

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XIX.]

TORONTO, MARCH 25, 1899.

[No. 12.]



Easter Flowers.

The roses were the first to hear—
The roses trellised to the tomb;
Bring roses—hide the marks of spear
And cruel nails that sealed his doom.
The lilies were the first to see—
The lilies on that Easter morn;
Bring lilies—crowned with blossoms be
The head so lately crowned with thorn.

The roses were the first to hear;
Ere yet the dark had dreamed
of dawn,
The faintest rustle reached their
ear;
They heard the napkin downward
drawn;
They listened to his breathing low;
His feet upon the threshold fall.
Bring roses—sweetest buds that
blow,
His love the perfume of them all.

The lilies were the first to see;
They, watching in the morning
gray,
Saw angels come so silently
And roll the mighty stone away;
They saw him pass the portals
gloom;
He brushed their leaves—O,
happy dower!
Bring lilies—purest buds that
bloom,
His face reflected in each flower.

The roses were the first to hear,
The lilies were the first to see;
Bring fragrant flowers from far
and near,
To match the Easter melody!
"Rabboni!" be on every tongue,
And every heart the rapture
share
Of Mary, as she kneels among
The roses and the lilies fair!

AN EASTER LEGEND.

BY LOUIS SNOW.

That beautiful city, "Jerusalem,
the Golden," lay sleeping beneath
the starlit sky. Over the
shadows of Calvary the night
winds moaned sorrowfully.

The sentinels, all save one, were
dozing, in sword and mail, wrap-
ped in their heavy cloaks. He,
the Roman soldier, who would
scorn to break his trust, stood
jealously guarding the sepulchre,
where they had laid the crucified
Lord. See! there is yet another
watcher. Lonely, and clothed in
rags, and, oh! pitiful; in her arms
a tender babe.

She believes the sentinels all
slumber, and she is alone in her
sorrowing, midnight watch. She
recalls those words of comfort and
counsel heard from the lips now
silent in the cruel death of the
shameless cross. Crouching by the
tomb, there in the gloom of the wind-
beaten hill, the sobs burst from her
sorrow-burdened heart.

The faithful soldier standing staunchly
by, with swift gesture lifts in his mailed
hand his sword, startled by the sad cry.

"Nay," dropping his arm; "'tis but
that foolish woman again," he murmurs.

Then his thoughts go back in waking
dreams, to those dear ones at home; in
the fair imperial city that rules the
world. When will he see them all
again: that sturdy boy, with eyes like
his mother; the bonny Roman maiden,
his little daughter, and their mother, the

noble matron—when shall they meet—
ever again?

That baby's wail! How it smites up-
on his softened breast! That woman
again, and with the babe! Why tarries
she not within walls this wild night,
rather than watch and wail by this dark
corner?

"Let her rave and moan," impatiently.
"But, no; the babe hath no blame to
suffer."

Swiftly the iron soldier, with heart of
flesh, snatches up the flickering camp-
torch, and hastens to the corner from
which those sounds of grief and suffering
proceed.

A look of pity softens the hard lines of
his bronzed face, and he takes from his
broad shoulders the heavy mantle, and
with gentle care wraps mother and babe
within its ample folds, saying: "These
night winds are fierce and cold. Here!
my cloak is heavy and warm. 'Twill
shield thee, and thy perishing child,"
and tenderly stroking the little one's
head, he furtively brushed away the tear
of which he need not have been ashamed.

Back and forth, unflinchingly on his
sentry watch, strode the Spartan soldier,
while, unawaking, his comrades slum-
bered till the early dawn. Then, when
lofty Olivet gleamed in crown of golden
sunlight on that first glorious Easter
morn, the soldier slept clad in his mail
there on the frozen earth, his mantle
covering the babe and its mother, worn

with sorrow but now resting in blessed
sleep.

"Lo! he is risen!"

A "questioner," grasping rudely the
cloak from off the weary sleeper, angrily
demands, "Why dost wrap thyself in this
garment of the unbeliever?"

Then answered the Master, the Risen
One, "O, ye of little faith and under-
standing! See ye not yonder soldier
hath, in sum and substance, my mission
repeated?"

QUEER EASTER CUSTOMS.

The sight of street boys striking their
rival eggs together to see which
is the stronger and can win the other is
as old as the civilization of Greece and
Rome, and it was as common in the
streets of Athens and Rome two thou-
sand years ago, if we are to believe an-
tiquarians, as it is in any of our Ameri-
can cities at the present day. In
the north of England it is cus-
tomary to exchange presents of
Easter eggs among families who
are on intimate terms, a custom
that also prevailed largely among
the ancients. To this custom the
sending of Easter cards and other
offerings, which has become so
popular of late years in our own
country, may be traced. The ex-
tent to which the latter practice has
increased of late is almost in-
credible, and these offerings grow
more elaborate and expensive every
year.

It is also customary in England's
northern counties to engrave Easter
eggs elaborately by scraping the
dye with a penknife, thus leaving
the design in white upon a coloured
ground. The full name of the
decorator, with the date of his or
her birth, is often recorded in this
manner, and these eggs, being care-
fully preserved for generations as
ornaments for cupboards and
mantels, would doubtless present
as reliable evidence of dates as the
records of a family Bible.

A century or more ago the Eng-
lish clergy and laity used to play
ball in the churches for tansy-cakes
at Eastertide. The ball-playing
was long since abandoned, but
tansy-cakes and puddings are still
favourite Easter delicacies in many
parts of England, tansy having
been selected from the bitter herbs
eaten by the Jews at this sea-
son.

Parish clerks in the counties of
Dorset and Devon leave as an
Easter offering at the house of
every parishioner, immediately
after the church service on Good
Friday, a large and a small cake,
having a mingled sweet and bitter
taste. This is evidently a sur-
vival of the bitter herbs of the
passion supper.

At Cole's Hill, in Warwickshire,
if the young men of the town can
catch a hare and bring it to the
clergyman of the parish before ten
o'clock on Easter morning, the good
man is bound to give them a calf's
head and one hundred eggs for
their breakfast, besides a "groat"
in money.

An old English name for Easter
is "God's Sunday." A quaint old
folk-song of the Middle Ages gives
the following account of the origin
of that name:

"Wen Cryste soe nekid and forlorne;
Had on ye crosse hys goode lymbes
torne;
Wen, three dayes after, all men sayde,
'Thys Cryste ys rysen from ye dede,'
Gode sayde 'Mye chylde, tys mye
waye
Ye calls thy alwayse Gode's Sondaye.'"

The use of flowers to decorate churches
on Easter morning, like many other
Christian usages, is derived from the
Druids, the heathen priests of the an-
cient Britons. Those worthies were ac-
customed to make liberal use of flowers
and vines in all their ceremonies.



EASTER MEANING.

"What doth Easter mean to thee,
Little maiden,
With its fragrant lilies laden?"
Joyously she answered me,
"Easter meaneth, 'Do not weep
Any more at thought of death,'
For 'tis just to fall asleep,
And awake in heaven, he saith.
All its meaning none may tell—
But Christ is risen, and all is well!"

"What doth Easter mean to thee,
Workman earnest,
Who, so like thy Master, yearnest
All his world from sin to free?"
"Perfect peace and strength for strife,

Blessed surely that above us,
In the land of endless life,
Waiteth One who aye doth love us—
This and more. All, who can tell?
But Christ is risen, and all is well!"

"What doth Easter mean to thee,
Pilgrim lonely,
'Reft of loved ones, meeting only
Eyes that cold and careless be?"
"Oh, it meaneth light supernal,
Even the shining of his face,
And reunion, sure, eternal,
Through the riches of his grace,
All it meaneth heaven will tell,
For Christ is risen, and all is well!"