



TRUTH FOR THE PEOPLE

OLD SERIES—17TH YEAR.

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PUBLISHER'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

From and after this date the subscription price of TRUTH will be increased to \$3.00 per annum, in advance.

The many and extensive improvements which have followed each other in such quick succession during the past year, has added to the cost of publication as to make this step absolutely necessary.

In the past the publisher, in his zealous endeavors to make TRUTH the best family weekly on the continent, has been just a little too generous. So much is this the case that the paper in its present form and at the present price is issued weekly at a decided loss.

To meet the exigencies of the case there are two courses which might be pursued.

The first, and perhaps easier method, would be to increase the quantity of advertising. The circulation of the paper is now such that advertisers are clamoring for space, and if it were so desired no trouble could be experienced in adding several pages of advertisements. But to do this several of the most popular departments of the paper would have to be withdrawn. This the publisher would never permit.

The next method, and the one it has been decided to adopt, is to raise the subscription price. From this date, therefore, the annual subscription to TRUTH will be \$3.00, instead of \$2.00, as formerly. To those who have already paid in advance, the new arrangement will not apply, but henceforth all new subscriptions and renewals will be received only at the \$3.00 rate.

We have taken this step only after mature deliberation, and with the interests of our readers constantly in view. The extra dollar will not be much to the individual, but the aggregate will be very considerable to us. It will enable the publisher to carry out some long-cherished improvements. It is more than probable that the paper will shortly be enlarged, new and attractive features will constantly be added, and the high moral tone and literary excellence will be rigidly maintained.

We believe our readers will appreciate our efforts to place TRUTH still farther in the van of family journals, and will continue to accord us that encouragement which they have so generously given us in the past.

WHAT TRUTH SAYS.

Those young people of both sexes who delight (much to the disgust of the letter-carriers) in sending one another missives, sentimental or otherwise on or about the 14th of February, may not perhaps be generally aware that the origin of these observances on St. Valentine's Day is supposed to be very ancient, though it is veiled in some obscurity. The saint himself, who was a priest of Rome, martyred in the third century, does not appear to have had much to do with the peculiar observances which take place at this season of the year, beyond the fact, (accidental, perhaps) of his day being used for the purposes.

The following particulars are gleaned from some remarks to be found in Mr. Douce's Illustrations of Shakespeare: "It was the practice in ancient Rome, during a great part of the month of February, to celebrate the Lupercalia, which were feasts in honor of Pan and Juno, whence the latter deity was named Februa, Februalis, and Februa. On this occasion, amidst a variety of ceremonies, the names of young women were put into a box from which they were drawn by the men as chance directed. The pastors of the early Christian church, who, by every possible means, endeavored to eradicate the vestiges of pagan superstitions and chiefly by some commutation of their forms, substituted, in the present instance, the names of particular saints instead of those of the women; and as the festival of the Lupercalia had commenced about the middle of February, they appear to have chosen St. Valentine's Day, for celebrating the new feast, because it occurred nearly at the same time. It would seem, however, that it was utterly impossible to extirpate altogether any ceremony to which the common people had been much accustomed—a fact which it were easy to prove in tracing the origin of various other popular superstitions. And, accordingly, the outline of the ancient ceremonies was preserved, but modified by some adaptation to the Christian system. It is reasonable to suppose that the above practice of choosing mates would gradually become reciprocal in the sexes and that all persons so chosen would be called Valentines, from the day on which the ceremony took place."

The Rev. Alban Butler, the compiler of the "Lives of the Saints," agrees with Mr. Douce in the greater part of his remarks. The festival nowadays seems to be much degenerated, the only observance of any note consisting merely of the sending of sentimental, jocular or satirical missives to parties whom the senders wish either to receive such testimony of their regard or to "quiz." In many cases the designs of the senders are more reprehensible, being evidently to hurt the feelings of the recipients of the "valentine." This, with the chronicling in the newspapers of the number of letters passing through the post office on the 14th of February, is nearly the whole extent of the observances now peculiar to St. Valentine's day.

At no very remote period it was very different, and, according to Misson, a learned traveller in the early part of the eighteenth century, the ceremonial observance in England and Scotland bore a stronger resemblance to that mentioned by Douce in the passage already quoted. These are the words of Misson: "On the eve of St. Valentine's Day the young folks, an equal number of bachelors and maids, get together; each writes their name, either true or feigned, upon separate billets, which they roll up and draw by way of lots, the maids taking the men's billets and the men those of the maids, so that each of the young men

lights upon a girl that he calls his *valentine*, and each of the girls upon a young man whom she calls hers. Fortune having thus divided the company into so many couples, the valentines wear their billets several days upon their bosoms or sleeves, and this little sport often ends in love."

So much for our observances, such as they are, of St. Valentine's Day, and which observances, like many others of old time customs, are gradually growing less and less.

One body of men at least will be thankful when St. Valentine's day is observed no longer, and that is the letter-carriers, who fail to see any sentiment or fun whatever in being compelled to drag through the streets a heavy bag of missives containing the lovers' sighings of amorous swains, and the nonsensical jokes of would-be "funny people."

A civil word is the cheapest thing in the world, and yet it is a thing which the young and happy rarely give to their fancied inferiors. See the effect of civility on a rough little street boy! The other evening a young lady turned a street corner abruptly and ran against a boy who was small and ragged and freckled. Stopping as soon as she could, she turned to him and said, "I beg your pardon, indeed, I am very sorry." The small, ragged, and freckled boy looked up in blank amazement for a moment, then taking off about three quarters of a cap, he bowed very low, smiled until his face became lost in the smile and answered, "Yer can hev my parding an' welcome Miss, an' yer may run agin me an' knock me cleau down an' I won't say a word." After the young lady passed on he turned to a comrade and said, half apologetically, "I never had anyone to ask my parding, and it kind o' took me off my feet."

Sicilian courtship differs from the Canadian article in some material points. When conditions are equal and there are no objections to the desired marriage, the mother of the young man takes the thing in hand. She knows that her son wants to marry because he is sullen, rude, silent, contradictory and fault-finding; because last Saturday night he hitched up the ass to the hook in the house well instead of stabling it as he ought; and himself passed the night out of doors, or because—in one place in Sicily he sat on the chest, kicked his heels and stamped his feet, so that his parents hearing the noise might know that he was disturbed in his mind and wanted to marry as soon as convenient. Then the mother knows what is before her and accepts her duties as a good woman should. She dresses herself a little smartly and goes to the house of the Nina or Rosa with whom her son has fallen in love to see what the girl is like when at home, and to find out the dowry likely to be given with her. She hides under her shawl a weaver's comb, which, as soon as she is seated she brings out, asking the girl's moth-

if she can lend her one like it. The latter answers that she will look for one, and will do all that she can to meet her visitor's wishes. She then sends the daughter into another room and the two begin the serious business of means and dowry. In the olden times the girl who did not know how to weave the thread she had already spun had before her a very small chance of finding a husband, howsoever great her charms or virtues. In Media the young man's mother or sister sweeps a broom against the girl's house door at night, which does the same as the weaver's comb elsewhere; and if all other things suit the young people are betrothed the following Saturday. After they are betrothed the girl's mother goes to a church some distance from her own home, where she stands behind the door, and according to the words said by the first persons who pass through foretells the happiness or the unhappiness of the marriage as, on foot. The inventory of the girl's possessions—chiefly house and body linen is made by a public writer, and always begins with an invocation to "Giesu, Maria, Giuseppe"—the Holy family. It is sent to the bridegroom elect wrapped in a handkerchief. If considered satisfactory it is kept, if unsatisfactory it is returned. If accepted as sufficient there is a solemn conclave of the parents and kinsfolks of the two houses, and the marriage ceremony in due time and form follows.

On opening a head of cabbage the other day, the cook of a hotel in Toronto found a document that the world would come to an end towards the end of next week. We have always had the profoundest respect for the superior intelligence of the cabbage head but we shall go on accumulating great thoughts for our next editorial just the same.

It is observed that when the Nihilists of Russia or the Anarchists of Prussia desire to express their emphatic disapproval of the systems of government in vogue in their respective countries, they make a direct assault upon a Czar, assassinate a Police Chief or plot to blow up an Emperor. The friends of Ireland who are trying to terrify the English government by setting off dynamite under railway trains in London, and getting up explosions in places frequented by women and children, cannot hope to gain the respect of the civilized world. An explosion in the Tower of London any day of the week would be more likely to kill Americans than Englishmen. The residents of London do not visit the Tower. It is a place of sacred interest to Continental and American visitors. If the dynamiters have a point to make in secretly killing the representatives of fancied British tyranny, they should direct their operations against people who have assumed responsibilities.

When it became known that O'Donovan Rossa had been shot, and when the report spread that the wound had proved fatal, a large number of good and loyal people heaved a sigh of relief and remarked, "The