



Rare American civil war fairing entitled 'Union for ever', worth approximately £2,000.



'What have these met for?' This is worth in the region of £2,000.



'Missus is Master', price £110.

## Victorian Fairings Revealed.

### Part 2: Fakes, Politics and War

by Andy Graham



'All Over', price £1,500.



'Une Heure Monsieur', price £170.

Political corruption is nothing new and it should come as no surprise that Victorian fairings represented this aspect of life. In 1881 the British parliament submitted the 'corrupt practice bill'; fairings responded to this with 'Free and independent elector' in which a politician is shown being slipped a bribe by another person. Funny how the world hasn't progressed! With a retail value of £500 it's worth looking out for at fleamarkets, antiques and collectors fairs, car boots, charity shops or in your grandmother's china cabinet.

War was another factor of the Victorian Age with, for example, the Franco-Prussian War, the Crimean War and the American War of Independence. It is not surprising that propaganda filtered into the manufacture of fairings with examples such as 'English neutrality 1870 attending the sick and the wounded', 'English neutrality 1871 attending the sick and the wounded' and 'English neutrality 1870 attending the sick'. During the Franco-Prussian war, in 1870, the British took a neutral position and these figures represent propaganda to that effect. Each is worth between £500 and £600. Another example is the fairing 'Unsere beiden, freundlichen nachbarn' which is both very rare, probably worth £1,000, and in German means 'Both our friendly neighbours'. It shows the two combatants surveying each other next to a map of Europe with a court jester leaning over the map. The Crimea war is represented by 'Our soldiers' showing a soldier standing with gun raised over a wounded comrade and 'Our Sisters of Charity' in which a nurse gives a wounded soldier a drink. For the American War of Independence we have the 'Union for ever' showing a union soldier holding the union flag. These last three fairings are worth approximately £2,000 each.

Animals hold an important place in our affections so it is no surprise that fairings depicting animals exist. 'O'do leave me a drop' (£240) for example showing two cats, one with its head in a jar of milk and 'Good Templars' (£150) in which two cats are having tea together. Dog fairings include 'Who said rats' (£150) in which a dog sitting in bed is watching out for the rats,



This reproduction of 'O'do leave me a drop' is only worth £20-30, but would be worth over £200 if it was an original.



A modern reproduction of 'The Orphans', worth only £5.

'The Orphans' (£150) which shows three dogs looking lonesome. Other animal based fairings are 'The early bird catches the worm' (£250) in which a boy has his 'boy-hood' bitten by a bird as he is taking a pee (at least that's my version of it) through a tree.

Fairings were often produced in pairs, for example 'Before marriage' and 'After marriage', shows a man and women embracing on a couch whilst the second figure shows a man and women looking away from each other. Pairs increase the value with this example being worth in the region of £300 to £500 depending on the version. 'Grandma' and 'Grandpa' is another example showing a young girl dressed as grandma in one and a young boy dressed as grandpa in the other. These are quite common and are only worth £100 for the pair.

Not surprisingly as the value of fairings has risen the number of fakes or reproductions has grown. Whilst writing this article I ran a search for 'Victorian Fairings' on a well known website and found thirty two items listed, once the books and bike fairings had been removed. Of these, thirteen are obvious reproduction but advertised as genuine, eleven are clearly described as reproductions leaving eight that are possibly genuine. It seems that the old phrase 'caveat emptor' - 'Let the buyer beware' is very much in vogue.

Most reproductions are bright or garishly coloured and badly modelled with captions printed instead of script. Everything about them indicates cheapness. You should expect to pay £5-£10 depending on the quality and subject matter. Earlier reproduction from the 50s and 60s are generally of better quality but even so, when compared to the original it's easy to spot the fake. I have found one of the best places to start when checking for authenticity is the base. If it has two large air holes then it's a reproduction. Originals can have one air hole which should not exceed 1/8in (2-3mm) diameter. The better quality reproductions have some value due to their decorative appeal in the region of £20 to £30, but don't expect the value to rise over time. In recent years modern English impostors have been found that have solid bases and a crude version of the arm and dagger mark. This was the nineteenth century mark for Conta & Boehme of Pössneck in Saxony. (See Part One July/August 2004 Edition) Once you have seen the real thing fakes are easily identified. They have a cheapness about them and the number sequences on the bases are from the 1800s series i.e. 1885, 1886, 1887 which were never used by Conta & Boehme. French and German versions of fairings can be found with examples such as 'Der Letzte Loscht Das Licht Aus' which translated means 'the last to put

out the light', and 'La Bataille' which means 'tug of war'.

Functional fairings were produced that took the form of match holders or strikers, trinket boxes and watch holders. Examples of these are 'According to the rules 1876-77' (£150), 'Any lights Sir?' (£150), 'Swansea to Bristol' (£120) and 'Champagne Charlie is my name'. This has George Leybourne, a major singer in the 1860s, sitting on a barrel or a champagne bottle and worth between £300-£500 depending on the version. Fairings can also be found in larger and smaller sizes. Both will generally command higher prices.

Victorian fairings capture the humour of nineteenth century Europe, whether risqué, political or plain funny. They are an up and coming collecting area with prices having risen over the last few years. When buying, make sure that the number, style and subject all point to the same factory and date. If they do not then it is a reproduction. Further information can be found on my website: [www.timeless-treasure.biz](http://www.timeless-treasure.biz).



'Returning at one in the morning', price £60-80.



Example of air holes on a modern reproduction.



Reproduction of 'Who said rats', price £20-30.



'Kiss me quick', price £2,000 plus.



'Waiting for a bus', price £400-500.



'A dangerous encounter', valued in excess of £1,000.