

# Friendship Cards

By EVELYN MILLER INGALLS

"Once more I greet thee!  
Take these fair flowers,  
Time cannot alter  
Friendship like ours!"

**T**HIS message, eloquently conveyed with a delicate feminine hand offering a garland of roses, pansies, and other flowers, is an example of the way in which friends greeted one another in the 1880's and 1890's.

The greeting card, as any other form of art, reflects the temper of its time, and one sees the elaborate ornateness and deep sentimentality of this period in equally ornate and elaborate greetings. Eyes that beheld little color in mauve costumes changing only into years of deep mourning and in homes decorated with cold steel engravings and horsehair furniture delighted in the brightness and gaiety of the lithographs produced by Louis Prang, J. H. Bufford, Major Knapp and others. Friends vied with one another in collecting fancy cards in albums that were cherished through the years, just as stamp collectors do today. Many of the bright colored designs, sometimes called chromos, were made in Germany, and sold in sheets by catalogue number. These designs were pasted to cards of various shapes and colors. Often the name of the sender was engraved beneath the highly embossed design, which would lift up to reveal the hidden name—hence

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The inspiration for this article was a special exhibition of Friendship Cards at the Palmer Library of Connecticut College in New London in the early 1940's. The author was then a member of the Library staff.

the term "hidden name" card or "concealed name" card found on agents' lists.

Like the business card, the friendship card had a simple beginning—the earlier designs, such as those printed by Bufford dated 1876, were printed directly on the card. Color was either added in the printing, or applied by hand. Often the sender did not pay for engraving, but merely signed his name to the card in the blank space provided. One often finds such cards used either as friendship or business cards. A firm would show a sample card with a personal name printed on it together with an identical card used by a clothing establishment to advertise its merchandise. Other cards were used for special occasions—New Year's Day, Christmas, Easter, etc.—or by teachers as rewards of merit. One card at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, showing the heads of two children peering from sprays of violets and lilies of the valley, retains the advertisement on the verso, "New embossed pack, 15¢. 50 designs, no two alike," with special price to teachers as rewards of merit or to merchants for business advertisement. It is the friendship card—that in which the cordial affection of one friend for another was indelibly stamped—with which we are most concerned, however.

That these cards were more than mere calling cards is evidenced by the sentiments:

"Sweet as fragrant roses  
Tis to have a friend  
On whom in gloom or sunshine  
We know we can depend!"



or in another:

“The face of  
one behold  
Who loves thee more than gold!”

Or a fan might be held by a lovely hand,  
as in a square gold-bordered card reading:

“This fan and these roses  
I send you today,  
As a mark of  
affection  
From one far away!”

An unusual variation is seen in a card showing a graceful hand holding a flower-banked goldfish bowl in which a bright fish swims gaily around. Another card offers the recipient a closed book, with these words:

“Within this book  
a record see  
Of all I’ve borne  
for love of thee!”

Other cards show open books with a scene in color on the left page and a sentiment on the right; or a scene on the left with a space on the right in which the sender inserted his own portrait.

Romance and love are woven into the foregoing verses, and many of the cards suggest the coquetry of Valentines. Just as now, cards in the 1880’s helped the gallant lover win his lady fair—if Cupid ever needs a helping hand! One series in particular, telling the story of a courtship and marriage, we have called the “Romance Series.” Card no. 1 shows an oval scene bordered in roses and forget-me-nots. A lady in a yellow dress and white bonnet is coyly waving her handkerchief to a handsome, moustached beau who sits on a grassy slope, doffing his hat in a true gentlemanly manner. “On my friendship e’er rely” is the message of sin-

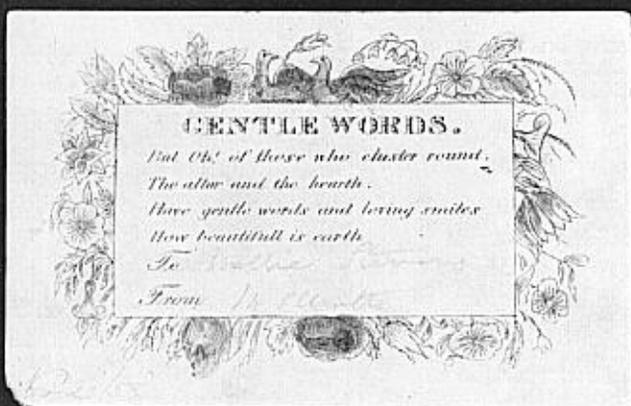
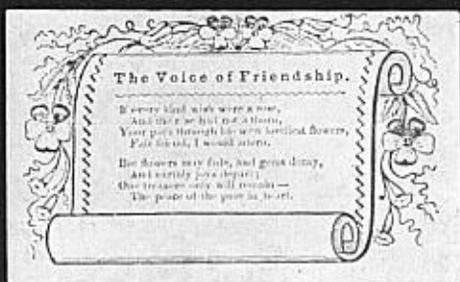
cerity conveyed. Card 2 shows in a green wreath amid two lovely red roses the bustled lady in a green skirt and red hat, and the gentleman in the background carrying a walking stick. This tells the story:

“It chanced they say, upon a day,  
A furlong from the town  
That she was strolling up the way  
And he was strolling down.”

A similar card shows them next, a bride and groom:

“A month, not more, had bustled o’er,  
When braving nod and smile  
One blushing soul came through the  
door  
Where two went up the aisle.  
It happened so, precisely so,  
As all their friends and neighbors  
know.”

While cards with such fanciful characters appealed to the fluttering hearts of the period, true life portraits were not altogether neglected. Military figures were favorite subjects. A portrait of General Logan is superimposed on an American flag with roses in the background. Gilt is used profusely to decorate his uniform and to outline the roses. One finds a picture of General Sherman on horseback beneath a blue, red and gold emblem of the United States with the motto, “E Pluribus Unum.” The clasped hand idea is carried out in an interesting way in a card showing General Hancock on horseback resplendent in blue uniform and gold braid, carrying an unsheathed sword. A bow of roses and an American flag unfurled form the background. In the foreground, we see the cuff of a Civil War uniform on the wrist of a masculine hand which clasps that of a lady fair. Rogers’ statue of “The Returned Volun-



FRIENDSHIP CARDS: (top) ca. 1840-1850, (center) DATED NOVEMBER 20, 1858, (bottom) LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY  
 From the Society's Collections.

teer" forms the centerpiece of a floral arrangement in another interesting piece.

The Domestic Manufacturing Company of Wallingford printed a "President Series" (Series no. 574), 12 for 20¢, showing the four presidents—Lincoln, Grant, Garfield, and Cleveland—on four individual cards. The American flag and eagle are used in the backgrounds with the inevitable roses intertwined. Simple mottoes such as "Dear to Memory" are used.

Famous literary characters even find a place, as in an unusual card which shows the heads of Topsy and Eva peering forth from a bird's nest. Actresses, too, came in for their share of glory side by side with insignificant babes peeking from the center of a rose.

Birds were the most popular subjects of the artist with the exception of the hand-holding-flowers cards. Snowbirds, pigeons, English robins, swallows, and doves are found as well as some highly colored fantastic birds. Occasionally a bird sits in a basket ("Basket Series"), or on a nest of colored eggs. The majority are hidden name cards with floral decorations. One such card, picturing a robin nesting in a bower of flowers, carries the verse:

"May you be as happy  
As little Robin red  
Your heart aglow  
with sunshine  
E'en when summer's fled!"

One card with gilt edges bears the most birds—five doves—brown, white, speckled, and grey—sitting on a fence. The sentiment expressed is:

"Each gentle cooing dove  
Will tell thee of my love!"

The influence of these bird cards is seen

in advertising cards of the period. John Dwight & Co., New York, makers of Dwight's soda, issued a "Beautiful Birds Series," a new series "much improved and more costly." On the verso of one of these cards is the information: "A set of these cards (60 in all) accumulated in the ordinary course of buying housekeeping supplies will form an interesting collection. Should all the cards be desired immediately six two cent stamps will about pay the cost and postage. . . ."

Animals, too, were favorites. One card shows a hand holding a small white poodle in a spray of flowers. "Sweet remembrance" is the printed motto. Dogs and cats with pink ribbons around their necks, rabbits jumping over clumps of grass, horses and fawns are predominant. An interesting "Pet Motto" card shows a dog's head in a spray of flowers. The dog holds a gilt mandolin in its mouth, which can be lifted to disclose the motto:

"Faithful  
as a dog am I  
If you don't believe  
me—try!"

Occasionally some prankish youth would get hold of a card with the picture of an ugly bullfrog with protruding eyes, holding a placard in its mouth, and scrawl "Sister" or the name of a friend across it, thus introducing a comic note into the exchange of cards.

The fact that a message was being conveyed is enhanced by cards with plain or fancy edges bearing miniature envelopes in which a tiny card with the sender's name was enclosed. Many of the flaps have "Happy New Year" or other greetings printed on them. These are closely akin to the visiting card. One card shows

a hand holding a quill pen, writing the message:

“Only a scrap of paper!  
 But mark the words  
   it bears  
 I’d joy to be beside thee  
 Thro’ all thy toils  
   and cares.”

Wishes of good luck were symbolically conveyed in designs of a hand offering a gilt horseshoe with a background of roses, violets, and lilies of the valley. In the horseshoe, winter landscapes—a snow-covered farmhouse, an old mill, etc.—might be depicted. Or ships of good fortune served as good luck tokens. One



FRIENDSHIP CARD, LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Inscribed within:

“My Best Wishes  
 By Yours the joy of boundless hope—  
     Light-hearted and serene.  
 May you ascend life’s sunny slope—  
     May pleasures, pure and keen,  
 Throng round, and be all blessings blent  
     With that true heart’s ease—sweet content.”

card bears a spray of roses with palette insert showing ships sailing around a buoy, and sends the message:

"May flowers bedeck thy paths,  
And fortune be thy guiding star"

In another, a hand holds a spray of violets with a gold, wreathlike medallion in the center with an embossed "Forget me not" motto. This can be lifted up to reveal a sailing vessel with three gay red and blue flags flying from the masts. "Untroubled be thy days" is the motto on a card showing a ship (in a rather turbulent sea!) surrounded by roses and forget-me-nots. Cards similar to these were printed by Franklin Printing Company, New Haven, Connecticut. "12 assorted for 10 cents. Cards without pictures 25 for 10 cents."

A few cards picture landscapes—a small homestead in the country with snow on the ground and naked trees, or a church against the sky wreathed in roses and forget-me-nots, or a frozen brook surrounded by pansies and lilies of the valley. In one rather different card, autumn leaves replace the out-of-season flowers. There are a few mellow moonlight scenes, but most are traditional winter landscapes, as in the "Curtain Series." Here a woman's hand holds back a curtain to display a scene along a river bank in tones of grey. This series varied in the color of the curtain—with each change of scene would be a change in color.

The fraternal orders—Odd Fellows, Grand Army, Knights of Pythias, Freemasons—all had cards of their particular orders, binding their members together in a spirit of good fellowship.

The deep religious spirit of the times is represented in cards quoting religious poems or scriptures, such as one endorsed "Nellie Doone from Abbie Hamlin, S. S.

teacher." Pansies and the verse, "Whom having not seen, ye love," I Peter I:8, are printed on this. Such cards were rewards of merit. Others were used as Sunday School texts, e.g., "The Forgiving Spirit," Matthew 18:21-35; Golden Text "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"—Matthew 6:12. This lesson (Lesson 7—August 12) was printed on the back of a religious picture card, with questions to be answered. "Terms 12 cts. per year, W. A. Wilde Company, 110 Boylston Street, Boston." Other series were printed by David C. Cook Publishing Company, Elgin and Chicago, Illinois, at 10 c. per year; by Colton, Zahm & Roberts, 172 Williams Street, New York; and by Kemple & Kronheim, New York (Series no. 48). Many are copyrighted 1882 by Prang. Other religious cards are in the form of book-marks for hymnal or Bible use.

Such were the cards that the agents peddled in the days when the Brooklyn Bridge was just opened to traffic, when the Statue of Liberty was first unveiled, when the first electric street railway opened in Baltimore, and John L. Sullivan was the world's champion fighter. The Palmer Library collection has two interesting sample books carried by agents of the Star Importing Company, Cadiz, Ohio, and Stevens Brothers, Northford, Connecticut. Samples of the cards carried in stock were most frequently tipped in, although a leaflet from the Ivy Card Company, Hamden, Connecticut, has printed illustrations in black and white: "As the expense of sending sample cards is so great, we take this method of introducing some of our leading styles. Of course we cannot, in this way, show you the beautiful colors or the fine finish as they REALLY ARE on the cards, but that you can judge by samples

of our styles sent. Do not be afraid to order from these illustrations, as they represent the same quality of cards as accompanying samples." A folder from the Holly Card Works, Meriden, Connecticut, is valuable for its list of styles and prices of cards in stock, and for its samples of type styles.

No matter what the character of the

card—artistic, comic, or sentimental—each played an important part in reflecting the spirit of its time. No matter what the use to which it was put, each expressed in its own quaint way human traits appropriate to any period—deep affection and warm friendship bridging all distances.