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The Two Valentines.

[1892-1907.]

A box with pale blue ribbon bound,
Unlooked for, by her plate she found,
"From J. to M., in memory
Of years and hopes that used to be,"
She scanned the card with languid eyes,
Austere, and cold, and worldly wise,
And scarce remembered, from the lines,
The day was good Saint Valentine's,
But with deft fingers she untied
Her husband's gift, and faintly sighed,
A ransom for a king, each strand
Of threaded pearl lay in her hand.
And once again she read the lines
And thought of other valentines.
Through all that day she seemed to hear
The strange words sounding in her ear
Half mockingly: "In memory
Of years and hopes that used to be!"
And some old self within her woke,
Some dim voice through the dead past spoke,
Then from a long forgotten nook
With hesitating hands she took
A cheap and flimsy heart of blue,
By arrows all pierced through and through,
Round which poor, faded cupids trooped,
With lacework fringed and ribbon looped,
And smiling through half bitter sighs,
She dashed the hot tears from her eyes
And gazed on that old valentine,
And read the scrawled and boyish lines:
"From J. to M., with love so true,
Dear sweetheart, eighteen-ninety-two."
—(Arthur Stringer in Everybody's Magazine.)



Why?

Were I to buy a valentine
For you, my dear,
Two loving hearts should close entwine—
Of course they'd be your own and mine—
With Cupid near.
Then in the first fond, loving heart
There'd be a dart,
Fresh shot from Cupid's daring bow—
It's been there many moons, I trow—
But why that start?
You thought it was your heart I meant—
With arrow spent!
It was my own; but, dearest, hark!
If your heart too has been a mark,
Why, spend a cent!

—Lurana W. Sheldon.



Force of Habit.

There was once a penman so queer
He wrote on a typewriter clear;
And when he was through
Pray what did he do
But hang it up over his ear.

ORIGIN OF VALENTINES



HE valentine is an inheritance that has come down to us through an almost interminable span of years, and the love sentiment that has made the day one peculiarly of love and lovers has hitherto remained untouched through the many changed forms that have characterized the festival.

The brilliantly humorous cards that are sent to the 20th century maid and the gilt and lace repository of the freckled boy's heart's secret have a common beginning.

It is a far cry from our civilization back to the ancient kingdom of Rome, predecessor of the republic; and yet the two are connected by a straight chain of valentine custom. When you sent that dainty card or gay lithograph you were perpetrating a rite that has come down through many changes from the Juno worship of the days of Numa.

The evolution of it is easy to trace. Any one familiar with the play of Julius Caesar knows that its action begins on the feast of Lupercalia, a great public religious festival. Caesar bids his wife, Calphurnia:

Stand you directly in Antonius' way,
When he doth run his course.

And to Antony:

Forget not in your speed, Antonius,
To touch Calphurnia, for our elders say
The barren touched in this holy chase
Shake off their sterile curse.

The lines mean that Marc Antony was one of the priests of the ceremonial that day. These were always specially chosen for the occasion, and part of their duty was to rush about at the head of the splendid religious street procession of the feast, garbed only in girdles of goatskin, and strike with goatskin whips at all the women who presented themselves. Those who so courted the whiplash were married and childless.

The explanation of this curious ceremony is that Lupercus was the Roman god of fecundity. His festival was held on Feb. 15, or two days after the ides of that month, as the Romans expressed it. The Italian spring time was well begun at that season, hence the weather was propitious both to street pageant and to festivals touching love, marriage and parentage. Eggs were used symbolically in many of the ceremonies, and that feature of them is perpetuated in an Easter custom of our own.

By a very pretty symbolism denoting the necessity of purity or purification in all relating to love, marriage and parentage, the day before the Lupercal was devoted to Februetta Juno, goddess of love's very youngest dream, as well as of its fullest fruition. Both of these festivals were established in the time of Numo Pompilius.

According to "Butler's lives of the Saints," one of the rites in the Februetta Juno celebration was that boys and girls "drew names" of each other and prospective lovers, for which "heathenish, lewd and superstitious custom" zealous Christian pastors in after years caused the

names of saints to be drawn for on that day.

So St Francis de Sales, we are told, forbade in Geneva, in the sixteenth century, the custom of valentines or giving boys in writing the names of girls to be admired or attended on by them, and he was one of those watchful pastors who had saints' names drawn instead, so that the young people might give their minds temporarily, at least, to imitation of these holy persons instead of lovemaking.

It happened that Valentine, bishop or presbyter, as he is variously styled, was martyred in the reign of the Emperor Clodius, A. D. 270, on the day of Februetta Juno. In due course he was canonized, and what more appropriate day to set aside as his than that of his martyrdom.

It was consistently the practice of the early Christian church to adopt and purify such pagan festivals as had become ineradicably rooted in the lives of the unconverted peoples. Thus in good time the feast of Februetta Juno was made St. Valentine's day, a festival for beginning prudent and pious courtship. The drawing of names continued, although some of the more zealous pastors, as Butler tells us, steadfastly set their faces against the practice.

How the drawing was done and what was the significance in middle-age England at least, are made plain by writers of that nation and period. The practice had long before reached that country, following the spread of reformed Roman customs all over Europe, through the work of the missionaries.

An equal number of young persons of each sex put little tablets inscribed with their names into a box on St Valentine's day. Drawings were made from the box until each Jack had a Jill, and each companion so bestowed by fate was styled the other's valentine. These were not necessarily expected to become lovers. The young man had the right of custom to be a sort of adopted cousin, whose friendship might blossom into love—who could tell?

Presents were exchanged by the young persons and the certificates of valentineship—the little tablet drawn—was worn proudly on the bosom for weeks, and "That is my valentine" said Jack, or said Jill, pointing at it. So in time came the tablet to be called the valentine in place of the person it named. The next step in the evolution of the custom was for those well pleased with their partners to make presents of handsome certificates to be worn in place of the humble tablet. Goldsmith, in the "Vicar of Wakefield," says it was the rustic habit of the time he writes of to send them in the form of true lovers' knots.

But by that time the drawing of names was all over. Perhaps the zealous pastors had gradually and by degrees sent the tablets home to keep company with the goatskin whip. According to Sir Walter Scott, it must have passed away in Scotland before the Reformation. For in his "Fair Maid of Perth" he makes Harry Smith and another gallant pay court to
(Concluded on page eleven.)

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