

AN EASTER EGG.

By Elizabeth Price.

They lived next door to each other, with only a low, green hedge between the yards, and even that had a convenient gap that saved going around by the gate every time that Dicksy wanted Dandy, or Dandy wanted Dicksy. There was only one month's difference in their ages, and they had lived next each other all their lives. "We're cousins harder than most people," they would have told you; "cause our papas are brothers and our mamas are sisters, and we've got just 'zactly the same grandpas and grandmas."

Such merry times as they had together, with scarcely a ripple of disturbance! As for a real downright quarrel, such a thing was so unheard of that when at last it happened both families felt that a calamity had befallen them. What made it worse was that it was the day before Easter; the mamas always left the boys help color their own eggs; and they had a royal frolic planned for this particular time. But what made it worst of all was that it grew out of such a trifle.

They had been hunting eggs in Dandy's barn, and were on their way to Dicksy's when they spied under the hedge a smooth, white egg so clear and delicate that it might have been an enormous pearl.

"That's mine," said Dicksy; "I saw my old Yellow-top over here a while ago."

"It's mine," declared Dandy, "cause Speckle never will lay in her own nest." That's all the beginning there was, but when five minutes later the mamas came flying to see what was happening, there was just a wriggling mass of black legs and blue arms, yellow heads and red faces.

In another five minutes the mamas, looking very sober, led two little boys away from each other, after saying that no eggs could be dyed together and no visiting done all day. And all the while the smooth, white egg lay forgotten under the hedge.

There was time for lots of thinking that long, long Saturday. Coloring eggs isn't much fun if you have no one to help you enjoy it but a very quiet mama with a very sober face. By noon Dicksy stood with his nose flattened against a south window, trying to be sure whether he saw Dandy with his nose flattened against a north window. The mamas were not at all entertaining that day. The pretty eggs, all purple and scarlet and spangled, lay neglected and unheeded. Who cared for Easter eggs if there was no one to help hide them or hunt them? How could a fellow roll them down the terrace if there was nobody to have races with? Dicksy stole a sly glance at Mama Marion, but she sewed steadily on with a sorry look around her pretty mouth. A long, long sigh sifted through the lace curtains, then a splash of something warm and wet lay on the window-

sill. Dicksy didn't know just how it came about, but in less than half a minute he was sobbing out his grief and repentance on Mama Marion's shoulder, at the same time finding oceans of comfort in the close embrace of those dear arms that he had feared were never, never going to hug him again.

Down at Dandy's it hadn't been a bit better—indeed it was almost worse, for Dandy was a whole month younger, and he felt that life simply wasn't worth living without Dicksy. Who cared whether it was Speckle or Yellow-top that laid the egg? Who cared whether any hen ever laid any egg again? Why should anybody ever want eggs, when one single one had broken his heart so it could never be mended? Then there was another long sigh, and another salty splash, and another sobbing boy, in Mama Mildred's arms, and a long, earnest talk about naughty tempers that always made trouble and unhappiness.

It was almost sunset when at last Dandy slipped out at the side door and up toward the hedge. In his hand he carried a little box of crayons, and around his mouth there was almost a smile. The egg was still there, and the little boy settled himself on the cushion Mama Mildred had made him bring, and carefully marked in red and blue on the smooth, clear side the word "Forgive." He was drawing a purple rose by way of further embellishment when a door shut somewhere, and the next minute Dicksy was peeping through the hedge. In his hand was a bottle of gold paint and a little brush. "Why!" he gasped, and "Well!" stammered Dandy, "I was fixing it for you. I'm awfully sorry." This with a lump in his throat that made his voice shake.

"I was just going to paint it for you. So'm I," said Dicksy with a damp look about his eyes. Dandy scrambled to his feet and held out the source of all their grief. "It's yours, Dicksy, and I think you're the nicest ever was 'cept mama, and I'll never hit you again." Dicksy's hands were behind him. "I wouldn't touch it, Dandy, after me bein' so mean to a littler feller than I am." "Oh, you must," insisted Dandy, pushing it through the hedge. But it went no farther, for it somehow slipped from his hand and smashed so completely that the only thing left that could be recognized was the word "Forgive."

"I am glad of it. Come over."

"So'm I. Can't. Not till tomorrow."

"Neither can I, but I love you harder 'n I ever did."

"So do I. Say, Dandy, did I hurt you? I'll never do it again."

Then the mamas, looking out of their windows, saw the two little men, each on his own side of the gap, reach living lips across the space and give the kiss of peace. —S. S. Times.

Earth is the land of the fallen monolith; in heaven the pillar stands.

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