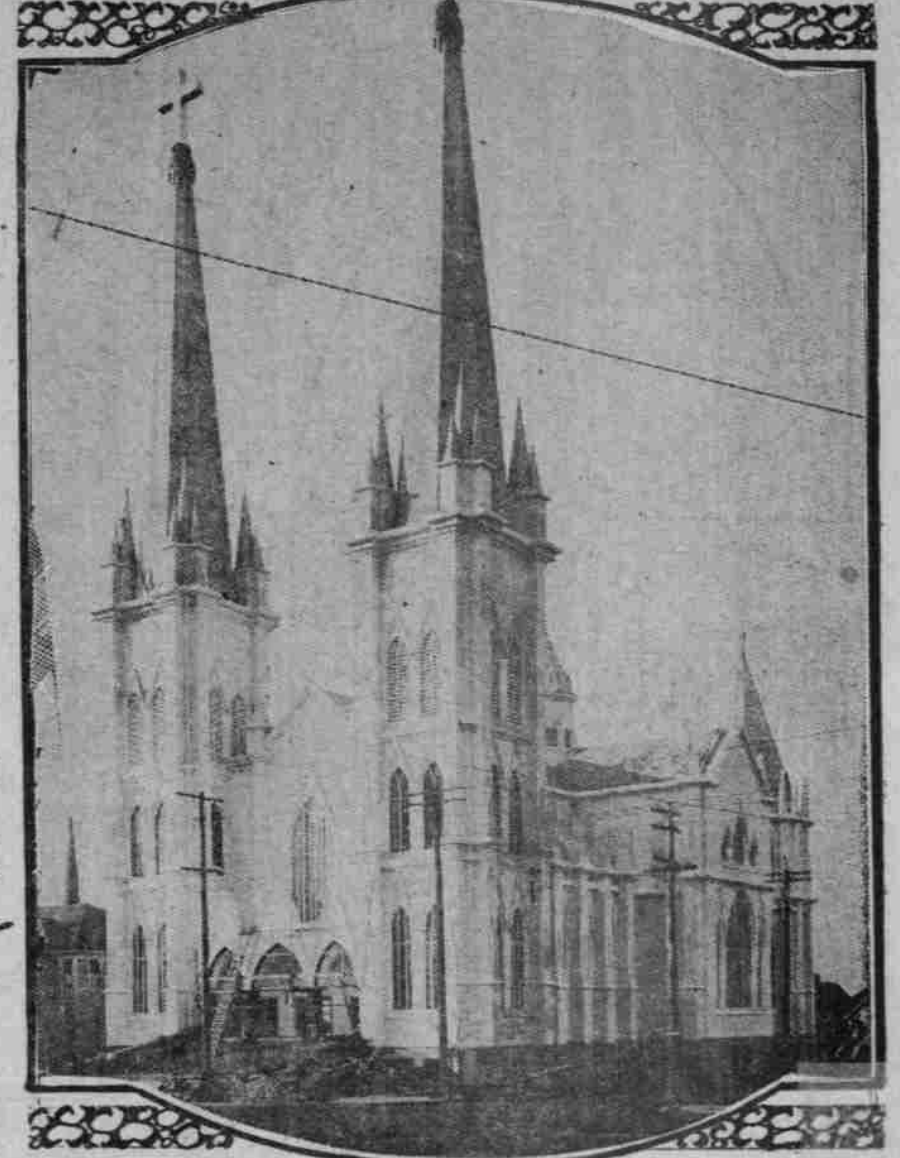


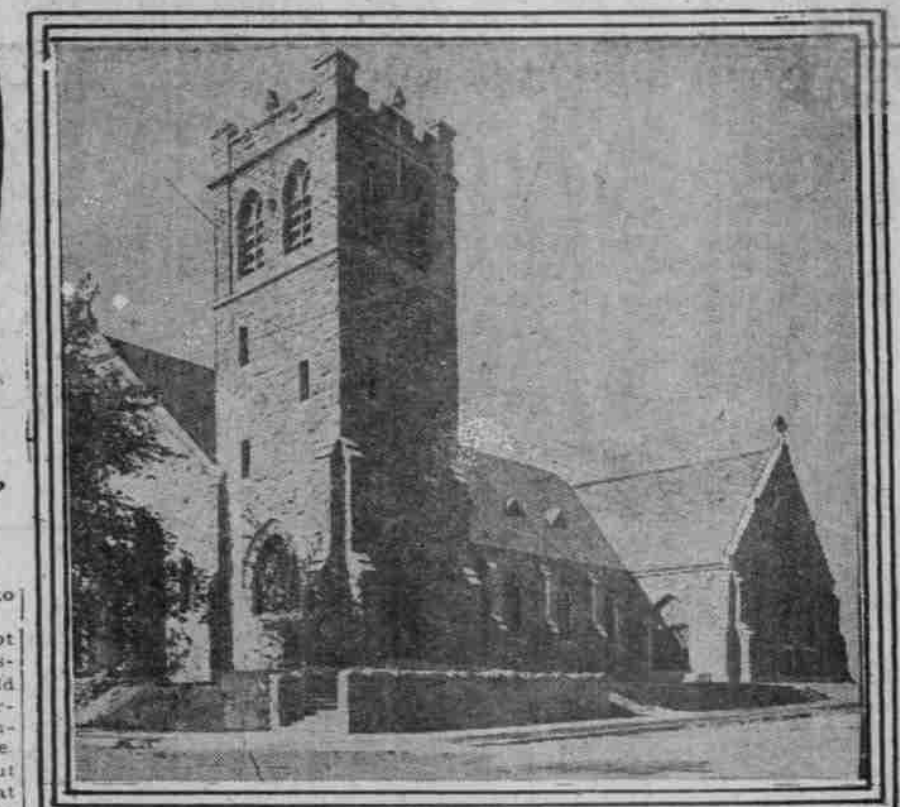


Traditions of Good Omen Accompany Easter Brides

Portland Girls Marry at Lent's End to Gain Sanctity for Joyous Sacrament.



St. Francis Catholic Church.



Trinity Episcopal Church.

BY DE WITT HARRY.

THE traditions of Lent, kept alive for centuries by the Roman Catholic and the Episcopal churches, have never seen a more practical manifestation than during the present year. Lent, according to these two churches, is a time of penance; a time for the examination of the innermost conscience and for purging those thoughts and actions which are antagonistic to the dictates of true religion. The Lenten period is looked upon as a time for getting a fresh start in the religious sense. "Repent" calls the church, and the true believer of those denominations, which insist upon a rigid observance of the six-week period, strives his utmost to do so.

Easter Sunday, ever since the resurrection of Christ, has been a festival of joy, bringing to a fitting end the six weeks of humility. Now, inasmuch as Lent is a time for reflection and examination of the conscience, the two old churches noted above discourage during this time the festival of marriage.

In the Portland Catholic churches during the Lenten period it is exceedingly doubtful if marriage bans have been published in even an isolated instance. While there is no Episcopal canon against marriage during Lent, the clergy as a rule do not perform ceremonies unless absolutely imperative and then they are seldom held in the church. Church weddings are absolutely barred in the Roman Catholic church.

Therefore, for romance carries on no matter what the period, after the six-week cessation of marriage ceremonies in these two of the largest denominations, there is always a number of love affairs awaiting their consummation. From the Easter period on in practically every church the marriage rate increases. Indeed the fact is that sanctity is gained for this sacrament by having it during or soon after the Easter period. Traditions of good omen accrue at this time so these marriages are especially popular. In addition there are also the early spring associations of romance and mating.

In the Roman Catholic churches of

this diocese, starting last Sunday, congregations will turn an expectant ear toward the chancel in order to learn of impending weddings. Clerks in charge of license bureaus in the court house are prepared for an increase in their business for the next few weeks.

Lent Is Mourning Period.

"Religious meditation and spiritual discipline are what we strive for during Lent," said Rev. Father O'Hara of Saint Joseph's Catholic church. "Festivals are discouraged as much as possible because it is not a period of joy. Marriage is a joyful occasion and not in keeping with the spiritual season of Lent; especially is this true of the period from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday."

"The associations of Lent call for humility and examination of the conscience," Bishop Walter Taylor Sumner of the Episcopal diocese says. "Social festivals, especially dancing, are practically forbidden during this time. I know of no church marriages during the past Lent. Unless there is a very urgent need or some good reason for performing the ceremony, we do not do so in the Episcopal church. However, immediately following Easter Sunday there are a number of ceremonies scheduled by our clergy, some of them being of special prominence. Always immediately after Lent there are a number of couples waiting church sanction for their union."

Though June will doubtless always be the popular bridal month, owing to the early summer season and real romantic setting, the Easter period is the time when religious omens attach the greater amount of approval and significance to marriage. Taking to heart the lessons of Lent, the church feels that its children will live a more profitable life in this union if it is had at this time. During Lent the church calls on her children for these things; a fresh start, Godlike service

for others, and sacrifice; all of which are necessary in achieving a true marriage. Lent is looked upon as a true period of the larger love with Christ's example.

Church Teachings Endure.

The ancient teachings of the church concerning holy matrimony, its indissoluble and inviolable sanctity, are again being revived. Churches that wield a great deal of influence among their devotees are beginning to emphasize, as never before, the necessity for performing the marriage vows within proper precincts and with the official sanction of the church itself. Doubtless it is hoped by these means to accentuate the imperishable character of the matrimonial vows in this period of indiscriminate dissolution and thereby prevent a great number of divorces.

Religious associations of marriage have been connected with Christianity since the beginning of its era. Regarded as a divine institution because it begins with and rests upon holy law, home in its true sense belongs only to the wedded. All real domestic life is the result of marriage and the church strives to bring about this natural contract which was established by Almighty God at the first creation of human beings. Not only has marriage, essentially regarded as a religious sacrament, been jealously guarded in its essential elements by the church, but the state early added its sanction to marriage as a civil contract, and civil laws have defended it with fidelity.

Marriage Treated Lightly.

The clergy of today hold, and justly it would seem, that this holy state is regarded too lightly, when in reality it is elevated to the dignity of sacramental honor and virtue in the Christian church.

Going back into the lore connected with the matrimonial state many strange and applicable beliefs are found. For instance, it is held that

a secret or private marriage is no marriage at all, whether in a civil or religious aspect. The necessity, the obligations and the blessings of the rite have their essential roots in society at large and are matters on which the rights and happiness of others may be quite as dependent as are the rights and happiness of the parties themselves. In a moral and religious view publicity is held in some degree both a test and a guaranty of virtue. In other words canon law holds that what is pure and good seeks or willingly abides the knowledge of man.

The Hebrews have a saying that he is not a man who has not a woman. In the Jewish church man and wife, as the stock and sown, are grafted by marriage and bear fruit to the world. They are the first link of human society to which all the rest are joined. Marriages are consented to above but consummated below.

Church Demands Obedience.

Taking the stand that the solemn benedictions of the church are necessary and essential to a proper marriage, we find that many people are prone to deny the religious aspect of the ceremony, treating it merely as a civil contract. In some essentials this is so. Inasmuch as it controls the property rights of the parties concerned and guards the social standing of the woman. However, marriage is not a thing of human institution nor does it seem, in its fullest sense, competent for human law to forbid or do away with it. This is one of the main tenets of the Roman Catholic church in their fight for religious control of this relation.

Easter time, when mankind, purged of sin by wholesome observance of precepts established by divine example, is set for by the church as one of the most auspicious occasions for the wedding of the marriage ties. Blessed indeed are these marriages held on account of the seasonal beliefs that accompany them. Church blessing, so essential to all canons, is held much more necessary than mere agreement. They point out that the first marriage, that between Adam and Eve, was solemnized by God himself and quote again and again the pregnant phrase, "What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder," and hold it unquestionably within the domain of the church. The sphere of religion, according to all established tenets, fully and completely contains the aspect by which

marriage shall be fitly displayed to men.

Taking another view and one not too extreme in the face of other established beliefs, the church should have no more right to dissolve marriages than has the state. Once consecrated, the tenure must endure. Other things may be transitory, but marriage is, in its abstract sense at least, lasting. Sacred associations so completely surround the nuptial idea that nearly every country has some observance which accentuates the mystic side of the rite. Generally it is esteemed and revered and the teachings of the church adhered to as to seasonal omens. Even in heathen practices there was some set time and form for the observance of troth plighting.

It has been erroneously asserted and often copied in the supposed interests of the civil contract theory that the scriptures, old and new, make no mention of religious rites; that the Hebrew people and all the ante-Christian church, as far as we know, celebrated the ordinance with civil and social ceremonies only. The truth is that marriage has always been held by the Hebrews as a sacred rite and solemnized among them with true religious ceremonies. However, the Hebrew church also did not encourage marriage during religious feast periods or times of abstention, or when they interfered with the regular worship of the church. Double ceremonies, that of the social and civil aspect first followed by the religious, have been known for ages. Benediction has always been held by the Jews as one of the main elements entering into the ceremony.

Time Changes Practices.

In minor particulars the solemnities of Christian marriage and methods of observance have differed in different ages and countries. Peculiarities of race and climate, national associations and sentiment and of civil institutions and local traditions have wrought interesting diversions. Nevertheless the recognized form of rite has remained the same the world over down through the eras. For instance, in the majority of the evangelized Protestant churches Lenten canons against marriage are not recognized and they are performed just the same at this time as at any other period in the religious calendar.

One Time Is Right.

Frequently in the prayer books occurs the phrase "At the day and time appointed for the solemnization of matrimony." This is little understood, but an analysis is given by

Proctor, one of the recognized religious authorities, as follows: "Marriage being an occasion of rejoicing, was forbidden in the fourth century during the solemn fast of Lent; and also in the 11th century at many other seasons also. The only seasons now prohibited, not indeed by law, but by custom and propriety, are Lent and any occasion of a public fast." Page 338, Am. Ed.

Ask many people what is the correct time to be married and they say "high noon," not knowing what is the reason. Indeed the right time for the ceremony, according to custom, is between the hours of 8 and 12 in the morning. This arises from ecclesiastical law, unknown to American institutions, but prevailing in the British Empire. This is held to be the one period in the 24 hours when the most serious business of life is best performed, when the judgment is clearest, the passions calmed and one is the least likely to be hurried into a momentary act for lifelong repentance. These are also held to be the most public hours, so far as one time can properly be said to be more public than another between sunrise and sunset.

Man Becomes Householder.

Then after the marriage the man emerges as a householder, commonly called husband, an artificial name given to designate the public, technical, legal and commercial relations and regarded as the antithesis of wife. When pronounced man and wife the judicial sentence conveys an exquisite touch of delicacy and truth often overlooked in that man is thus said to receive the whole nature and office of the wife into his waiting bosom, sensible of no line of demarcation or contrast or foreign elements whatever, but only of a felicitous blending out of an otherwise unattainable and unnatural void.

Another phase of the ceremony often glossed over is that it must be held in a fitting place and in the presence of the friends and neighbors of the contracting parties. This is for the reason that all shall know

that the two have espoused each other. In this sense no place is more fitting for the observance than the church, and then in order comes the home of the bride's father or that of a friend. An authority states that either of these three places is much more to be desired on every ground of propriety and sentiment than are the woods, or an open lawn, an hotel parlor, a stage coach or an ascending balloon. This man goes on to say that it is often forgotten, when the proprieties are thus ignored, that they are not founded in mere human caprice or taste, but in a humble and due respect to the great Being who is the only source to whom mankind looks for the felicity which a marriage duly contracted and conducted is capable of yielding.

Then, in the church, the man stands on the right side for the reason that in church annals this seems to rest with the restoration of the woman in the family and the church. This practice comes from the far recurrence of the belief that woman was taken from the side of man nearest his heart and needs his protection and belongs on this side. The position of the man at the right side is the natural one for protection, as man inevitably grasps the object to be cherished with the left hand, leaving the right free to repel assault or ward off danger. In a passage of scripture the bride says "His left hand shall be under my head and his right should embrace me."

And this week the jewelers will again garnish their display windows with engagement and wedding rings, for this token will once more spring into favor. In the wedding ceremony the ring is regarded as a seal and confirms the lifelong tenure of the vows assumed by the most irrevocable sanction known to human covenants. The ring is thus the perpetual pledge and reminder of the irrevocable agreement. In the wedding circlet gold is generally recognized as the most fitting material, as it is reputed to be the most unchangeable of metals. It is the inviolable seal of personal faith.