

Easter



Just Why Hare Is a Figure in Easter Legends

Every Easter we are accustomed to see in the shop windows the hare with his little basket of eggs or standing with some gift or reminder of the season in his paws.

But our grandmothers would tell us that when they were young they did not have the hare in any form at Easter.

Now, why should any one suppose that it is the hare and not the hen who is responsible for these particular eggs, and what has he got to do with Easter? asks Kladya R. Steege in the New York Times. There is a good deal to be said on this subject and it leads one into somewhat curious paths of research.

Easter is a feast governed by a lunar period, and the hare, in many religions and countries, is the symbol of the moon. There are several reasons for this. The hare (not the rabbit, one must understand) is a nocturnal animal, and comes out at night to feed. Hence there is a connection in the mind with something that watches as does the moon. It was formerly a popular belief that the hare never slept. It is a fact that it is born with the eyes open, unlike the rabbit, which is born blind and it was supposed never to close them. For this, by a homeopathic system of reasoning, the brains and eyes of the hare were used as a cure for sleeplessness.

Influence of the Moon.
In all old superstitions the moon was thought to be sometimes masculine and sometimes feminine, the former when it was increasing and growing stronger, and the latter, as its light and power waned. The hare was supposed to have the power of changing its sex also like the moon.

If we go back to Egypt we shall find, so Mr. Andrew Lang tells us, that the Egyptians frequently represented the god Osiris as a young hare. Many Indian races worshipped the dawn as a hare, and a leaping hare was the symbol of the dawn, or of the opening year, when all life is renewed. The Egyptian word for hare was "un," which means to open. As in the spring feasts eggs were broken to symbolize the opening of the year, so the association of the hare with them may easily be explained.

In our Easter representations of the hare, his cousin, Br'er Rabbit, is generally his substitute. It is true that though the latter has his own stories and associations, they have no particular connection with Easter, but he looks sufficiently like the former to please the popular taste.

Saved Eggs During Lent.
To the early Christian church the use of eggs was not prohibited during Lent, but after the Fourth century they were not allowed to be eaten.

customs, such as the English country custom of the women lifting the men and the men the women on Easter Monday and Tuesday to receive a piece of silver money and a kiss for pay.

We must not forget Paris in our mention of Easter celebrations. All the week of Easter women used to go about the streets, and perhaps they still do, with barrows piled high with colored eggs, generally red and white, and the people of the city used to call it the week of the eggs.

Years ago there was a curious game played at Bresse, when among the spectators on one Easter were Marguerite of Austria, then governess of Flanders, and Philibert the Fair of Savoy. It was the custom to scatter on a level, sandy place 100 eggs. Then a lass and a lad would take each other by the hand and dance the national dance in and out among the eggs. If they succeeded in executing it properly without breaking a single egg they were considered betrothed, even if their parents should object. On this occasion, when royalty was present, three couples one after the other failed in their attempt, but Austria and Savoy succeeded, whereupon the story goes that Philibert said, "Let us adopt the custom of Bresse." The princess let her hand remain in his, and so they were married.

But now this egg hunt leads us to the fact that Washington is not the first nor only place in the world where they roll eggs on Easter Monday. It is an old, old custom. Boys and girls used to do it in many an English village and town. There was an old song which they sang as they played and it bore the refrain:

"Garland, parland, haste egg day."



Story of the Easter Bunny.

The story of the Easter bunny is told by Christoph von Schmid in Schuffler's book on Easter. A German lady living among the poor in a small mountain village, where eggs were unknown, wished to introduce these delicacies to the peasants. She had a coop of fowls brought into the village and taught the people to use the eggs. When Easter approached she decided that eggs were an appropriate gift, as a sign of the reviving spring. She boiled them with mosses and roots, to give them a variety of brilliant colors, "as the earth has just 'aid aside her white mantle and decorated herself with many colors." On the Easter Sunday she had the little children make each for himself a little nest of moss and hide it in the neighboring wood. Afterward, when they went to the wood, they found each nest filled with colored eggs. The children's efforts to account for the presence of the eggs resulted in the belief that the hares had laid them.

from Ash Wednesday until Easter. The hens, however, were no less industrious in Lenten days than at other times, so they kept on laying. The good hens, of course, could not know about cold-storage warehouses or they might have laid up riches for themselves. But their thrifty owners saved as many of the eggs as they could and dyed them for their children to amuse themselves with at Easter.

It was the custom in England in the early time for rulers to give presents of eggs to their courtiers at Easter, and in Russia as many of the people as could went to kiss the hand of the empress and to receive the gift of a decorated porcelain egg. In the same country on the morning of Easter the servants brought baskets of eggs to the churches to be blessed. These were afterward eaten, kept as amulets or given away. In Italy almost every one brings eggs to be blessed, and presents are made of other eggs to the priest who comes at that season to sprinkle the houses with holy water and to give his blessing.

In former times in France eggs were tribute to the king at Easter, and the largest and finest were reserved for him. During the reigns of Louis XIV and XV after mass on Easter Sunday the courtiers received gifts of gilded eggs.

Bells' Travels to Rome.
There was an old tradition that the church bells went to Rome to be blessed at Easter, and that they brought back with them eggs dyed like a cardinal's cloak to prove that they had really been there. Though how the bells managed it no one seemed to know.

There was also the idea that angels came down at Easter bringing baskets of eggs for the faithful, and occasionally great trouble was caused by some one of the angelic baskets containing an egg of doubtful character. This naturally was most disturbing and what was done in such cases is difficult to surmise.

There were many Easter games and

EASTER SONG

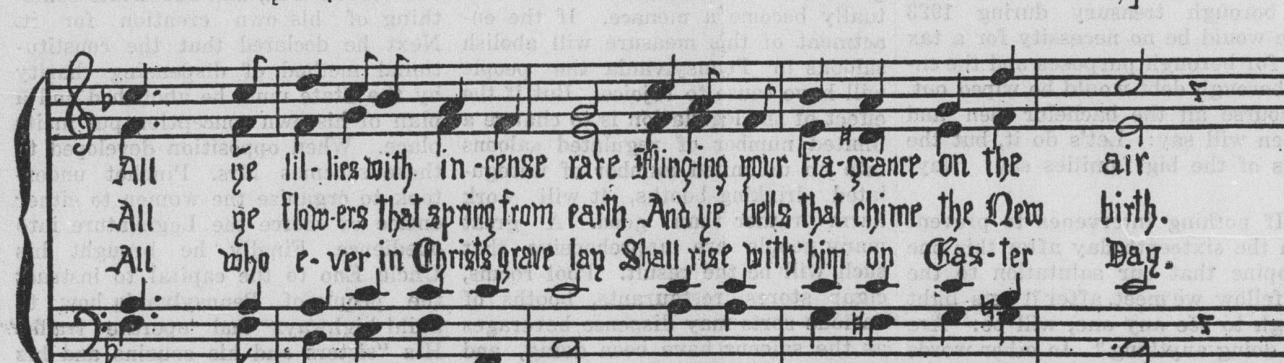
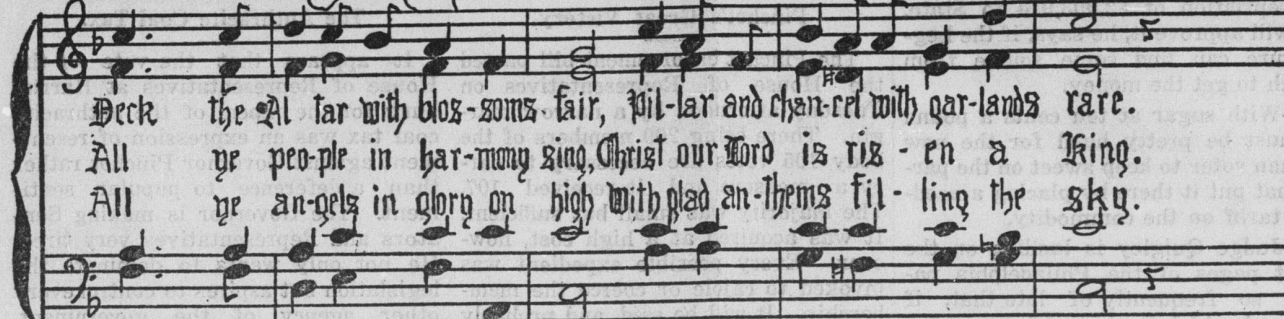
Oh, I have seen the daffodil
Dance up and down the April
hill,
And I have watched the wild
flowers go
Where trod the ermine footed
snow,
And I have heard the bluebirds
spill
The silver of their song
Along
The reedy banks beside the rill.

The seal is broken; ecstasy
Of life on earth again is free
For you and me.

Out of the sky, out of the sod,
There looks the conscious face
of God.
—Clinton Scollard.

Deck The Altar With Blossoms Fair

Words by H. A. Fontaine Easter Carol Music by Rev. F. S. W. Hodges.



—From the Living Church.

No Human Being Saw the Savior Leave the Tomb

It is strange to consider the fact that the most extraordinary event in the world's history was witnessed by no human being.

Jesus rose from the dead, but no body beheld His resurrection.

The soldiers placed as guards at the sepulcher were first to discover that the body was gone. They saw the stone (which sealed the entrance) rolled away, and soon afterward, going in, they found the tomb empty.

Mary Magdalen was first to arrive at the tomb the next morning, which was Sunday. Finding it empty, save for the white linen cloths in which the body had been wrapped, she hastened in great distress to Peter and John, her supposition being that it had been stolen.

Peter and John could hardly believe what she told them, but, going to the sepulcher thereupon, they verified her statement.

John had been an eyewitness of the crucifixion. He knew that Jesus was dead, and to his mind that tremendous fact was final. To all the followers of the Master His death was a shock peculiarly dreadful because they had taken it for granted that He could never die. After His execution, they had no notion that He would return to them, and, as will presently be shown, even the apostles were at first wholly incredulous of His resurrection.

John tells how he saw the soldiers break the bones of the two thieves, as they hung on their crosses, to hasten their death; and, further, that they did not do this to Christ because He was dead already—a fact which was made sure by a spear which one of the soldiers thrust into Jesus' side.

Tomb Guarded by Soldiers.

Jesus had preached doctrines which the authorities in Jerusalem regarded as dangerously socialistic. In addition, His teachings had given offense to the Jewish priesthood, which stirred up popular feeling against Him. Arrested on trumped-up charges, He was condemned to death to satisfy the mob and appease the rancor of His high-placed enemies.

Pilate, though he weakly yielded to the demand for Jesus' condemnation, had himself no sympathy with the proceedings. It was therefore with entire willingness that he granted to Joseph of Arimathea permission to take down the body and see to its interment.

Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man. He had, a short time previously, ordered the construction of a burial vault, cut out of solid rock—presumably for the use of his own family.

either the body, wrapped in white linen, was taken and laid out to await embalming.

Thereupon it was that certain Jews went to Pilate and said to him: "Sir, we remember that the Deceiver said, while He was yet alive: 'After three days I will rise again.' Command, therefore, that His sepulcher be made sure, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say unto the people, 'He is risen from the dead.'"

Pilate granted the request, and sent a squad of soldiers to guard the tomb, against the opening of which they rolled a large boulder, to close it. But in the night an earthquake came; the boulder was rolled away, and, when the soldiers entered the sepulcher, a little later, the body had disappeared.

An Angel Appears.
We read: "One of the soldiers came and said, 'Know that Jesus is risen!' The Jews said, 'How?' And he replied, 'First there was an earthquake; then an angel of the Lord, bearing lightning, came down from Heaven and rolled away the stone,

and sat upon it. And, through fear, all of us soldiers became as dead men, and could neither see nor speak.'"

The soldiers, worried lest the disappearance of the body bring punishment upon them, sought advice from the high priests, who gave them money, saying, "Say you His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we were asleep." The priests promised to square the matter with Pilate, and so the affair was adjusted.

"He is Risen."

The same morning (Sunday), after Mary Magdalen, Peter and John had visited the tomb and gone away again, women came to embalm the body in accordance with the Jewish custom, bringing myrrh and aloes for the purpose. On entering the sepulcher they saw (according to St. Mark), an angel—"a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment." They were frightened. But the angel said: "Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified. He is risen; He is not here."

The immediate followers of Jesus were not only overwhelmed with distress by His death, but felt a very natural alarm for their own safety. They could not fail to perceive that they were in great danger. At any moment they might be arrested as criminals, and meet the same hideous fate as that which had overtaken their Master.

Their best chance was to scatter and hide, and to remain hidden until

the excitement was over. This, in fact, was what they did.

They do not seem to have paid serious attention to what Jesus told them about His approaching death, or to His promise that He would rise again. That this is true is proved by the incredulity with which they received the news of His resurrection. At first they refused to believe it at all.

Christ Appears to Mary.

Two women (Luke 24:11) told them that Jesus had appeared to them near the sepulcher, and that they had actually taken hold of His feet; but the Apostles thought it a foolish and incredible story.

Mary Magdalen (Mark 16:11) told them that she also had seen the Master, though He would not permit her to touch Him. They thought that she was either lying or a victim of delusion.

Two of the disciples of Jesus stated that they had seen the Savior; that He had talked with them, and had walked with them to Emmaus, a village eight miles from Jerusalem—whereupon He had suddenly vanished. Their story (Mark 16:13) received no credence.

All three of these appearances occurred on the very day of the resurrection; and it was in the evening of the same day that Jesus presented Himself before eleven of the apostles who had assembled (doubtless for consultation) in the "upper room," where in the Last Supper had been held. Even the evidence of their own senses did not convince them of His corporal reality until they touched His wounded side and saw Him partake of food.

Thomas Doubted.

Thomas was not one of the company gathered on that occasion; and when they said to him afterward, "We have seen the Lord," he refused to believe, saying, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe."

When Jesus appeared to the apostles in the "upper room," they took Him for a ghost. Only by talking and eating with them was He able to satisfy them that He was not a disembodied spirit. The two women who saw Him near the sepulcher on the morning of that day had at first the same idea; and it is likely that the same is true of Mary Magdalen.

Nor did the apostles easily overcome this first impression. When, more than a week later, He appeared to seven of them at the Sea of Galilee, they failed at first to recognize Him, and their first emotion was that of fear. This, too, notwithstanding the fact that all of them had seen Him again two or three days earlier, when He convinced the doubting Thomas that He was truly risen in the flesh by showing His wounded hands, feet and side.