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ABOUT EASTER EGGS.

THEIR SYMBOLICAL USE AN ANCIENT CUSTOM.

Easter Egg Festivals Date from Pre-historic Times - The Meaning Attached to the Custom by Different Races.

Of all the peculiar customs in vogue in Christendom to-day the use of the Easter, or Pasche, egg is probably the most widely spread and most ancient. To its antiquity, it may be said, this peculiar Easter rite owes its general observance, for its origin dates back not merely to the birth of Christianity, but to much earlier times, when several ancient peoples recognized the use of eggs at this season of the year as symbolical of the resurrection of nature—the springing forth of life in the spring. It is not surprising, therefore, that the early Christians grew to recognize the egg as a fitting symbol of the Resurrection, or, as an old writer puts it, "an emblem of the rising up out of the grave, in the same manner as the chick, entombed, as it were, in the egg, is in due time brought to life."

The Count de Gobelin, in his "Religious History of the Calendar," declares that this custom of giving eggs at Easter is to be traced up to the theology and philosophy of the Egyptians, Persians, Gauls, Greeks, Romans and other ancient nations. Hutchinson, in his history of Northumberland, says of the Pasche eggs: "They were held by the Egyptians as a sacred emblem of the renovation of mankind after the deluge. The Jews adopted it to suit the circumstances of their history as a type of their departure from the land of Egypt, and it was used in the feast of the Passover as part of the furniture of the table with the Paschal lamb."

"The Christians have certainly used it on this day, as retaining the elements of future life, for an emblem of the Resurrection. It seems as if the egg was thus decorated for a religious trophy after the days of mortification and abstinence were over and festivity had taken place, and as an emblem of life certified to us by the Resurrection from the regions of death and the grave."

Carmel, in his "History of Customs," says that during Easter and the following days, hard eggs, painted various colors, but principally red, are the ordinary food of the season, and that in Italy, Spain and Provence, where nearly all ancient superstitions are retained, there are in the public places certain sports with eggs. He attributes this custom as coming from the Jews or the pagans, observing that it is common to both. The Jewish wives, he says, at the feast of the Passover, on a table prepared for that purpose, place hard eggs, the symbols of a bird called Ziz, about which many fabulous stories are told.

"That the church of Rome," says Brand in his "Popular Antiquities," "considered eggs as emblematical of the Resurrection may be gathered from the subsequent prayer, which the reader will find in an extract from the ritual of Pope Paul the Fifth, for the use of England, Scotland and Ireland. It contains various other forms of benediction. 'Bless, O Lord! we beseech Thee, this Thy creature of eggs, that it may become sustenance to Thy faithful servants, eating it in thankfulness to Thee, on account of the Resurrection of our Lord.'"

In Hakluyt's voyages the following amusing account is given of the observance of the custom in Russia at that period: "They have an order at Easter which they always observe, and that is this: Every yeere, against Easter, to die or colour red, with Brazzel (Brazil wood), a great number of eggs, of which every man and woman giveth one unto the priest of the parish upon Easter day, in the morning. And, moreover, the common people use to carrie in their hands one of these redde eggs, not only upon Easter day, but also three or four days after, and gentlemen and gentlemen have eggs gilded, which they carry in like manner."

"They use it, as they say, for a great love and in token of the Resurrection, whereof they rejoice. For where two friends meete during the Easter Holydayes, they come and take another by the hand; the one saith, 'The Lord, or Christ is risen;' the other answereth, 'It is so of a truth;' and then they kiss and exchange their eggs, both men and women, continuing in kissing four days together."

This odd custom still exists in Russia in a modified form. The Abbe d'Auteoche, in his "Journey to Siberia," relates that on Easter morning a Russian entered his room, embraced him and then gave him a gaily decorated egg. The custom of picking eggs is an extremely old one. It was in vogue in the various parts of England, Scotland, Wales, and in portions of Europe many centuries ago, and although it has become extinct in many localities, it is still prosecuted with unrelenting vigor and enjoyment by the youths in many lands. Hyde, in his work on Oriental sports, numbers this pitting of egg against egg to see which will break the other's shell as one of the Easter games of the Christians of Mesopotamia.

Puss and the Owls.

A menacing yellow toment on top of a rail fence awoke Howard Chase's entire household in the Dutch mountains, near Scranton, Pa., one moonshiny night this winter. The cat was a visitor, and Mr. Chase was about to flee at him from a window when two gigantic horned owls dropped upon the noisy fellow simultaneously. One got him by the neck and the other by the rump, nailing him so suddenly that he changed his plaintive midnight love song to a piteous wall of pain. In struggling for liberty the musical animal landed across the rail upon his belly with one of the wideawake night birds tousing at his hide violently on either side of the fence. The owls were a dead match in both size and strength, and they scowled the toment across the rail until he yowled and

spluttered in a way that showed he was sorry he hadn't stayed at home. All the dogs and cats on the premises flocked out to witness the interesting midnight spectacle, their voices mingling with the frightful cries of the toment. The energetic owls paid no attention to the noisy fourfooted spectators, but continued to beat the air and to keep the cat in limbo on the rail.

After a while the cat reached the rail with his hind claws and he kicked so hard for dear life then that the owl at his head yanked him and the other owl over the fence. They all tumbled into the snow, where for a short time the desperate cat made the feathers fly. The vigorous forest birds didn't let up on the cat a particle, though, and they kept twisting and tugging and tearing his hide till he was almost completely played out. Then the owls, with their heads pointed in the same direction, clutched the cat at opposite ends, bore him skyward and sallied away to the woods with him, one in front of the other.

The Dancing Hammerkop.

It is somewhat like a heron or stork, has a melancholy gait, lives on fish and frogs and is considered in Africa a bird of evil omen. It is found in Cape Colony, some other parts of Africa and in Madagascar. Under its quiet appearance it nourishes esthetic tastes. When it casts off its sober demeanor it indulges in a fantastic dance. In a state of nature two or three join in the dance, skipping around each other, opening and closing their wings. They breed on trees or on rocky ledges, forming a huge structure of sticks.

These nests are so solid that they will bear the weight of a heavy man on the domed roof without collapsing. The entrance is a small hole, placed in the least accessible side. In a lonely rocky gien Mr. Layard counted half a dozen of their nests, some almost inaccessible, placed on ledges of rock. One nest contained at least a large cartload of sticks. They occupy the same nest year after year, repairing it as required. The female is credited with the joiner work and the male is the decorator. On the platform outside the inner portion he spreads out all kinds of vertu, brass and bone buttons, bits of crockery and bleached bones.

If a knife, pin or tinder box were lost within some miles the loser made a point of examining the hammerkops' nests. Indeed, were it not that hyenas, leopards and jackals ranged in their vicinity it is highly probable man's curiosity or resentment would have often extirpated these interesting artists, or at least destroyed habits founded on leisure and immunity from persecution.

The Railroad in Mexico.

A locomotive engineer employed by the Pennsylvania railroad, who served five years on one of the roads down in Mexico, in the course of a talk with the writer said: "In Mexico the government stands by the corporations to the last ditch. Sin against the railroads and you are doomed. This state of things has brought about almost a continual warfare between the lower or ignorant classes and the railroads. The confiscation of valuable land and the accidental killing of human beings and cattle contribute to the feeling of hostility. Mexicans dislike being hurried, and I have had my hair raise on ends on account of the leisurely way they have crossed the track in front of my engine, notwithstanding the frantic shrieks of the whistle and the gesticulations of bystanders."

"I have seen an ignorant Mexican stood up against a water tank and shot full of holes by soldiers for simply throwing a tie across the track. His child had been killed by the train just ahead of mine and he wanted to throw our train in the ditch out of revenge. The tie would have done no damage, but an excited Mexican official wanted justice, and in spite of my arguments he got it, of a Mexican sort."

The Muniments of War.

"Twelve years ago last month," said Mr. Helzhoover, of Pennsylvania, "I had an interesting experience on the floor of the House over a term used by me in the course of debate. I had been criticizing Gen. Hazen, who was at that time chief signal officer of the army. I referred to him as 'wearing the muniments of war,' and in other ways depicting himself in public places. Hazen was defended by as brainy a quartet of men as ever sat in the House. They were Ezra Taylor, Garfield's successor; Ben Butterworth, of Cincinnati; Judge Converse, of Columbus, all three Ohio men, and Mayor Calkins, of Indiana. Judge Taylor ridiculed my use of the term 'muniments of war.' While he was speaking I slipped out to the congressional library and asked Ainsworth Spofford if it was correct. He replied that it was, and picking up a copy of Shakespeare which lay on his desk he opened it at the second act of 'Coriolanus' and pointed to the passage which contained it. It was quick work. It showed the muniments of war, and enabled me to get back at my opponents in a manner particularly gratifying to myself."

A Wonderful Hog.

Tennessee claims to have within her borders the oldest hog in the world. This hog made her appearance on the farm of Hugh Boyd, at Gadsden, five miles south of here, in 1872, and is, consequently, 23 years old this spring. At 4 years old she was sold to Joseph Fullalove and he sold her three years later to W. W. Richardson, her present owner. Every spring and fall she has regularly appeared with a lot of little fellows tugging on behind, never fewer than seven, until now she is the mother of the grand total of 380 pigs which attained maturity, or a killing age, and is a grandmother ten times over. Her progeny have weighed from 200 to 450 pounds each, and taking the average at 250 pounds would make a total weight of 95,000 pounds. At the price of hogs

on foot at the present time, 5 cents, the 41 tons of hog would be worth \$4,125.

The hog has always had excellent health, except for a few days' indisposition after being knocked off the tracks of the Louisville and Nashville railroad by a passing engine, which has happened half a dozen times. Last summer, when she became entirely toothless, she became very thin and her departure from this world of care was expected. Watermelon time came on, however, and she picked up rinds enough about the little town of Gadsden to fatten her up and put her in condition to successfully stand the beautiful sunny South winter with the thermometer registering 10 degrees below zero.

The Turkey Stopped the Train.

Swarms of locusts are well known to have stopped railway trains, but up to this time it was probably never heard that a single turkey had power to accomplish this feat. How it was done in Oxford, Pa., is described in the Philadelphia Public Ledger.

The engine was puffing hard on an up grade and passed under an over-arching limb of a large tree in front of a farmhouse. On the limb were several turkeys at roost. The exhaust steam was so strong that it knocked a hen turkey from her perch and she came down upon the bell rope.

The bell rang and the engineer brought the train to a halt. Then, of course, the conductor hastened forward to know what was the matter and one of the train hands discovered the bird still tilting upon the rope and giving utterance to notes which, it is fair to presume, were expressive of surprise.

The men set up a roar, the bird took wing and the engine again began to puff.

The Natural Bridge of Oregon.

One of the chief of the west coast natural curiosities is the "Titan's Bridge," situated in Douglas county, Ore., and about eighteen miles from Oakland. It is not on such a grand scale as the famous "Natural Bridge" of Virginia, but will, when its whereabouts become generally known, rank high among American oddities of nature. This Oregon natural bridge was discovered only a few years ago by a Californian of the name of Magee. The canon spanned by its arch is 914 feet wide at the base between side walls, and the arch itself only lacks 44 feet of being an even 100 above the little stream that runs beneath. The rock stratum which spans the canon and forms the bridge is 30 feet in thickness, exclusive of 3 or 4 feet of earth, which supports a few straggling trees. It has already become a great resort for Oregonian outers, and a large hotel on a plateau near the western approach of the bridge among the near future probabilities.

Seven Cents for the Best Bed.

"Speaking of cheap lodging houses," said a prominent member of the New York Charity Organization society the other day, "did you ever hear of one in Second street where they charge seven cents for the best bed?"

"No? Well, the seven cent bed is a board—that is, it is elevated from the floor, but there is no quilt and no pillow. The floor itself is next. You may sleep there for five cents. The five centers use their shoes for pillows. Up in the attic a 6x8 floor space is rented for three cents, and the earliest applicants get the space near the door. They have a better chance of living till morning than the men in the rear of the room. There is no light to speak of, and I wonder how it is that the board of health permits such overcrowding and such danger of pestilence."

"And after the three cent bed there is little to be expected but the river and the slab in the morgue."

A Double Sidewalk Suggested.

A Chicago man suggests that that city build a double sidewalk along its most crowded streets. The plan provides for a continuous walk above the present walks, the upper work to be constructed of glass and iron and to be level with the second story of the buildings. A few of the enumerated advantages are: Persons using it would be free from the many dangers that now threaten them, and free from the dust and dirt encountered on the lower level; in bad weather the upper sidewalk would afford a shelter from the rain or snow, making the covered way underneath, under such conditions, most desirable; the owners of buildings would have two main floors where they now have one, making them more valuable; the retail business of the city would be carried on on the upper level, and patrons of elevated railways would be enabled to transact their business without descending to the lower level.

Longest Forests.

The longest forest in the world is that which extends in Siberia from the Obi river on the west about three thousand miles to the valley of the Indigirka on the east. It is more than one thousand miles in breadth from north to south. Its timber is of the pine or conifer species. Other long forests are the one lying north of the St. Lawrence river, about seventeen miles in length from east to west, and the great Amazon forest, which occupies a region twenty-one hundred miles in length and thirteen hundred in breadth. The central African forest in which Stanley was a prisoner so long has been estimated at a length of three thousand miles north to south.

The Realism of Death.

Realism on the stage has educated audiences to such a fine point of appreciation that when an actor's clothing caught fire and burned him to death during the progress of a performance the other evening the spectators took it for granted that the accident was a part of the show, —Chicago Times-Herald.

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