

THE WEEKLY MIRROR.

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, FEB. 13.

There never was a period when there existed greater facilities for the acquisition of scientific and literary information than the present. The progress of intelligence has gradually derobed science of that mysterious jargon in which it was the policy of the pretenders to philosophy, during the middle ages to invest it, in order to procure from their barbarous and superstitious contemporaries, a veneration which they were conscious they did not merit, and which they were well aware would not be paid them, if the sciences they professed were not wrapped in a garb of mystery which awed and imposed upon the vulgar. Now every department of science,—every branch of literature is rendered accessible to the commonest capacity; treatises have been composed simplifying the grand principles of philosophy, and illustrating by easy and familiar examples the facts from which these principles are drawn. Knowledge is no longer considered as a certain something attainable only by the study of years, and useful only as an employment for the philosopher, or a recreation for the rich. Throughout every department of society, from the wealthy nobleman who views in easy repose the beautiful exemplifications of the operation of nature which are constantly occurring in his own domain, and under his own eye, to the poor artisan who calls in his acquaintance with philosophy to aid him in the operations connected with his humble but useful career, the effect of the increased cultivation of science is observable.

No man will be a good citizen till he thinks—and no man will think till he begins to read. Every one therefore actuated by the philanthropic wish to benefit his fellow beings, should above all things, strive to inculcate a taste for reading. For this object principally, was our humble periodical called into existence, and so long only as we think it will contribute to this end, will its existence continue. We regret to state that a taste for reading is not so generally diffused in this community as in many others, which we have seen. The idle and dissipated habits, which we are sorry to say, are too generally characteristic of the younger classes of the population of Halifax, betoken an unhappy state of society; but we think that a change for the better is already taking place, and we hope at no distant period, to see the day when those hours which are now consumed in the frivolous, if not less harmless amusements of society, shall be devoted to the acquisition of useful knowledge. If our youth employed the time now spent in these amusements in storing their minds with learning, at the same time that they would be receiving a pleasure far more elevated and ennobling than they can derive

from the round of inanities which are now too commonly the objects of their pursuit, they would be qualified, when the course of events called them forward to the station in society to which their rank or their circumstances entitle them, to fulfil their duties with credit to themselves and advantage to their fellow citizens.

To the youth of the community more particularly we wish to address ourselves.—Though we hope that the pages of our periodical may sometimes contain hints which will not be unprofitable to the aged and the well informed, it is to the youth more particularly that we look for support, and we shall have a main aim to their benefit in such remarks of a scientific or literary nature as we may have occasion to make in the progress of our journal. The youth of our community are the germs of a generation to come, and upon the amount of their intelligence and information, will depend the character of the community which they themselves are hereafter to form. How necessary then that they should devote such part of their time as they can spare from the necessary occupations of society to the acquisition of scientific and moral information, that their minds may be improved with those solid principles of action which will qualify them for the active duties of life! The accomplishment of this end, will be one of the main features of our future exertion, and we shall be happy in receiving the co-operation of such among them whose talents and education may qualify them for furthering this object.

COMMUNICATIONS.

FOR THE MIRROR.

MR BOWES.—*If you think a short explanation of the Feasts and Festivals as observed by the Church throughout the year, will be acceptable to any of your juvenile friends, I will furnish you with them occasionally.*

MENTOR.

SEPTUAGESIMA, SEXAGESIMA, QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAYS.—February 15, 22, and March 1.

There being exactly 50 days between the Sunday next before Lent and Easter day, inclusive, that Sunday is termed Quinquagesima (or Shrove Sunday) i. e. the 50th.—And the two immediately preceding are called from the next round numbers, Sexagesima, and Septuagesima, 60th and 70th. The Church thus early begins to look forward to Easter, the queen of festivals. She would call back our minds from the rejoicing season of Christmas, and by reflections on the humiliating necessity there was for Messiah's advent, prepare us for the solemn season of Lent, in which, if with deep contrition and lively faith we follow Christ in his sufferings, we may rejoice with him here, and humbly hope to reign with him hereafter in his glory.

FOR THE MIRROR.

Mr. Bowes.—I suppose Sir that you have readers of all ages and that you have discovered ere now that you have various tastes to please. If you think the following piece will be interesting to any of your readers please give it a place in your next Mirror.

A SUBSCRIBER.

Valentine's Day, 14th February.

St. Valentine was a Presbyter of the Church, who was beheaded in the time of Claudius the Emperor, but there is no occurrence in the legendary life of this Saint, in the slightest degree connected with the customs which have long been observed on this day; tho' Wheatley, in his illustrations of the Common Prayer, informs us, that he "was a man of most amiable parts, and so famous for his love and charity, that the custom of choosing Valentines upon his festival took its rise from thence."

It is a very general custom of doubtful origin, but of great antiquity, for young people to draw lots on the eve of Valentine's Day: the names of a select number of one sex are, by an equal number of the other, put into a box, out of which each person draws one, which is called their Valentine, and is looked upon as a good omen of their being man and wife afterwards.

This custom of choosing Valentines was a sport practised in the houses of the gentry of England as early as the year 1476; and John Lydgate, the Monk, of Bury, alludes to it in a poem written by him in praise of Queen Catherine.

The custom of drawing for valentines is still observed in the northern counties of England, where also the first woman seen by a man, or man seen by a woman, on Valentine's day, is marked for their Valentine for the ensuing year.

The rural tradition that, on this day, every bird chooses its mate, is alluded to by Chaucer, Shakspeare, and numerous other writers.

The customs of St. Valentine's day seem at present confined to that of young people sending complimentary or satirical letters to their acquaintance, and to such an extent is this custom carried, that in London alone, the increase of two-penny post letters on that day, exceeds two hundred thousand.

Gay has left us a poetical description of some rural ceremonies used on the morning of this day in his time:

"Last Valentine, the day when birds of kind
Their paramours with mutual chirpings find,
I early rose, just at the break of day,
Before the sun had chased the stars away;
A field I went, amid the morning dew,
To milk my kine (for so should house-wives do.)
The first I spied, and the first swain we ees,
In spite of fortune, shall our true love be."

STAR-LIGHT FROST.

The stars are shining over head
In the clear frosty night;
So will they shine when we are dead,
As countless and as bright.
For brief the time and small the space
That e'en the proudest have,
Ere they conclude their various race
In silence and the grave.
But the pure soul from dust shall rise,
By our great Saviour's aid,
When the last trump shall rend the skies,
And all the stars shall fade.

Rev. W. L. Bowles.