

"Truth"

By L. de Villeneuve. Gestefeld Pub. Co.

"'TRUTH' IS A NOVEL," says the author, modestly seeking to evade the plaudits of the public behind the rampart of a confessed pseudonym. It may be added that it is, also, a monument of unconscious humor. "I have not written for the fashionable world alone," says this candid historian in his preface, "but trust that my book will be read by all the bright minds of the day, and that men of culture, reading between the lines, may grasp the great thought of the closing century, to which all life now tends." Is not that fine? Double-lead the advertisement of any patent medicine, and ask the world to read between the lines the wisdom of Prof. von Helmholtz. But let us look at the lines themselves. "Truth" is a fair Southern girl with a soul too big for her white muslin dresses. The result is trouble for her numerous suitors. As she coyly relates the tale of them to her godfather, we can see what havoc this soul wrought. One "was very nice," she said, "a lawyer, well-dressed, fashionable, and he did smoke such nice cigars." But nice cigars are expensive, and Truth was poor, so the lawyer loved and rode away. But Truth was not desolate. "Ah sir," she said, "I had a tall, blond real-estate man for a beau. We walked on the breakwater. The new moon looked down upon us and the evening star shone brightly. My fine, manly beau said, 'Listen to me! I will say what I have to say in original

poetry.'" Think of that! However, Truth was reserved for another fate. Although she was passionately adored by her godfather, the celebrated, aristocratic and rich Dr. L. of New York, and had gazed down that gentleman's throat to find it a "rosy channel to a finely developed interior, free from disease of any kind," she married a man named Leb Dai who had yellow whiskers and reminded her of Santa Claus in his youth. Truth's soul could rise even above that.

Meanwhile the story moves to the jungles of Africa. Two hungry travellers are about to make a fire to cook their supper, when Dr. L. descends casually from a tree and discourses to them on the flora of the country. They are charmed and urge him to return with them to their party. In a company they sit around the camp-fire a thousand miles from the nearest settlement of white men, while the Doctor discusses at length such appropriate and germane questions as the definition of will power, matrimony, and the difference between Buddhism and Brahmanism. Plainly he is qualifying for an affinity with Truth. With her, also, matters are reaching a climax, for, after a son was born to her and yept Justice Dai, she very properly got a divorce from Leb and set out to marry the discursive and aristocratic Doctor. It was a very swell affair, indeed, this celebration of *secondes noces*, a bishop officiating at midnight in a great church crowded with the élite of New York. Truth gave a reception to a thousand persons, and then chose from the fashionable world "a small, exclusive set, much to the chagrin of the larger number, who felt the slight." But Truth was happy now, for the Doctor gave her all the mulled cider she wanted ("the drink of drinks"), published her books at his own expense, abused her critics, and did everything that could be expected of a loving husband. But when Truth found that even he was human and abused his washerwoman, her ethereal soul refused to put up with the world longer. One day she had the ball-room decked as a mortuary chapel, but in white, and, after seeing visions of mulled cider, she went and died upon an improvised bier in her best Paris night-gown. This comes as a dramatic rebuke to the hilarious reader, who has followed her fortunes thus far.