honest enough, as she asks for some *pretty* valentines; a little ripple of laughter dimpling her rosy cheeks as she speedily selects one; tells you she thinks she has picked the very prettiest; pays for her treasure, and is off in no time.

Very different is the next young lady, with meek brown eyes, and well-defined dark eye-brows, who declares she never bought a valentine in her life before; she would not be buying one at this moment, but mamma insists upon her sending one to a certain gentleman, who is merely a "friend." Suspicious

of the claims of this "friend," I place before her a most lovely sachet, with more than friendly words attached.

"Indeed, that is nothing like the one she wants," she spiritedly protests.

"Something more definite, perhaps?" I innocently inquire.

"Oh, dear, no! Something more *indefinite*; nothing more decided than "Forget me not," or "Remember me." In fact, she confidently remarks that it is far from *her* wish to *send* a valentine *at all*, *at all*, but *mamma's* express desire; for *her own* part she would most willingly put a stop to what has already arisen, but *mamma* says it would be unkind not to acknowledge so gentle an offering of devotion.

Pondering upon the wiles of this dutiful daughter, we salute our next customer—a middle-aged, *noli me tangere* sort of individual. In she walks, with an expression of



"I WANT TO SEE SOME UGLY VALENTINES."

supercilious revenge curling her upper lip. "I want to see some *ugly* valentines," she says, and desperately turns over the wretched cartoons, after which process she enigmatically inquires if I have sold one representing "a two-faced woman nursing a reptile?"

"Have you seen one?" I unwittingly ask.

"I have seen one," she replies. "In fact, I may say that I have just received one of that description; the ugliest valentine I ever saw; these are queens in comparison. I know of no one whom I can possibly have offended so deeply, who should choose to send it to *me*. My husband is *distracted*. He says it is some jealous, ill-mean-



"POOR POSTMAN!"

ing, underbred person who deserves horse-whipping. I was thinking, if you could tell me if you remembered who bought such a *one*, I would not mind *what* I *paid* to serve them out with something as hideous."

Of course, on the principle that shopkeepers *have*



principles, there is a demur to this, or the question is parried by a smile as a little joke. I am not sorry that she does not find anything "hideous enough" in my little stock of "comics." With the exception of "babies long and short," we see less and less every year of the frightful cartoons of personal defects and monstrosities.

Now comes Materfamilias to bargain for a dozen or two of "cheap pretty valentines." She hopes that she will be fairly dealt with, as she has so many children she doesn't know what to do about sending one to each; it is *quite* a consideration to invest in valentines for the family, but everybody's children send and receive valentines now-a-days, and *her* children must not be below *par*."

"Oh, dear! I wish this bevy of girls would be quick and choose their valentines," I murmur *sotto voce*, as sweet sixteen and sweeter seventeen upset my boxes. Girls just leaving school are the greatest buyers of valentines, sending them to their bosom friends, big brothers, country cousins, darling grandmas and grandpas, indiscriminately; while sweetest eighteen denies the necessity of propitiating every relation with a valentine; at the same time she may be detected stealthily posting a *recherché confection* to a certain "dear Will," or "sweet Harry."

Enough has been revealed of the tender sex; turn we to the contemplation of the sterner sex in love.

Do you see that modest, inoffensive young man peeping through the window? Presently watching a quiet opportunity, he sidles into the shop. I know that young man. For the last three or four seasons has he come hither for his valentine.

He looks around; refrains from touching any, lest you should suspect his design; quietly and simply asks for a penny railway guide, and then makes as though he were leaving the shop forthwith; but softly, softly—I have pity on that young man, and do not detain him with embarrassing questions; but placing a few valentines, which I flatter myself are just suited for his requirements, within his reach, I see him pause, glance, admire, then hear him say he "doesn't mind

taking one of them"—the prettiest too; and he allows it to be sealed, and addresses it himself, before ever he asks if it will cost him fivepence or five shillings.

Save me from the cool, calculating young fellow of pretension, who comes to look, and looks again and again; for he "likes this one well enough, if the words were but different;" and thinks the "words of that more suitable, but the design is execrable." Trying to please him by placing almost the whole of my stock before him, ten to one he will walk away "still longing, yet for ever unsatisfied."

Very different is the young man who follows him. Entering with manly tread, he declares at once that he "has come for a valentine," and "it must be a very nice one too;" and he smiles, and I smile, and we are quite chatty over it; and he says this is not amiss, and that is "very good," and will do first-rate, if it is not *too* high a figure; and fortunately it is not *too* high a figure; and he laughs outright as he flings down his sovereign, and I place it in his hand with an unuttered God-speed to his wooing.

Still another—a juvenile adorer is this. Young as he is, he belongs to the "Good Intent Society," if he will send to the girl of his heart a trifle that costs a month's pocket-money; he has seen it in the window, and no other will satisfy him; and, oh! the time he occupies in committing its verses to memory before finally sealing it for the post!

Last scene of all—an aged convert to St. Valentine, an old man of venerable aspect, who will by no means avow his intention to send a valentine, but "promenading" his eyes over the "spread," wonders "how in the world such perfection is attained;" mounts his spectacles, and picks up a dainty sachet; turns it over, and "perceives that it has a fine scent." It is not very difficult to win him over. You may see that he really means "business;" for as he reads a certain motto, a wizened smile flits across his wrinkled face; he plunges one hand into his pocket, with the other takes off his specs, and pointing to the valentine that so diverts him, he tells you to pack it up and let him go before he parts with his last shilling. SABINA.

## HOW CAPTAIN BURNABY RODE TO KHIVA.



HE "strongest man in the British army" not long since returned from a visit to the furthest point in Central Asia to which Russian conquest has as yet rolled in its course towards India—beyond it, indeed, for Khiva, though reduced to vassalage and disarmed, is a nominally independent state. But the encroaching tide has sapped its foundations, and might swallow it up at any moment.

Several considerations combined to make this journey attractive to him: as a soldier, he wished to go over the ground of recent military operations; as a patriotic Englishman, who possessed the exceedingly rare accomplishment of speaking the Russian language fluently, he desired to satisfy himself of the

extent to which the recent Muscovite conquests threatened British interests; as a man of enterprise and an athlete, the dangers and difficulties of the trip had a rare fascination for him. But when, in addition to all these inducements, there came that of prohibition, the desire to make the journey became too imperative for resistance. When Captain Burnaby saw a paragraph in a newspaper to the effect that no foreigner was to be allowed to travel in Russian Asia, he naturally felt that the question was settled, and travel in Russian Asia he must. The exigencies of his profession added a fresh difficulty; a soldier is not his own master, and cannot absent himself without leave, which he must take when he can get it. Captain Burnaby was successful in obtaining four