



A Cut Paper Valentine—one of the Oldest Valentines in existence.

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## The Oldest Valentines in Existence

NO class of antiques is of greater rarity to-day than the valentines of yesteryear. Nor is this strange, for filmy creations of lace paper and scrap pictures could scarcely be expected to stand the wear and tear of a century or more and survive as does old furniture or pewter or brass. Possibly because old valentines are so comparatively few in number and so hard to find, only a very limited number of persons have ever attempted to gather collections of ancient valentines as a fad or a pastime. A recent canvass of the leading museums and libraries in the United States disclosed the fact that none of them possesses so much as a single specimen of the valentines of our great-grandmother's period, although the British Museum in London boasts the ownership of a number of early valentines.

The one notable collection of old valentines on the American continent is the property of Mr. Frank House Baer, a well-known resident of the State of

Ohio and a prominent railroad official. Mr. Baer, who has had the means to indulge his unique fad, inaugurated his hunt for valentines some years ago and has covered all quarters of the globe in his search. This premier valentine collector now has more than two thousand specimens in his odd art gallery and many of his prizes have cost him a pretty penny.

Antedating all forms of manufactured valentines were the "valentine writers"—books of specially prepared verses and sentiments designed for the use of the swains and maidens of a century and a half ago, who must needs prepare their own valentines. These first aids to the sentimentally inclined have such suggestive titles as "The Bower of Cupid," "The School of Love," "The Ladies' Polite Valentine Writer," "The Satirical Valentine Writer" and "Rhapsodies for Gentlemen Who Wish to Address Ladies in Sonnets."

The oldest and most valuable valentines in exist-

ence are the cut paper valentines. These are carefully folded and delicately cut with saw-tooth edges, the average love token of this kind being so arranged that its unfolding discloses a continuous succession of penned sentiments. One of these cut-paper valentines, bearing the date 1790, is formed from a sheet of paper about the size of a lady's handkerchief, folded into squares of about four inches. It was originally sealed with the representation of a heart.

Particularly quaint conceits in the line of old-time valentines found in this collection are those which represent in each instance, either a single flower or a cluster of gay posies, fashioned from tissue paper, somewhat on the order of modern artificial flowers. However, these ancient counterfeit blooms were so slit into lattice-like meshes, that the pulling of an attached thread will cause each flower to unfold, disclosing sentimental messages hidden in its depths.

Transformation pictures consisting of crude drawings in ink or at best, a more or less artistic rendering in water-colour, preceded by many years, the transformation valentines that were introduced by the Germans when the manufactured valentine became an established institution. In these old valentines of the "before and after" order, a favourite subject was that of a bachelor sitting disconsolate and alone in his cheerless home. Upon lifting a flap of cardboard there was disclosed, by way of contrast, the happiness and contentment that might be his in a home presided over by a devoted wife.

One of the valentines of this class seems, at first glance, nothing more than a commonplace representation of the exterior of a church, but a shifting of the scene displays the interior of the church with the bride and groom, best man, maid of honour and other attendants. The best part of the scheme is that the young lady—her name was Flora—who sent this keepsake a century ago went to the trouble to duly label each person represented in the entrancing scene so that the recipient, presumably, had advance information as to all the details of his own wedding. The same idea was utilised for comic valentines in the early days as may be seen in one antiquated comic wherein the head of a lady gives place to that of a poll-parrot.

## Unappreciated Sympathy

THE soda-fountain clerk was engaged in vigorously shaking up a chocolate and egg, says a writer in the *Bellman*, when suddenly the glass broke in his hands, and the ensuing deluge made him look like a human eclair. The horrified customer leaned over the counter and tried to be sympathetic. Not knowing exactly what to say, he finally blurted out, consolingly:

"Oh—er—too bad! Did the glass break?"

Dripping from head to foot, the clerk looked at him witheringly.

"Did the glass break?" he repeated. "Did the glass break?" And then with freezing sarcasm, "Oh, no, not at all, not at all! You just happened to stop in while I was taking my morning shower."



An Ancient Comic Valentine—Lady with Head of a Parrot.



A Valentine sent in 1805.

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A Valentine of the Period of 1830