

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

ENLARGED SERIES.—VOL. IX.]

TORONTO, MAY 11, 1889.

[No. 10.

ASIATIC BRIDAL PARTY.

THE Tribes of Tartary in Central Asia are a strange people. They almost live in the saddle. One of the queer ways of courtship is to give the lady a start of a short distance on swift steed, then to allow the would-be bridegroom to pursue her. If the fair fugitive does not want to be caught she puts her horse to his utmost speed. If she is not unwilling to be made a captive, well, she does not put forth such efforts to escape. Our picture shows us one of these young women in her strange bridal dress.



ASIATIC BRIDAL PARTY.

AERIAL POSTMEN.

PEOPLE have not as yet succeeded, although many have tried, to discover some way of making practical use of balloons carrying passengers and mails. But while they have failed, a tiny little bird has succeeded—not in carrying passengers, but in being a marvellous postman. Think of it! a postman with wings, flying at the rate of a hundred miles an hour—twice as rapidly as the fastest express train.

Away back ever so far in the history of the world we can run across accounts of the carrier-pigeons. When the Crusaders marched against the Turks in the Holy Land, long, long ago, the Turks employed these birds to carry information from one city to another, or to fly between different divisions of their armies; but the Crusaders kept falcons, who would chase and capture the pigeons in the air.

Carrier-pigeons are a variety of the domestic pigeon, and have a wonderful instinct which causes them to fly to their homes even when carried hundreds of miles away from it. They have been taken far out of sight of land, on the ocean, and yet have

found their way back to their own cots again. If you have ever been at sea, with no land in sight, you must have noticed that the water all around seemed to be inclosed by a circle of horizon, and that your ship was always in the centre of this circle. One direction looked just the same as another to you. And yet these birds, when let loose, will fly up from the deck to a great height in the air, sailing round and round as they go, and will then without hesitation—if the day be a clear

on the ground, the pigeons have considerable difficulty in finding their way.

Several years ago there used to be a regular line of these birds flown from Halifax, N.S., to Boston, Mass., and from Sandy Hook to New York, with special news brought from Europe by vessels.

But, fast as these little creatures fly, the tiny spark of the electric telegraph flies faster yet, and as a postman and news agent the birds are almost useless in civilized countries.

one—set off on their journey home. It is said that they select the direction by some instinct so wonderful that people cannot discover what the theory is.

The pigeons are taken when quite young, and trained to fly short distances at first. These lengths of flight are gradually increased, and prize-winning birds have been known to fly over a thousand miles at a time.

The letters or messages sent by these postmen of the skies are usually inclosed in a quill and fastened to their legs, necks, or wings. Before the invention of telegraphy, pigeons were often used by capitalists to carry the changes in the prices of stocks and bonds.

During the winter of 1870-'71, when the city of Paris was besieged, the balloons which were sent up always carried a number of birds. The Prussians could follow the balloons and often capture them; but when the navigators escaped the birds could be carried almost any distance, and be sent back to Paris with valuable despatches, flying far over the heads of the enemy lying at the gates, and out of reach of the most skillfully sent bullet. During this war very long despatches were micro-photographed, and forwarded safely fastened beneath the pigeons' wings. In foggy weather, or when snow is