

SOME EASTER CUSTOMS.

A DAY CELEBRATED ALL OVER THE CHRISTIAN WORLD.

Flower-Decorations, Nest-Hunting, and Other Easter Diversions—A Pretty Poem and an Entertaining Story.

Forget-Me-Not: An Easter Poem.

Christ is risen, good Friday is past,
And joy has come after forty days' fast;
The resurrection is for rich and poor,
For young and old, for evermore.

To enjoy springtime's beaming hours,
To see the nature's lovely flowers,
The people go forth at early morn,
The church with garlands to adorn;
Each one brings a gift on the altar to lay,
For this is the holy Easter Day.

But see! a little child with tearful eyes,
Her little heart breaking with pitiful cries;
"My little one, why are your eyes full of tears?
Come, darling, and tell me all your fears."

Oh, father! I, too, sought my offering; but
I found not a single forget-me-not;"
There, there, be quiet! The Lord helps in need,
He knows thy heart and takes the will for the
deed!

They pure love, my little tot,
Is the dear Lord's forget-me-not."

Thus speaks the father, but the child weeps
still more,
And pleading, draws him once more to the door.
They seek again up and down the lake,
But spring is only partly awake.

Now, as they return at the close of day,
They meet an old beggar hard by the way,
Wrapping his hand and bewailing his lot,
"Take pity, my child, and forget me not."

The child looks up with a smile and a tear,
As the flower's true meaning comes to her ear;
She clasps from her neck a chain of gold,
And gives it to him with tears untold.

The chain was of tiny, golden buds,
Each holding in its calyx the forget-me-nots.
"They taught me," she says, "what I had forgot,
That the poor man is the Lord's forget-me-not."

The child became queen of great renown,
And forget-me-nots still adorn her crown.
For to hundreds she gave their daily food,
Maria Theresa, the great and good.

Easter Customs.

HE sacred festival of Easter has been appropriately termed the "queen of festivals." It has been observed from the foundation of the Christian religion, and is celebrated in every part of the Christian world with great solemnity and devotion.

The flower decorations of the Roman, of the English, and of the American churches on Easter Day exceed those of any other nation; but the home amusement of preparing the Easter egg has not yet become universal and is not nearly as pretty as the nest-hunting as described in our Easter story. Again, the gathering of wild flowers for an Easter offering, which is practiced everywhere in the southern part of Europe, and which our poem "Forget-me-not" so beautifully describes, is certainly an admirable idea.

A few years ago the writer had the pleasure of preparing an Easter egg hunt at a young ladies' academy on the Hudson. It was a bright cold day, and all that nature could afford for decoration were branches of abor-vita and a few of arbutus. These were quickly woven over fine wire into delicate little nests, then eggs were blown out by the dozen and on each a pretty Easter greeting was written and was tied into the nest with white satin ribbon, to which was attached a prettily decorated Easter card in the form of a cross. After the nests had been well concealed in every nook and corner of the building, the young ladies were invited to begin their hunt. While they were rummaging a rustic table was laid, that is, instead of a cloth it was spread with green branches. On these were placed eggs, prepared in every conceivable manner. There were boiled, scrambled, fried, broiled, poached, steamed, baked, pruned, scalloped, curried, and pickled eggs. In the center was a huge log cabin built of Easter cake cut in strips. At each plate was a cordial invitation that the one who had been fortunate enough to find a nest was entitled to a seat.

Now the fun began. Many had found two or three, others had not found any; the latter were not entitled to seats at the table, and the former were not willing to give them the prizes demanded. Finally they agreed that the unsuccessful Dians should pay a dime for her nest; thus the nests were equally distributed and about one dollar and fifty cents was collected for the poor. After the refreshments the young ladies danced the gavotte and had a general good time, and they unanimously declared that they had never known Easter joys before. We will close this description by giving our readers a few hints for coloring Easter eggs: For bright red, boil them in cranberry juice; for bright yellow, boil them with onion skins; for blue or purple, use the juice of preserved plums or black cherries; for bright green, wrap them in spinach leaves. The old-fashioned method of boiling them wrapped in bright calico is very satisfactory.

The Living Easter Egg.

BY MRS. A. L. WALLACE.

LL of you run, now, and seek to your hearts' content, under the gooseberry bushes, behind the large trees, in the arbor, and away out on the meadow. Run, children, but keep peace. Whoever finds an egg may eat it, but he who with another seeks in the same place, and then begins to quarrel over the found egg, will be punished, and goes empty, and, above all, he will not receive his Easter cake. It was a noble peasant woman who spoke thus, and those whom she addressed were two little girls of the age of 7 and 10, and two little boys, one 12 and the other 4 years old.

When the last syllable had passed her lips, the little crowd, which had been kept in the house all winter, rushed out doors and rummaged under the branches of all the bushes and in the tall grass.

Easter that year had fallen unusually late; therefore the gardens and fields displayed the colors of spring.

The leaves of the gooseberry and currant bushes began to peep out and warm themselves in the rays of the April sun. Apple and plum trees were arrayed in their white and rosy bloom. The lilies of the valley opened by thousands their tender white calyx and the lark thrilled a joyful resurrection song.

"I found it," triumphantly called a voice from the corner of the garden, and the youngest girl, with beaming countenance, crept from under the gooseberry bush, in the thick branches of which she had discovered a bright, speckled Easter egg. Her older brother, whose search had been rewarded only by an empty bird's nest, called, "Yes, yes, I have found two, no, three; yes, one under the bush, and hurrah! there I see two behind the dog house."

Then the other little girl cried: "See this beautiful blue egg. I found it in the elder arbor."

Only the youngest of the boys stood with a sad face, just ready to cry; his large black eyes staring into the sky, his little empty hands folded behind him. He said plaintively: "Hans finds nothing and can see nothing."

"Because Hans does not seek earnestly," said the youngest girl, taking him gently by the hand. "Come with me; I will help you hunt."

She led him away back of the garden, where the old willow trees bounded the meadow. Meanwhile the peasant woman, taking her knitting, seated herself on the old log before the house, watching the merry play of her children.

Her husband, a muscular-built man in the prime of life, his meerschaum pipe in his mouth, dressed in his Sunday coat with gilt buttons, made a fine appearance as he stepped out of the front door, seating himself at his wife's side, who greeted him with a hearty "Well, you have come just right. It does our heart good to see the merriment of our children; they seem to complete the scene of nature on this beautiful Easter day."

"Yes," he responded, "nature is wonderful and mysterious! It is incomprehensible to me how the sunbeams can bring forth the buds and flowers and clothe the fields in living green." And after a pause he added: "And yet there are many people who never admire nature and quarrel with fate, even when all around them is bright and joyous."

"You must have met Claudius, and he has vexed you," remarked his wife.

The man nodded. "It always seems as if somebody stabbed me whenever I meet that man, with his gloomy countenance and his eyes cast down. He just came sneaking along like a shriveled-up mole that can not endure the light."

"Well, every one has his troubles, and perhaps his burden is unusually heavy," said she.

The peasant, puffing his pipe, replied: "No doubt, but he owes the most of his misfortune to his own imprudence, and has to blame himself for having to live a lonely and embittered life."

"Do you know, Anton, I think you might tell me a little more about the history of this man. How did it happen that he turned his own son out of doors? You know I was sick at that time and have never heard the story minutely. What made the old man send his only child out into the wide world, and forbid him ever to cross his threshold again?"

"Yes; you see, Gertrude, this is the way it came about."

The peasant scratched himself a little behind the ear, watching the thick clouds of smoke as they arose from his pipe into the clear spring air, and laying the pipe down beside him, he began as follows:

"You must still remember how matters stood in our house last October."

"Alas! I shall never forget the 2d of October even if I live to the day of the Resurrection," replied the wife with a deep sigh.

"I think the fall of 1813 will be remembered by every citizen of Leipsic and especially by our poor community and all the other villages. The terrible shooting still sounds

the pile of leaves, their faces expressing the greatest astonishment.

"Come, let us see what it is," urged the wife.

"O, bosh! It can be nothing very much; a dead mole, a hedgehog, or something of that sort," replied the peasant, slowly rising and preparing to follow her.

A few moments later they had reached the spot. The sight which here presented itself threw them into consternation. In the center of the pile lay a lovely little child, perhaps nine months old, wrapped in an old gray woolen shawl. The old man's face looked like marble as he gazed at the child, and Anna Maria was on her knees kissing and stroking the little thing, while the oldest boy in his roguish way called, "Oh, good! Good old father Claudius has found a living Easter egg—a nice living Easter egg!"

"Very true," said the peasant; "and now the question is, who found it?"

"For shame!" said his wife. "The first thing is to revive the little frozen body." And taking the little thing into her arms, she bade them all follow her into the house. There she quickly undressed it and began to rub the little limbs with coarse flannel, and from time to time she wet the dainty lips with some spirits. Soon the little fingers began to move, it opened its eyes, and before the children had time to express their joy by "It lives! it lives!" it joined the chorus by a loud cry.

"Get me some warm milk, quick!" said the mother.

Anna Maria was the first to obey the command, while old Claudius stood like a petrified skeleton. A few minutes' music and then the voice was hushed by long draughts of warm milk.

"Husband, will you go to the attic and fetch the box packed with our baby's garments?"

No sooner said than done. There was

nothing needed to clothe the little foundling, even to the little socks. After it had had its warm bath and was dressed, it went sound asleep again.

"Johnny, will you lend baby your crib to sleep in?"

"Es—es," stammered the little boy.

"But, mamma, the baby does not belong to us; Father Claudius found it and ought to take it home," remarked the eldest.

"You are right, my boy," said the father. "Father Claudius, you will take the child and care for it well."

"The dickens! What can I do with the thing? I have no woman to take care of it."

"What difference does that make? You have nothing to occupy your time; you need some employment; it will do you good."

"O fudge! I have plenty to do without taking care of babies. Your girl teased me into the garden, and you have as much right to it as I. I say, add it to your stock; I'll let you have it for nothing."

The impudence of this speech aroused the wife's temper. Like a flash she jumped to her feet, and, with the child in her arms, confronted the old man, saying:

"Now, see here, Father Claudius! you know very well that we have our hands full, and can hardly make both ends meet. You have ample means, and, being the finder, the law will force you to take care of the child."

"The law force me? Gracious! who ever heard of such a thing? I won't take care

of it. No, not I! Nobody knows where it came from, and the little bastard can go to the poor-house."

While this dispute was going on the children amused themselves examining the old rags in which the child had been dressed, and just as Father Claudius had finished his declaration the eldest boy picked up an old green shawl which had enveloped the poor little infant and kept it from freezing to death, and as he waved it in the air for a banner of victory a piece of paper fell at his mother's feet.

"Ha! ha! Father Claudius, not so fast!

What is this? Let's see! Perhaps it will give us a clue."

She had picked up the message and read as follows:

"This certifies that this is the legitimate child of Mary Louisa Terre, lawful wife of George J. Claudius. The father was killed in the last battle, and the mother, on her death-bed, left the infant to the care of a mutual friend of her and her husband's family, with the request that, if possible, the child should be conveyed to his grandfather, Isaac Claudius, of Leipsic."

"Knowing that the owner of this garden is an intimate friend of the old gentleman, and also being assured that the children would have their Easter hunt, we conceal the little treasure in the soft bed of leaves, where we believe it will surely be found; and in this way we relieve ourselves of all responsibility without exposing our name, and hope that you will kindly deliver it to the right owner, Isaac Claudius, who by law is in duty bound to take care of it as his son's child."

"That is a put-up job. They could palm off a dozen children on me in that way!" sneered the old man.

"Hold on; here is some more!" And she continued:

"Meanwhile we shall not lose our interest in the orphan, and I should any difficulties arise we will boldly come forward and take the child's part."

"Sincerely your true friend."

"There now; take the child and be off to your cottage, quick as possible."

"Before the old man could say boo, he had himself pushed out of doors, with the child in his arms and a bottle of milk in his coat pocket.

Being afraid of becoming the laughing-stock of the passers-by, he hastened home as fast as his tottering limbs would carry him.

Half an hour later, when the peasant woman was sure she had given the old man time enough to be think him, she took another bottle of milk and everything that was necessary to complete the baby's outfit, and went over to see what the old man was doing. As she drew near the house she heard the baby crying pitifully. She hastened as much as possible, and, opening the door abruptly, found the old man pacing the floor like one deranged, the milk trickling from one of his coat tails, while the child lay on the hard table, calling for attention.

"What's the matter? What have you done to it?"

The poor man had not heard her come, and at the sound of her voice appeared to be frightened out of his wits. "Why—why, nothing. I put the thing on the table. I suppose you could find no softer place."

"Take it up this instant, and walk with it!" He silently obeyed, for he felt it was use to oppose her; but he took the child up in such an awkward manner that she was obliged to adjust it properly in his arms.

Then she made him trot up and down.

"Where is the milk I gave you?"

"What milk?"

"The bottle of milk I put into your pocket."

Then, for the first time, he saw how he had sprinkled the floor with the contents of the smashed bottle.

"Well, to be sure! What an awkward, stupid man you are! Fortunately, I brought another portion, for that which I gave you is wasted."

Then she gave him a lesson in nursing the child. She repeated her visits every day, and trained him so well that he not only became attached to his ward but also to his business.

As the child grew to the cunning age

when it could say "Grandpa, grandpa," it brought back to him all the scenes of his married life, and it was then that he realized that blessings often come in disguise, and that God does not always punish according to our transgressions.

He could not bear the child out of his sight a moment. As she grew up to girlhood he begrimed even the hours she had to spend at school. But against his own wish he was destined to become grandfather and great-grandfather, and had the pleasure of seeing his name established for generations to come.

Frost-Proof Flowers.

It is possible, even in our northern tier of States, to have out-of-door blossoms from April to November, by a proper selection of varieties; but how few

there are among the multitude of flower-lovers in them that can attain such a desirable condition of things. There are so many that must and will have flowers of some kind, that have to do

the best they can with the varieties that

drift into their possession; and after they have nursed their petted darlings into blossoming freely, how often they sigh, some early fall morning, to our sorrow how often there are frosty nights in the middle of September.

"Experience is a good teacher," if a

dear one; it often takes many failures

and hard knocks to get any kind of an

idea into our heads; this occurred to

me this fall, after all the hard frosts

and flurries of snow way into October,

while looking at my flower-beds. For

the pink and purple verbenas, petunias,

red catch-fly, sweet alyssum, pansies,

and double chamomile were blooming

as brightly as if they had not been frozen

stiff so many times; and even the

first of November, one of the neighbors

had a bed of purple ten weeks' stocks