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TRADITIONS OF HALLOW'EEN.

A History of Curious Spells and Love Charms.

MATRIMONIAL FATES FORETOLD.

Customs of the Mystic Night—Quotations From the Poet Gay and Other Authorities—Peering into the Future.

Hallow'een.

All boys and girls know that next Wednesday, Oct. 31, will be All Hallow Eve, though most of them corrupt its name to "Holly Eve." They know it is a night of mirth and mystery specially devoted to mischief, fun, incantations, divinations, charms and spells, but very few of them understand its real significance, or can tell whence it derives its name.

It is many centuries since the church, finding it impossible, from the great and constantly increasing multitude of the saints, to set apart a separate day for each one, decreed that Nov. 1 should thenceforth be kept as a day in honor of all the saints and that it should be known as All Hallow Mass or All Saints' Day, and that the night of Oct. 31, immediately preceding it, should thereafter be kept as a vigil and be known as All Hallow Eve, these occasions being still observed in the Catholic, Episcopal and Lutheran churches.

From its first origination Hallow Eve has been invested with a peculiarly mystic character. As there is nothing in the church celebration of the evening day of All Saints to justify these singular ideas and customs associated with Hallow Eve, and as none of them are of a religious character, we may justly regard them as relics of pagan times.

In the north of Europe in all ages and countries Hallow Eve has been deemed the occasion par excellence for divining the answer to that momentous question, which absorbs so large a share of the thoughts of romantic young men and maidens—who is to marry whom? The means employed to gain this much-desired information are as quaint and curious as they are numerous and varied. For this purpose every time and every country has had its own charms and spells peculiar to itself, and they have furnished an almost inexhaustible theme to folk poets and compilers of folk-lore.

Those of Scotland have been most graphically described by that greatest of all poets of the people, Robert Burns. In his poem of "Hallow'een" he has given us a most vivid account of more than half a score of hallow eve charms and spells peculiar to the Scottish peasantry.

In a very old book called "Ye True Arte to Reade the Future," I find the following: "If a maid would know ye name of ye man she is to marry let her on All Hallow Eve, steal out to a lime kiln and throw a sieve of blue yarn still holding to ye other end. Presently ye end in ye kiln will be sharply pulled. Then ye maid must say 'who hold?' Whereupon ye voice of her future husband will pronounce his name—both ye christian and ye squire name." The only obstacle to the successful performance of this spell is the difficulty of finding an old lime kiln.

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Water, nuts and apples bear a prominent part in the spells and charms of Hallow Eve. A quaint old book of charms, published in Edinburgh in 1890, entitled "Old Father Times Bundle of Faggots Newly Bound Up," declares that an infallible means of getting a view of your future husband and wife is to go to bed on Hallow Eve with a glass of water, in which a small silver of wood has been placed, standing on a table by your bedside. In the night you will dream of falling from a bridge into a river and of being rescued by your future wife or husband, whom you will see as distinctly as though viewed with waking eyes. This charm is thus alluded to by the English poet Gay: "Last hallow eve I loved my love to see, And tried a spell to call her up to me. With wood and water standing by my side I dreamed a dream and saw my own sweet bride."

In a folk-lore book called "Ye Mysteries of ye Wychecraft," which is the oldest in my collection, there is given a charm "By which a maid may know if ye man she loves be true." To perform this the maid is directed to pluck at midnight on all hallow eve, two monthly roses with long stems, naming one for herself and the other for her lover. She must then go directly to her sleeping room without speaking to anyone, and kneeling beside her bed, must twine the stems of the two roses together and then repeat the following lines, meanwhile gazing intently upon the rose named for her lover:

Twine, twine and intertwine,
Let my love be wholly mine,
If his love be kind and true,
Deeper grow his roses to me.

If her swain be faithful, the color of the rose representing him will grow darker and more intense.

Of all the hallow eve spells and charms associated with nuts, one of the oldest is that which prevails in some of England's northern counties, and which is to the effect that if a young man or woman will go at midnight on Hallow Eve to a walnut tree and walk around it three times, crying out each time "let him (or her) that is to be my true love bring me some walnuts," the future wife or husband will be seen in the tree gathering its fruit. The poet Gay thus refers, in his "Pastorals," to this custom:

"Last Hallow Eve I sought a walnut tree
He hopes that 'ere true love's face might see."
Three times I walked, three times I walked
In the trees I saw my true love's face."

A very old Hallow Eve divination, formerly much practiced by English rustics to tell from what quarter of the compass the future husband or wife will come, is performed by stealing out unobserved at midnight, nucking a small lock of hair from one's head and casting it to the breeze. Whatever direction it is blown towards believes to be the location of the future matrimonial partner. This divination is also mentioned by Gay in his "Pastorals" as follows:

"I pluck this lock of hair from out my head,
To tell whence comes the one that I shall wed.
Fly, silkon hair, fly all the world around
Until you reach the spot where my true love is found."

There can be no question that many of the observances of Hallow Eve are derived from those of the old Roman festival of Pomona, when divinations and the consulting of oracles and omens were universally practiced.

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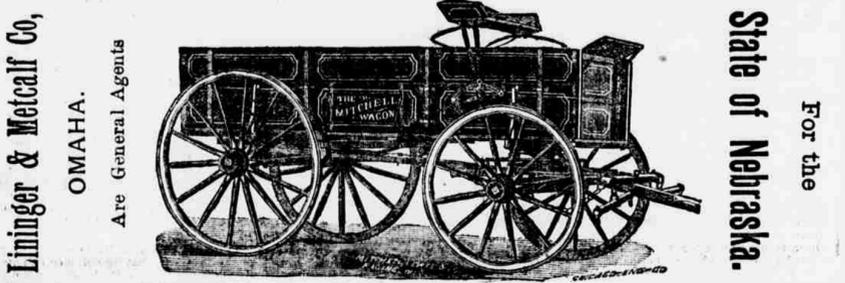
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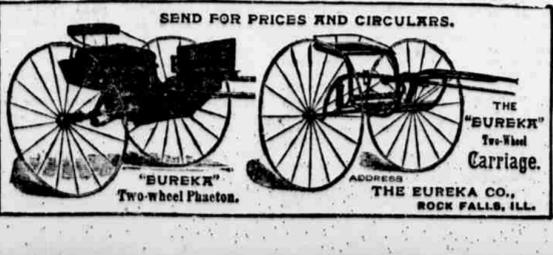
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