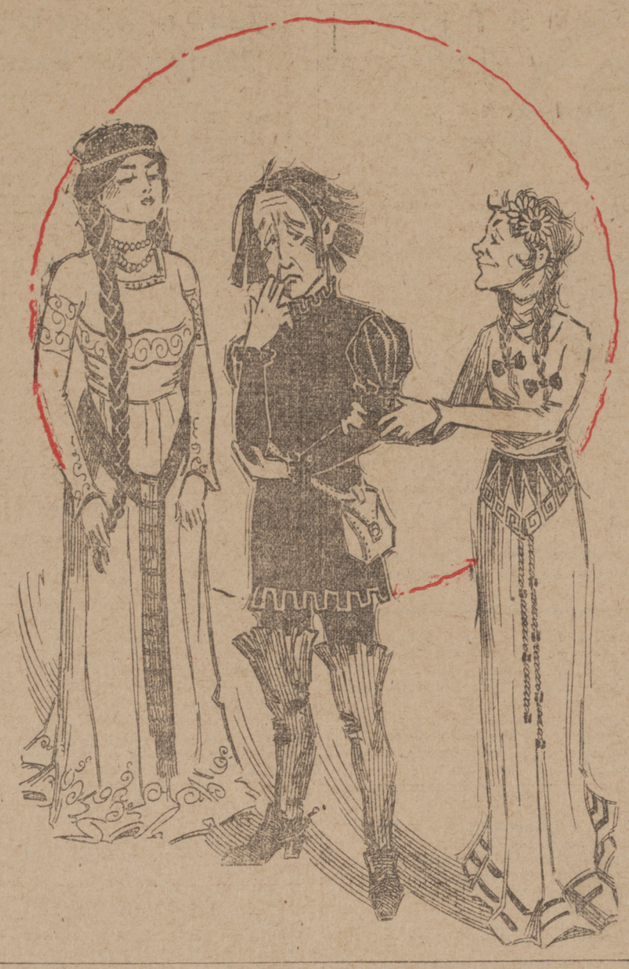
ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

WHEN CUPID REIGNS SUPREME.



Cupid reigns every day—but on St. Valentin's Day he reigns supreme. Of all the holidays in the year, the fourteenth of February is the only one set apart on which to make obeisance to the mischievous, adorable little son of Venus. Not that the troublesome elf needs a day for his very own, or that he appreciates the honor, especially, for he well knows that every day is his own, that his arrows fly just as true and as straight on one day as on the other and that all men and all women of all ages have bowed to him and obeyed—always.

But on St. Valentine's Day the spirit of Love is recognized more openly than at other times. The little winged god, ordained the God of Love by the Romans, and held in high esteem among their host of deities, sends his arrows broadcast. They lurk in dainty missives of tinseled lace paper valentines, that keep the postman busy delivering them. They hide in the petals of violets and roses and the sweetest of floral tributes to Milady Fair from her adorer. They go through the land and leave in their wake happiness and heartease or disappointment and rue. And lovers await them, expect them, welcome them.

IN OUR OWN COUNTRY.

The celebration of the day in our own country is so well known that it scarcely needs setting forth. The custom of sending one's valentines anonymously, however seems to be largely confined to the English-speaking people. And the mushroom growth of the so-called comic valentines, horrible distortions of even clodhopper humor, is distinctly American. St. Valentine, if he be the one responsible for the day, could scarcely have countenanced such things as these. Our celebration is more of a personal one to the individual than a collective one in which a number can get together and celebrate simultaneously. In fact, the sender of a valentine nowadays does it almost like the proverbial thief in the night.

IN THE CHURCHYARD.

In Derbyshire, England, when a lovelorn lass, who is not afraid of the dark and supernatural, wants to find out what her future lord and master looks like, she goes into the churchyard at midnight of St. Valentine's eve and, as the clock strikes 12, commences running around the church and repeating without intermission:

"I sow hempseed, hempseed I sow,
He that loves me best
Come after me now."

Having made the circuit of the church 12 times, repeating all the while the touching little doggerel, she will behold, unless she drops from exhaustion from her rapid transit, moving-picture oratorical stunt, the figure of her lover, dim and ghostly, following her footsteps around the church.

In the county of Norfolk, England, as soon as it grows dark, packages are laid on doorsteps, the bell is rung and the bearer scoots away. The packages are supposed to contain presents, thus being a sort of combined Christmas and Hallowe'en.

Though it is certain the English idea of humor has not as yet grasped in its entirety the American's joy in flooding his friends—and enemies—with the atrocious comic valentine, there are still possibilities in this old custom.

What a chance for the practical joker to leave a package on a door step, ring the bell and "beat it" and from the friendly shadows of a nearby tree or wall, watch the consternation of the sturdy English face that answers the ring and finds in the package, in place of the expected present, a little thing that only storks are supposed to have the privilege of depositing on front door steps!

WHAT'S IN THE PACKAGE?

Or picture the hale and hearty English squire coming home nearer sunrise than sunset with the loving spirit of St. Valentine's Day—and other spirits—oozing out of his very eyes. He's in better shape than the man who had to tell his cabby to ask his better half to pul-lease come down to the carriage and pick him out from the rest of the good fellows aboard it—but he's sufficiently three-sheets-in-the-wind to make it advisable for his cabby to deposit him on the front door step along with the rest of the "packages" laid there, ring the bell and scoot—just like the other St. Valentine Day celebrants. As is evident, there are vast possibilities in this package system of observing the day. It depends upon the "package."

In the west of England there was one ancient custom that was extraordinarily singular. Early in the morning of St. Valentine's Day young men, necessarily of the character that "dee-lights" in the strenuous life, started out together with a clap-net to catch an owl and two sparrows in some neighboring barn. If they were successful in catching the birds and brought them to the village inn without injury and before the women folk had risen, they were rewarded with three pots of purl (whatever that is) by the innkeeper. They also enjoyed the privilege of demanding similar consideration at the hands of every householder in the neighborhood.

Things that bear the earmarks of age, even though they be nothing more sacred than customs, should be reverenced, it is true. But a wee bit of speculation as to "how it felt to be there" can scarcely be considered iconoclastic or irreverent—though it may be somewhat irrelevant. In the first place, it may be noted, this unique and laborious method of procuring the aforementioned purl was evidently a species of graft that appealed strongly to the minds of those rustic swains.

WHY THEY DID IT.

Just why this purl should be considered worth crawling out of a warm bed at 3 in the morning and stabbing around in the dark with a clap-net for an owl not "on to his job," while the hay from the loft of the barn sifted down into one's nostrils, the chronicler fails to relate. Perhaps the young men of those days considered such a stunt a regular helluva time. Or, perhaps, it was simply a case of seizing an opportunity of getting on the outside of a lot of purl in free-lunch fashion. At all events, according to the chronicler, they went after the birds with the same patience the modern "bugologist" expends in chasing butterflies over a new-plowed field, and received their reward with an applause and admiration similar to that the present-day head of a family receives if he can get out of bed on to the cold floor in the morning and turn on the steam without a murmur. Though scarcely necessary to say so, it is incumbent upon the writer to relate that he has not been able to discover a survival of this custom in any form in the modern American celebration of St. Valentine's Day.

In many of the European countries the St. Valentine Day kiss was exchanged between young people as a token of good will. The exact nature of such an osculatory performance is somewhat vague. Though the same conscientious chronicler does not mention the relationship, it suggested that this St. Valentine Day kiss is a third cousin, at least, deceased, of the famous "soul" kiss. There is some doubt on this point, however, for in no way can an exegesis of the word "affinity" lead the investigator back to that time. On the other hand, the fact that this custom is now in vogue universally—not only on St. Valentine's Day, but on other days, and far into the night as well—is significant. The only difference is that the so-called St. Valentine Day kiss of the present is a token of good will—and other things.

CAN IT BE POSSIBLE!

Apropos of the same elucidating subject, the chronicler states further that:

"If man meet a maid and she does not readily assent to the osculatory practice, it is a kind of service on him that his attentions are not desirable and is loked upon as a congee."

Yea, verily! a case of the original stingerino and the original "stung" it would seem. But it is far, far better than the big stick of the fly cop and a joy ride to the police station.

Even to the present day, it is customary in Europe for the young men to meet together on the village green in trials of strength. The young lad who has real his "sporting extras" most seriously and is able to give most fluently the precise and indisputable reasons why Jim Jeffries should climb back into the ring and "put it all over" big, black Jack Johnson, is the lad who should come off with the gate receipts. Being "the candy kid," he naturaly has his choice of the maidens fair who have, apparently laid aside their grouch as suffragettes and consented to occupy ringside seats at the fight. The losers, however, come in for a-whack up for the short end of the purse, for they are allowed to choose their maidens for the ensuing St. Valentine Day festivities according to the order of merit of their bruised physiognomies.

In Ireland, the great feature of St. Valentine's Day is the breakdown dance. All the boys and all the girls engage in it, the couple dancing the longest winning the coveted applause. The victorious couple is looked upon as well-mated and not infrequently a wedding follows during Eastertide.

THEY DANCE SERIOUSLY.

The dance itself is indeed a spectacle. With much ceremony the door of the barn is lifted from its hinges and the dance comenced as soon as the fiddler or the player of the bagpipes orders the couples out. The floor of the barn is of mud; hence the door is laid on the ground to form a suitable surface for the dancers. Goldsmith describes the dancers in his "Deserted Village."

"The dancing pair that simply sought renown,
By holding out to tire each other down.

The absolute whole-heartedness of the dance and the fierceness of these tests of endurance must be seen to be appreciated. Though the occasion is one of the utmost jollility and good will, the contestants are in dead earnest in their endeavors to win.

FROM SHAKESPEARE.

Shakespeare says of the day in his world-wide Valentine:

"I swear to the by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head,
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,
By that which kindleth souls and prospers loves."

In England the schoolgirls of a half a century ago plucked at the buttons on their gowns and uttered in a sing-song monotone on St. Valentine's Day the verse:

"Tinker, tailor,
Soldier, sailor,
Apothecary,
Ploughboy, thief."

If, after sing-songing these words for a stated number of times they should first meet other than the one on whom of all mentioned in their roundely their hearts were set, they scattered in great fright.

A GENTLE PROTEST.

The earliest and most popular St. Valentine's Day jingle that has been handed down to the present time is:

"The rose is red,
The violet blue,
Sugar is sweet
And so are you."

The gentle Dean Swift, in writing to a friend, describes his first reception of a comic valentine:

"I was seated in my library when the postmaster arrived and I opened the bag. What was my surprise to find my first greeting on St. Valentine's morning to be a representation of a fat parson, with a body like a pig and a head like a dolt. Of course, it grieved me, for I always considered the day one devoted to everything beautiful in life. But I felt far more compassion for the unfortunate mental condition of the sender than I did for the feelings of the recipient, which were, I assure you, quite healed before I finished breakfast."

The simplicity of this gentle protest, scarcely a protest, is pathetic. Much more kindly and considerate is the tender missive, even though it be sentimental, like the following:

"If you'll be mine
I will be thyne,
And so Good
Morrow, Valentine"—

For St. Valentine's Day is a day of joy, of love, of happiness.

Passenger Balloons Planned in France

Before many months have passed away it is planned by what is claimed to be a substantial commercial corporation in France, to have giant steerable balloons flying, or perhaps more properly speaking, sailing, from a number of big French cities and carrying loads of passengers in competition with the railroads. It is claimed for this new idea that it will be far cheaper to operate than railroads, and the manufacturers of dirigible baloons are said to have guaranteed that the air ships for passengers will be safe and able to live up to schedule except under extraordinary weather conditions.

The minister of public works for the French Republic has already begun to outline the rules and regulations which will govern airships in future sailing through the air. The French minister has decided to call all air craft by the name of "aeronefs." As balloons proceed through the air more after the manner in which ships force their passage through the water than like any other form of locomotion, the French government proposes to treat all vehicles proceeding through the air as a ship or vessel rather than as in the nature of an automobile or a railroad car.

The French foreign office has also begun to bestir itself over what it considers the imminent importance of rules and regulations governing the rights of the atmosphere, now that it expects war balloons (both armed for battle and of the sort to spy out foreign contries) to be sailing through the atmosphere over Europe. State baloons, military balloons, air ships, belonging to private individuals and dirigibles like those mentioned as planned to carry passengers for regular traffic, will have to be governed by new legislation.

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

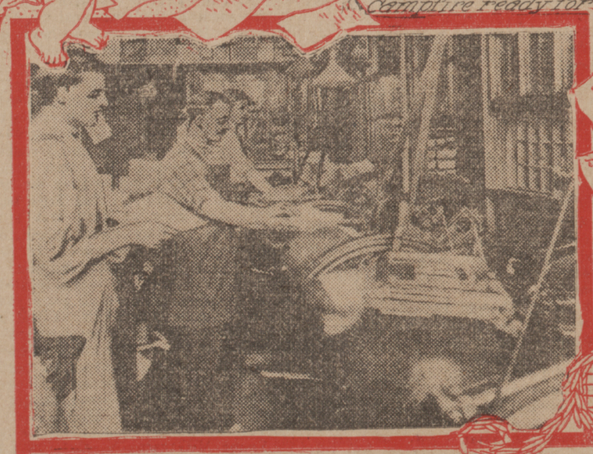
THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S HOLIDAY

by Waldon Fawcett

Receiving Valentines

American Gypsies Romany Women around their Campfire ready for the Valentine Day Harvest

Sorting Misdirected Valentines at the Post Office at Washington D.C.



Printing the Verses on Comic Valentines

Typical American Country School Waiting the Distribution of Valentines

A considerable proportion of our American holidays are, before all else, children's festivals—that is, children derive the keenest enjoyment from their observance. However, the one observance that is not only pre-eminently, but almost universally, a young people's holiday, is St. Valentine's Day. The devotes of the February feast of sentiment include all members of the junior generation from little tots too young to understand the significance of the exchange of pretty pictures, to young men and young women who take advantage of the license of this occasion tto make more or less veiled declarations of regard or the reverse.

Oddly enough the origin of St. Valentine's Day would seem to give little warrant for the modern custom of exchanging on February 14 missives and epistles, either comic or sentimental. Certainly there was naught in the life of Saint Valentine, a bishop or pope of Rome, to suggest the promiscuous dispatch of tokens wherein are conveyed in prose, in verse or in emblematic picture the love of the sender or the faults and foibles of the recipient. As a matter of fact Saint Valentine led a particularly sombre existence. Clinging steadfastly to his faith during the Claudian persecutions he was cast into jail and ultimately was beaten with clubs and finally beheaded.

A second churchman bearing the name of Valentine, whose possible connection with the origin of St. Valentine's Day has sometimes been suggested, was likewise a bishop. Both bearers of the now magic name were accounted tto possess miraculous powers for the sick. The first-mentioned bishop while in prison cured of blindness the daughter of his keeper, and to the second prayers are yet offered up in Germany and Italy for the cure of epilepsy. This second Bishop Valentine also met a violent death, being choked by a fish bone.

Students of history and delvers into the lore of tradition, have made various attempts, none wholly successful, to explain how the modern festival of mirth and sentiment derived its name. One of the most plausible theories is based on the fact that in the olden days "v" and "g" were frequently interchangeable in popular speech. There is evidence that the Norman word galantin—a gallant and lover of the fair sex—was frequently written and pronounced valantan, or valentin. With such a foundation it is easy to credit the corruption of the phrase to the present-day Valenttine Day or mayhap, by a confusion of names Bishop Valentine may have been established as the patron saint of lovers and sweethearts, although, as we have seen in a fleeting glimpse of his biography, there was no warrant whatever for such designation.

As far back as 1721 when Valentine Day was already an established custom in England we find one British writer attempting to explain its origin on the premise that about this time of year—the middle of February—the birds choose their mates and that probably this suggested the custom of young men and maidens adopting the same season as a time for choosing valentines or special loving friends. An even more plausible explanation is that our latter-day feast of St. Valentine is merely the Christianized form of the classic Lupercalia—a feast held annually in Rome during the month of February in honor of Pan and Juno when the chiefe feature of the eceremonies was the practice of placing the names of young women in a box or other receptacle from which they were drawn, as chance directed, by young men.

As the story goes the Chritsian clergy, despite repeated efforts, were never able to abolish this pagan practice. During the sixteenth century the church in the person of St. Francis de Sales "severly forbade the custom of valentines or giving boys in writing the names of girls to be admired and attended on by them." As a substitute there was inaugurated the practice of giving billets containing the names of certain saints, but in the end St. Francis was no more successful in his crusade than his predecessors had been. The sentimental young folks returned to their old practices and restored the heart mart with all its old significance.

Indeed, they did move. They abolished, about this time, the practice of leaving solely to the young men the choice of mates. France took the lead in ushering in this era of equal rights in the valentine lottery and henceforth the names of young people of both sexes were written on bits of paper and placed in the proper receptacles so at the drawing each participant was sure to secure a partner from the other sex. The selection thus made was supposed to seal a sentimental bond that should endure for at least a year, if not terminated by marriage. Throughout the twelvemonth a couple designated partners by fate's decree stood in the relation of cavalier and lady of beauty, the knight being bound, of course, to honor and defend his charge, who repaid his championship by smiles and sentimental tokens.

The custom soon spread from France to England and was in high favor there as early as 1690. The practice of having both the young men and the young women draw lots or "valentines," had one disadvantage in that it was seldom that partners were placed in a double bond by each drawing the name of the other. As a rule, the young man who drew the name of a girl would find that his name in turn had been drawn by some other girl. However, disputes as to the possession were in a great measure forestalled by the accepted custom of young men in general to show greater allegiance to the valentines that fell to their lots than to the maidens who drafted them, as it were. In Scotland it was the custom several centuries ago for young men and young women to regard as a "valentine" the first representative of the opposite sex who was met with one the street on the morning of the 14th of February.

In Shakespeare's day the approved observance of St. Valentine's festival seems to have taken the form of "challenging" valentines, with the understanding that he or she who said it first on meeting a person of the opposite sex should receive a present. In short, it was a custom very similar in effect to the Christmas gift greeting which long prevailed, and yet obtains in many parts of the United States. As time went on the practice was so amended that all the challenging was done by the young ladies and all the giving of presents by the young men who were successfully challenged. This custom seems to have been the direct forerunner of the modern practice of exchanging printed or written valentines. In a diary dated in London, on February 14 1667, we read of an innovation in the form of a valentine token, consisting of the recipient's name written in gold letters upon blue paper. Then brief mottoes, such as "Most courteous and most fair," began to make their appearance upon the primitive valentines, and gradually, step by step, there was evolved the silk and satin lace paper confections of the present era.

HE TOOK THE BLAME.

Bragg—Behold in me a self-made man.

Dragg—I congratulate you because of your charitableness.

Bragg—I beg pardon.

Dragg—You are certainly charitable in taking all the blame on yourself.

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