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**VALENTINE**

AND

**ORSON.**

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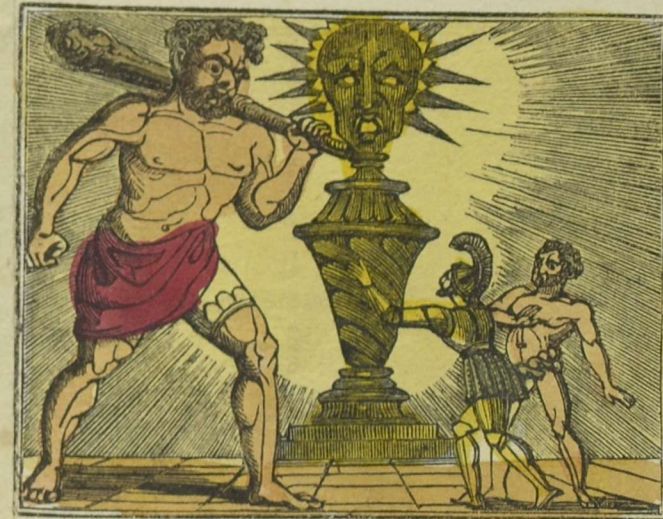
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David B. Thillaber  
Valentine and Orson;

OR, THE

WILD MAN OF THE WOOD.

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## VALENTINE AND ORSON.

PEPIN, the renowned king of France, had a sister named Bellisant, who was exceedingly beautiful, and whose hand was demanded in marriage by several kings and princes. The lady Bellisant's choice fell on Alexander, emperor of Constantinople, who came to the court of king Pepin to espouse the princess. Great rejoicings were made on the occasion throughout France; and shortly after the marriage, the emperor took leave of king Pepin, and conducted his lovely bride with great pomp and triumph to the city of Constantinople.

The emperor's prime minister and greatest favourite was an arch-priest, a selfish, cruel man, who completely governed the emperor, and tyrannised over all his subjects. The arch-priest, observing the gentleness and sweetness of the new empress, soon feared that she would acquire too much influence over the emperor, and wickedly resolved to seek the destruction of the amiable lady. The emperor was of a suspicious temper, and the arch-priest soon found means to infuse into his mind suspicions of the empress. One day, when the emperor was alone, the arch-priest entered the apartment; and prostrating himself at the emperor's feet, said—"High and mighty king, may heaven guard you from the base attempts of the wicked and treacherous! I am a holy priest, and may not seek the death of any man; nor may I reveal the name of

the criminal who has entrusted me, in the way of confession, with a dreadful secret; but in the most solemn manner, I conjure your majesty to beware of the designs of your empress, for that beautiful and dissembling lady is faithless and disloyal, and even now is planning your death. Oh! mighty emperor! my heart swells with grief and indignation, to think that a lady so unparalleled in beauty and wisdom, and the sister of so great a king, should become so dishonourable and wicked.”

The emperor, giving implicit faith to the arch-priest's tale, could no longer restrain his fury; and abruptly leaving the arch-priest, he rushed into the apartment of the empress, and in the most fierce, and unmanly manner, dragged the fair Bellisant about the chamber by her long and beautiful hair.



“Alas! my dear lord!” she cried, “what moves you to this outrage?”

“Base, despicable wretch!” he exclaimed, “I am but too well informed of your infamous proceedings!” then dashing her with violence against the ground, he left her almost dead.

The attendants of the empress, finding her bleeding and senseless upon the floor, uttered loud screams, which presently brought all the court into the chamber of the empress. Every one pitied the sufferings of their amiable queen; and the state counsellors demanded an audience of the emperor, to represent to him the wrongs he had done to an honourable lady, in whom no one had ever perceived a fault. But the emperor was yet mad with passion, which the arch-priest continued artfully to inflame; and to the representations of his state

counsellors, he answered—“Let no man presume to defend her who has basely betrayed me. She shall die!”

The empress, being recovered from her swoon, then fell on her knees, and, in tears, thus addressed the emperor: “Alas! my lord, take pity on one who never harboured a thought against your person or dignity. I shall soon become a mother, and I implore your compassion on behalf of my child. Let me be imprisoned till the time of its birth, and then, if your anger be not appeased, do with me as you please, but, oh! save my child!”

The hard-hearted emperor, bewitched with the false tales of the insidious priest, answered—“Perish, thou and thy child, basest of women! Thy child would be to me no joy, but rather great dishonour.”

The courtiers, perceiving nothing could mitigate the rage of the empe-

ror, removed Bellisant from his presence. Her faithful servant, Blandiman, now threw himself at her feet, exclaiming, "Ah! madam, quit this barbarous monarch, and suffer me to conduct you to your brother, the good king Pepin. Innocent and noble lady, follow my counsel; for if you stay here, the emperor will bring you to a shameful death."

"No, Blandiman," the queen replied, "I must not follow thy advice: should I steal privately from the court, it might be said I had fled, knowing myself to be guilty. Believe me, I had rather die the most cruel death, than bear the blame of which I am innocent."

The emperor, still loving his queen, could not bring himself to pronounce the sentence of her execution; yet, as the base arch-priest continually irritated his mind with false accusations

against her, he resolved to banish her from his dominions, and commanded her to quit Constantinople. At the same time, he published an edict, forbidding all persons, on pain of death, to assist or succour the unfortunate lady, allowing her no other attendant than her servant Blandiman, whom she had brought with her from France.

Sentence being thus pronounced, the empress hastened away. As she passed through the city, she was met by multitudes of people, lamenting the loss of so good an empress. When she left Constantinople, as she was complaining and weeping with anguish, her servant said to her—  
“Alas! madam, be not discomfited, but trust to Providence, who will protect you.”

After refreshing themselves at a fountain, they proceeded towards France. Many weary days and nights

had they travelled, when, arriving at the forest of Orleans, the disconsolate empress was so much overcome with grief and fatigue, that she sank down, incapable of proceeding further. Her faithful attendant gathered some fallen leaves and moss, to make a couch for her to rest on, and then hastened away to seek some habitation where he might procure assistance for his unfortunate mistress.

During Blandiman's absence, the royal lady was delivered of two beautiful sons. She pressed the lovely infants by turns to her bosom, and shed tears of joy over them; when suddenly a huge bear rushed upon her, and snatching up, one of the babes in its mouth, hastened into the thickest part of the forest.

The wretched mother, distracted at the fate of the child, pursued the bear with shrieks and lamentations, till,

overcome with anguish and terror, she fell into a swoon near the mouth of the cave into which the bear had borne her infant.

It happened that king Pepin, accompanied by several great lords and barons of his court, was on that day hunting in the forest of Orleans, and chanced to pass near the tree where the other son of Bellisant lay sleeping on a bed of moss. The king was astonished at the beauty of the child, who opened its eyes, as the king stood gazing on him, and stretched out its little arms, as if to ask protection.

“See, my lords,” said king Pepin, “this lovely infant appears to solicit my favour. Here is no one to claim it, and I will adopt it as my own.”

The king little imagined it was his nephew, the son of his sister Bellisant, that he now delivered into the hands of one of his pages, who took the

babe to Orleans to be nursed, and gave it, by the king's order, the name of Valentine.

Scarcely had the page gone away with the child, when the king met Blandiman, and demanded with great surprise what news from Constantino-ple. Blandiman, bending one knee to the ground, began to relate the disasters of the empress; but upon king Pepin's hearing that the arch-priest had accused her of plotting the emperor's death, he flew into the most violent rage, against his innocent sister, and said, "Now, by heaven, I cannot believe the loyal arch-priest would bring a false accusation against any one, and I blame the emperor for sparing the life of his treacherous, disloyal queen: let her beware how she comes within my power; and hear me, nobles, henceforth it is death for any one to name her in my presence."

So saying, he turned back, and proceeded towards Orleans.

Blandiman, with a heavy heart, searched the forest for his injured mistress, and at length espied her on the ground, tearing her dishevelled hair, and uttering piercing cries of grief. When she became more calm, she related to Blandiman, the birth of her two sons, the sad fate of one of them, and the loss of the other from where she left it. "And perhaps," said she, "some more cruel beast of prey has devoured it."

After some time, Blandiman communicated his interview with king Pepin, and his unjust wrath against her. This determined her to take shelter in a retired monastery, that stood on the borders of the forest of Orleans.

The bear that had carried away the infant, bore it to her cave, and laid it



down unhurt before her young ones. The cubs, however, did not devour it; but stroked it with their rough paws; and the old bear, perceiving their kindness for the little babe, gave it suck, and nourished it in this manner for the space of a whole year.

The child became hearty and robust, and as he grew in strength, began to range the forest, and attack the wild beasts with such fury, that they used to shun the cave where he continued to live with the old bear, who loved him with extreme fondness. He had passed this kind of life during eighteen years, growing to such wonderful strength, that he was the terror of the neighbouring country. The name of Orson was given him, because he had been nurtured by a bear; and the renown of this wild man spread over all France. He went naked; and uttered no other sounds than of a wild kind of howl, to express either his anger or his joy.

Valentine, in the mean while, had been educated in all kinds of accomplishments with the king's fair daughter, Eglantine. Nothing could exceed the fondness of the young people for each other. Indeed, there never was a lovelier princess than Eglantine, or a more brave and accomplished cavalier than Valentine. The king, observing his inclination for arms, indulged him with armour and horses, and gave him a command in the army that was preparing to march against the Saracens.

Valentine soon distinguished himself above all the other leaders in battle. He fought near the king's side; and when his majesty was taken by a troop of Pagans, Valentine rushed through their ranks, slew hundreds of them, and, placing the king on his horse, led him off in triumph. Afterwards, when the Saracen city was besieged, he was the first to scale the

wall, and place the Christian standard upon the battlements. By these means, a complete victory was obtained, and peace restored to France.

Valentine, having conquered the Saracens, returned to the court of king Pepin, and was received with loud acclamations by the people, and joyfully welcomed by the princess Eglantine. The distinctions and favours showered on him, raised the envy and hatred of Henry and Haufry, the king's sons, who plotted together to destroy Valentine. The same day, king Pepin presented Valentine to his nobles, saying "My lords, this brave youth saved my life, and rescued his country from the Saracens; I therefore now create him Earl of Clerimont." Haufry and Henry were more and more irritated against Valentine by this new and honourable distinction, and they determined to watch closely

for some opportunity of effecting his destruction.

It happened very shortly after the return of Valentine from his victory over the Saracens, that a petition was presented to the king by a deputation of peasants, praying relief against Orson, the wild man of the woods; the fear of whom was now become so great that the peasants dared not to go out to till their fields, nor the shepherds to watch their flocks. The king immediately issued a proclamation, saying, if any man would undertake to bring Orson, alive or dead, to the city, he should receive a thousand marks of gold.

“Sire,” said Henry, “I think no person so proper to undertake this enterprise as the foundling Valentine, on whom your majesty lavishes such great favours. Perhaps, if he conquers the naked savage with his sword,

you will not think it too much to reward him with the hand of our sister Eglantine."

To this the king replied with a frown, "Away! for this rude speech betrays thy envy."

Valentine, fixing a stern look on the malicious brother, said, "You gave this council to encompass my death. Be it so. Know that I will not fail of victory here also. I will go without delay, and alone, to conquer the savage man."

"No, Valentine," said the king; "you shall not rush upon destruction, to gratify the ill-will of evil-minded persons."

"Pardon me, my liege," replied Valentine; "it concerns my honour that I go. I will encounter this danger and every other, rather than not prove myself worthy of your majesty's favour and protection. To-morrow

morning, I will depart for the forest at the break of day."

At the first dawn of morning, Valentine arose; and putting on his armour, having his shield polished like a mirror, he departed for the forest; and being arrived there, he alighted, and tying his horse to a tree, penetrated into the thickest part of the wood, in search of Orson. He wandered about a long time in vain; and being come near the mouth of a large cave, he thought that might be the hiding-place of the wild man. Valentine then climbed a high tree near the cave: and scarcely was he seated among the branches, when he heard Orson's voice roar in the forest.

Orson had been hunting, and came with a swift pace, bearing a buck he had killed upon his shoulders. Valentine could not help admiring the beauty of his person, the grace and

freedom of his motions, and his appearance of strength and agility. He felt a species of affection for the wild man, and wished it were possible to tame him without having recourse to weapons.

Valentine now tore off a branch of the tree, and threw it at Orson's feet; who, looking up and espying Valentine in the tree, uttered a howl of fury, and darted up the tree like lightning. Valentine as quickly descended on the other side. Orson seeing him on the ground, leaped down, and opening his arms, prepared, in his usual manner, to rush upon and overthrow his antagonist; but Valentine, holding up his polished shield, Orson suddenly beheld, instead of the person he meant to seize, his own naked, wild, and terror-striking figure. On Valentine's lowering the shield, he again saw his enemy, and, with a cry

of transport, again prepared to grasp him in his arms. The strength of Orson was so great, that Valentine was unable to defend himself without having recourse to his sword; he uttered loud shrieks of anger and surprise, and instantly tearing up by the roots a large tree, furiously attacked Valentine.

A dreadful fight now ensued between these two brothers, and victory was a long time doubtful; Orson receiving many dreadful wounds from the sword of Valentine, and Valentine, with great difficulty, escaping from being crushed to death beneath the weighty club of Orson. Just at this time, the bear, who had nursed Orson, and who was in the cave, hearing his cries of rage, came out to see what was the matter with her favourite. Valentine, perceiving her approach, aimed a blow at her with his sword,



which probably would have killed her on the spot, had not Orson rushed forward; and throwing one arm round the neck of the bear, he with the other hand supplicated for mercy for his old and only friend. Valentine was greatly affected at this generous action, and, laying aside his sword, made signs that he would not hurt the bear; and in a token of kindness, brought some grapes, and a bottle of strong liquor, which he had deposited near for his own refreshment in case of need, and presented them to Orson.

Orson no sooner tasted the delicious flavour of the fruit, than he gave it to the bear, and afterwards let her drink the strong liquor, with both of which she seemed much pleased; while Orson, delighted to see her make such a plentiful repast, threw his arms round her, and embraced her; and

the bear, desirous to testify her affection for him, stroked him with her huge paw, and uttered a gentle growl, as if to express her satisfaction in his caresses.

Valentine now made many signs to Orson, persuading him to go with him, where he should be fed and clothed, and treated with the greatest kindness: but Orson rejected all his offers with anger and contempt, making signs that he would never quit his beloved bear nor his wild life in the woods. But it happened that the strong liquor, which the bear had drunk so greedily from Valentine's bottle, caused her death: and soon after testifying her love to Orson in the manner we have described, she faintly howled, and fell dead on the ground.

Orson stood for a few moments motionless with alarm and amazement; then, supposing his ancient friend

might be only asleep, he stooped and endeavoured to rouse her; but finding all his efforts ineffectual, his grief was scarcely to be described. He threw himself upon her body, and uttered piercing shrieks of distress. At length he suddenly sprang from the ground, and, approaching Valentine, made signs that he would now be his; and while the tears ran down his cheeks for the loss of his bear, he suffered Valentine to bind his hands, and unresistingly followed his conductor.

Valentine took his way towards Orleans; but wherever he passed, the people, perceiving the wild man, ran into their houses and hid themselves.

On arriving at the city, the inhabitants shut the doors, and ran into the highest rooms to gaze upon the wild man. Being come to the outer court of King Pepin's palace, the porter, in affright, barred the gate with heavy

chains and bars of iron, and would not be prevailed on to open it. After soliciting for admittance for some time, and being still denied, Valentine made a sign to Orson, who, tearing up one of the large stone posts that stood by, shattered the gate to pieces.

The queen, the princess Eglantine, and all their attendants, fled to hide themselves, when they heard that Orson was arrived; and Valentine had the greatest difficulty to persuade them to believe that Orson was no longer furious and savage, as he had been in the woods. At length the king permitted him to be brought in; and the whole court soon gathered in a crowd in the apartment, and were much amused by his wild actions and gestures, although very cautious not to come near to him. On Valentine's making signs, he kissed the king's robe and the hand of the princess

Eglantine; for Orson had now become so attached to Valentine, that he would obey him in all things, but would suffer no other person to attempt to control him.

Very soon after the capture of Orson, a herald appeared at the court of king Pepin, from the duke of Aquitain, summoning all true knights to avenge the cause of the lady Fezon, daughter to the noble duke, who was held in cruel captivity by Agramont, the green knight: the herald proclaiming, that whoever would conquer the green knight, should receive the hand of the lady Fezon in marriage, together with a princely dowry.

This green knight was so famous for his cruelty and his victories, that the young lords of the court all drew back, and seemed unwilling to enter the lists; for it was known that he was defended by enchantments, and that

it was his practice to hang upon a high tree all knights whom he had defeated. Valentine, however, offered himself without hesitation, and engaged to get ready and depart the next morning.

The princess Eglantine secretly resolved, if possible, to prevent the destruction of her beloved Valentine, by combatting the green knight herself. She had been accustomed to fence and ride, and was greatly accomplished in all the manly exercises. She contrived to steal away the armour of Valentine while he slept, and equipping herself in it, mounted a fiery courser; and attended only by her favourite maid, in quality of a page, she proceeded to the castle which the green knight inhabited and where he kept the lady Fezon a prisoner.

Valentine meanwhile missing his armour when he arose at dawn of day,

and learning that the princess had taken it and was gone on this perilous enterprise, was almost distracted with his terrors for her safety. He ordered his horse to be prepared; and, followed by Orson, set out in search of the princess; and arrived just as she was almost overpowered in the combat.

Valentine now rushed with dreadful fury on the green knight, and the fight was long and equal. At length Agramont demanded a parley. "Brave Knight," said he to Valentine, "in pity to thy youth, I tell thee, unless thou canst remove yonder shield, thou ne'er canst rescue the lady Fezon or conquer me.

Valentine approached the shield; but in spite of all his efforts, he could not loosen it from the tree; breathless with so much exertion he stood leaning against the tree; when Agramont,

with a loud laugh, exclaimed, "Fly, and save thyself, fair knight: for, thou art not destined to be my victor. Further know, the only one who can subdue me, must be the son of a mighty king, and yet suckled by a wild beast." Valentine started at hearing these latter words, and ran to Orson, who had been all this time gazing with looks of admiration on the beautiful lady Fezon. Valentine led him to the enchanted shield; which on Orson's raising his arm towards it, dropped from its place: the ground now rocked beneath their feet, and the green knight trembled and turned pale; he attempted to grasp Orson in his arms; but Orson seizing him as if he had been a mere child, dashed him on the ground, and held him down till chains were brought; when he bound him in strong fetters.

Agramont finding himself subdued,



said to Valentine, "This savage man is my conqueror, there must therefore be some mystery in his fate. Haste to the castle of my brother Ferragus, where a brazen head will explain to you who he is." Valentine dispatched a herald to acquaint the duke of Aquitaine with the release of his daughter, and sent the lady Fezon with princess Eglantine to the court of king Pepin, while he and Orson proceeded to the castle of the giant Ferragus.

On entering the castle, a little dwarf approached them and conducted them to a chamber abounding with gold, and precious stones; in the centre of which were four pillars of jasper, between these was an emerald of amazing value; and in the midst the brazen head rested upon a rich pedestal. Before the pedestal stood an enormous giant, who lifted his club to forbid their approach; but Orson

seized him by the middle, and bore him from the chamber to a dungeon, where he secured him. Valentine fixed his eyes upon the head, anxious to hear what it would say concerning his birth. At length, it spoke thus:

“Thou, O renowned knight, art Valentine the Brave, and art the man destined to be the husband of the princess Eglantine of France. Thou art son to the emperor of Greece, and thy mother is Bellisant, sister to king Pepin, of France.

“The wild man is thy brother. You were both born in the forest of Orleans. Thou wert found, by and brought up under the care of, king Pepin, thy uncle; but thy brother was stolen and nurtured by a bear. Proceed, Valentine, to France, where thou wilt find the innocent empress, thy hapless mother: at the moment she embraces thy brother, speech will

be given him. Away, and prosper! These are the last words I shall utter. Fate has decreed, that when Valentine and Orson enter this chamber, my power is at an end."

Having thus spoken, the brazen head fell from its pedestal; thunder shook the foundation of the castle; they were surrounded by thick darkness; and when the light again burst upon them, they found themselves on an open plain, and no traces of the castle remained. The little dwarf, whose name was Pacolet, at the same time appeared before them on a winged horse and said, "Noble youths, I go before you to the court of king Pepin, to prepare your royal parents, who are already there, for your reception." And instantly Pacolet mounted into the air on his winged horse, and was presently out of sight. Valentine now fell upon the bosom of his brother

Orson, and Orson upon his; they embraced each other with the utmost affection, and joyfully proceeded towards France.

While these transactions were passing, the Emperor of Constantinople had lived in great affliction for the loss of his queen. The wicked arch-priest continued to represent her as the vilest of women, and to abuse the Emperor's confidence in him, till he was on his death-bed; when repenting of his treachery, he sent for the emperor, and confessed, before the whole court, that he had basely slandered the amiable enpress.

Nothing could exceed the emperor's grief. He immediately set out with his nobles to France, to implore king Pepin to assist him in searching for the injured Bellisant. In every town on his journey, he caused her innocence to be proclaimed, and offered an

immense reward to any one who should bring tidings of her.

It happened that Blandiman, who was buying provisions for the monastery at Orleans, as the emperor passed through, heard the proclamation, and hastened with the tidings to his mistress. The empress, overjoyed to have her innocence made known, quitted the monastery, and went to the palace of her brother, where she was received with shouts of triumph,—king Pepin and the emperor both falling at her feet, to implore her forgiveness.

Scarcely had the reconciliation passed, and the empress related her sorrowful history, when the dwarf Pacolet arrived on a winged horse, to announce the wonderful declaration made by the brazen head, and the approach of the royal brothers. At these tidings, the empress thought

herself the happiest of women; but the emperor could not forbear shedding tears, when he remembered all the dangers and sufferings he had caused to his amiable queen and his princely sons.

The noble youths now presented themselves to their parents; and no sooner had the empress Bellisant thrown her arms round the neck of her son Orson, than the faculty of speech was given to him, and he expressed his duty and affection to his parents and uncle, in terms of such grace and propriety, as at once astonished and delighted the whole court. The duke of Aquitain, having already come to the palace of king Pepin to congratulate his daughter on her deliverance from Agramont, the green knight, now took the hand of Orson, and presented him to the lady Fezon, as her future husband; king Pepin at

the same time joining the hands of Valentine and the princess Eglantine. Splendid preparations were immediately made for the celebration of these nuptials; and, during a whole month, nothing was to be heard of throughout France, but tilts and tournaments, feasts and balls, fireworks and illuminations, with every other kind of splendid and magnificent entertainment.

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