

VIVIENNE MILBURN
looks at some romantic
and historic gifts to
delight your Valentine

Lines of Love

BOOKS can make wonderful tokens of love for your loved one on Valentine's Day. I, personally, was once given a book of poems (mind you, it was over twenty years ago!) and I treasure it still.

After all, the written word is a fine way to express ones feelings and, as an Independent Auctioneer and Valuer, I have had the pleasure of dealing with some romantic classics over the years.

Whenever I am asked to value or sell books on behalf of my clients I always take into consideration a number of factors. The two main things, however, are the rarity of the book and also the popularity of the subject.

For example, a 17th Century cookery book with recipes recommended as 'aphrodisiacs' would be guaranteed to attract a lot of interest in today's market. However, if that is not to your taste, some of the 19th Century classics might be such as 'The Complete Works of Jane Austen', including 'Sense and Sensibility' and 'Pride and Prejudice', the popularity of which has not diminished but increased in today's market aided by the recent films and TV dramas. A fine set of twelve volumes of Jane Austen's works can fetch in excess of £10,000.

From a commercial point of view, illustrations in books are also extremely important; some of the more fascinating can often also be the strangest and books on exploration are particularly popular at the present time. As globalisation increases it seems we are eternally fascinated with the early impressions of strange and far off places as discovered by early explorers. Illustrations in books of exotic plants, animals and people never fail to bring interest to collectors.

George Baxter, who patented a new process producing coloured prints in 1835, produced other interesting and sometimes romantic prints from the 19th Century. Prior to Baxter's coloured prints colour engravings were extremely expensive to produce. Baxter produced approximately three hundred prints



Left: A watercolour by Henry Reynolds Steer (1858-1928) □ this artist was keen on making his subjects romantic. He also romanticised other subjects such as homeless figures. This painting is entitled □The Trysting Place□. This made £950 in a recent sale

made £400. In my position as an Auctioneer and Valuer, one of the most important factors, as previously mentioned, is the rarity of a book and if only a small number were printed originally and say that author's works go on to be extremely popular then that makes the First Editions extremely valuable.

Other items of a romantic nature which you may be thinking of giving to your loved one on Valentine's Day might be something like a handwritten note from Lord Byron, or a romantic 19th Century watercolour depicting a trysting place, of which there are many artists from the 19th Century who painted such pictures. Prices will generally depend upon the artist's name and how well known he is.

What romantic soles we must all be at heart to have so many precious objects. ■

If you would like a valuation it's advisable to get the advise of an Independent Auctioneer and Valuer as selling such items in the right location and advertising them on the Internet is key to receiving the maximum. For further information please contact Vivienne Milburn on 01629 640210 or 07870 238788 or visit www.vivienmilburn.co.uk

in total and one of my particular favourites is the 'Lovers Letterbox'. I have sold a number of these prints over the years and they can fetch between £100/200, depending on condition.

A Private Press Edition of a volume of Cinderella, with illustrations by Arthur Rackham, would not fail to bring delight on Valentine's Day and I recently sold a copy of this book for a Sheffield client. As Arthur Rackham engravings are so popular, the book

Below: A set of the Complete Works of Jane Austen, including □Sense and Sensibility□ and □Pride and Prejudice□, bound in morocco by Robert Reviere & Sons in green and with gilt tooling. A set of First Editions of these all time classics would fetch in excess of £10,000 in today's market.

