

# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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## THE FIRST EASTER.

In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women. Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him; lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.—Matt. 28. 1-8.

## EASTER EGGS.

In mythology we find many queer beliefs about eggs. The Persians believed in two deities, Light and Shade. Light produced twenty-four good spirits, all enclosed in one egg; this was invaded by evil spirits proceeding from the other deity, hence the birth of good and evil. The Hindus never ate eggs, because they believed them to be the source of all things. There is a tradition among the Mongolian races that a mystic bird laid an egg on the bosom of one of the deities. When this was hatched, he let it drop in the water; it broke, the upper part became the sky and the lower part the earth, the white forming the moon and the fragments of the shell becoming stars. The Jews used the eggs as a symbol of bondage and deliverance and it is still used at the Passover season as a symbol.

The Grecian philosophers tried to prevail upon the people to refrain from eating eggs; because eggs, they said, contained the elements of life, the shell representing the earth; the white, water; the yolk, fire; air was found in the shell, and the egg contained the germ of life, which it was a sin to destroy.

It is said that the peculiar shape of the dome of Mohammedan mosques is traced to the worship of eggs. Queer superstitions have been attached to eggs. It is said that nurses in Ireland and England used to instruct the children under their care, after eating an egg, to poke their spoons through the shell, "to keep the witches from mak-

ing a boat of it." In the Netherlands the ignorant people eat on Easter Day two eggs that have been laid on Good Friday; this is supposed to prevent chills and fever. In many countries the ignorant people believe that eggs laid on holy days have peculiar qualities, and they are carefully kept, and eaten with particular ceremonies to gain the efficacy of their peculiar qualities. In some parts of England the

people will not allow eggs to be carried out after sunset, nor brought into the house, because of their possibilities of bringing ill luck; while Scotch fishermen will not allow them on board their fishing-boats, because they are believed to bring contrary winds.

Our custom of colouring eggs for Easter Day had its birth among the pagans, who used to present each other with these

pression; and surely Easter should be one of the most treasured days of all days in the year, and no day is more fitting for expressing joy than this, which signifies the coming of Christ into his kingdom, and the giving of a new life to earth. Every tree, twig, and plant is throbbing with new life, a promise of beauty. Let us try, this Easter Day, to bring into it a new meaning. Let us give it a new expression of love.



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coloured eggs to show their joy at the return of spring. Even in Africa and South America eggs have this significance, for they are presented to the idols to celebrate the coming of spring. The use of coloured eggs among Christians was to signify the shedding of the blood of Christ, the eggs being always coloured red. St. Augustine used the egg as a type of hope, a new life coming from an apparently dead thing. This idea took such a hold on the minds of men that even in the fourth century the use of eggs as an article of food was prohibited during Lent. This did not prevent the hens from laying, so the accumulated eggs were coloured and given to the children on Easter Day.

In Russia, Easter is to the people of the Greek Church what Christmas is to the Germans. It is a day for family gatherings and for the giving of gifts. Eggs are presented, with the words, "Christ is risen." The Empress of Russia presents to all who kiss her hand on this day a decorated egg of porcelain. In Poland pyramids of hard boiled eggs, surrounded by coils of sausage, are laid on the table; the host cuts one of the eggs in thin slices and gives a slice to each guest in turn. This ceremony is then repeated by each of the guests present. In Paris eggs are presented during Easter week, and they seem there to be very much what the Christmas-card was with us at one time—an exchange of greeting between neighbours. A very pretty idea for Easter morning is to hide coloured eggs in different parts of the house and have the children hunt for them. This is objected to by some on account of the possibility of great noise, and so the candy or china gifts in egg form are laid at the plate of each member of the family on Easter morning, as an expression of love and good will. A pretty gift for the little children at the hospital would be a tiny basket lined with moss and holding a couple of coloured or decorated eggs. We live in such a busy world, and are so apt to forget the opportunities for expressing our interest in each other, that we ought to hold closely to every day that gives us the opportunity for such ex-