



CHRISTIANS everywhere rejoice, for Easter, the queen of festivals, is here, putting a new song of thanksgiving into the hearts and mouths of those who regard the season as a high and holy one, and bringing a sort of resting place to the minds of others, who, clinging to the sentiment and poetry of religion, observe, without attaching any special sanctity to the same, this anniversary which touches the sensibility and calls up tender, loving pictures to the imagination.

Easter in Christendom, of course, commemorates the resurrection of Christ, though it takes its English name from the Teutonic goddess of spring, Eastre or Ostera, whose feast fell at the same season, the name being retained though the character of the celebration was changed. It is one of the movable feasts, moving backward and forward between March 22 and April 25, according as the full moon next after the vernal equinox falls nearer or further from the equinox.

Easter day, according to the ecclesiastical rule, is always the first Sunday after the full moon which happens upon or next after the 21st of March, and if the full moon happens upon a Sunday, Easter day is the Sunday after. This decidedly complex rule was only arrived at after long striving and much contriving. At the very beginning a difference of opinion arose, some of the Christians keeping their festival on the same day that the Jews kept their Passover, the 14th of Nisan, while others, attaching more importance to the day of the resurrection, and also desiring to mark more conspicuously the difference between themselves and the Jews, kept their festival on the Sunday following the 14th of Nisan. Discussions at first pacific soon became heated, and threatened at the close of the second century a schism. This, however, was avoided by a compromise, the eastern and western churches agreeing to each maintain its own customs. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the ordinary Jewish year consisted of 354 days or twelve lunar months, a thirteenth of thirty days being intercalated every third year. Even then, however, the Passover often fell before the vernal equinox, and the western Christians, who considered the vernal equinox the beginning of the natural year, objected to a mode of reckoning which might cause them to hold two paschal feasts in one year and none in the next. Constantine had the matter settled for the whole church at the council of Nice in 325, making Sunday the Easter day and laying down the rules which are still followed.



TYROLESE SINGING EASTER HYMNS.
The Metonic cycle of nineteen years was first adopted by Meton, having observed, B. C. 433, that the moon returns to have her changes on the same month and day of the month in the solar year after a lapse of nineteen years. But the new moon, though it happened on that day, returned an hour earlier, so a Roman cycle was framed of eighty-four years, it being thought that in this space of time the moon's changes would not only return to the same day of the month, but of the week also. In 457 the more perfect Victorian period of 532 years was drawn up, which was adopted by the church at the fourth council of Orleans, 541.

On Easter day depends all the movable feasts and fasts throughout the year. Before "the queen of the festivals" march, like a stately body guard, the nine preceding Sundays and behind her the eight succeeding ones. Though since 1564 it has not begun the year in France, it is a very important day, not only governing the church calendar, but having much to do with the colleges and schools.

In our reprint from Mr. Armistead, the well known English painter's picture of the "Dawn of the First Easter Sunday," is illustrated the first two verses of the twentieth chapter of St. John, where Mary Magdalen, after her visit to the sepulcher before daylight, ran to tell Peter and John that the Lord's body had been taken away. The disciples, sorrowing, slumbering or watching, are seated in a kind of rude cabin. The sky behind is lighted by the first gray dawn. Mary Magdalen, breathless and excited, bursts in with the strange news on her lips. Many of the old customs of Easter still linger with us. The beautiful one of singing Easter hymns, represented in the illustration here given, remains a feature

in the Tyrol. Bands of musicians, for which the Tyrolese have always been noted, traverse every valley, singing the beautiful Easter hymns to their guitars, calling out the people to their doors, who join them in their choruses, and together rejoice over this glad anniversary. Their wide brimmed Spanish hats are decorated with bouquets of flowers; crowds of children accompany them, and, when the darkness of night comes on, bear lighted torches of the pine wood, which throw grotesque shadows over the spectators and picturesque wooden huts.

With much of the lore and literature of Easter day our readers are acquainted, whether reference be had to the egg, the hare, or the dancing of the sun. The Easter egg, however, it may be worth saying—whether it be a hen's egg boiled in a piece of colored print, or a costly envelope for bon-bons—is supposed to represent the eggs used by the Jews at the feast of the Passover, or the colored eggs given at the solar festival of the New Year by the old Persians. The egg, a natural symbol of life, appeared in the Athenian mysteries of Bacchus, in the Hindoo fables, in the Japanese worship, in the religious rites of Egypt. The early Christians were wise as well as ingenious when they seized upon the immemorial superstitions and usages of the world around them and gave them a meaning and a part in the great work of the church.

Easter week at Rome is always a great season, being celebrated with elaborate ceremonies. The "Landing of Joy," as the firing of cannon and merry peal of bells. At St. Peter's the pope officiates at high mass and pronounces a benediction with indulgences and absolution. An unusual number of distinguished people will witness the ceremonies this Easter, which will be of unusual magnificence, owing to the fact of its being the Jubilee year.

"THE CALICO EGG."

"Have you saved up y'r eggs for Easter?"

"Ya-as; ye got any real purty calico ye c'd lemme have?"

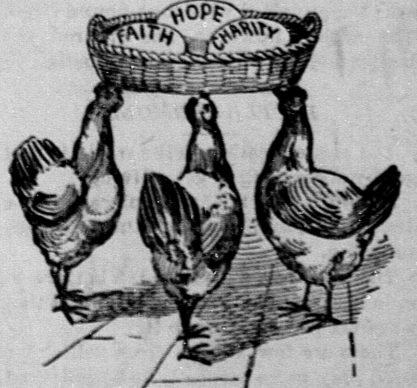
This conversation, varied according to circumstances, might have been heard in many hundred places in the United States forty years ago, and especially in the west. Easter was the children's big day on the Wabash and southwest generally. Thanksgiving day had not then been established south of the "Yankeeed states." It did not require a full standing in Indiana till the civil war, and it is not even now much regarded south of the Ohio. But Christmas, Fourth of July and Easter were truly national—none of them religious—festivals in the south and west. Indeed, the New Englander who goes to southern Illinois and Indiana, Missouri and farther south, is even now amazed and frequently shocked to see and hear Christmas ushered in with drums and shotguns, firecrackers and pistols, egg nog and general riot.

"When the hens began to lay" was the time the little boys and girls began to "save up" for Easter. In their wildest dreams of luxury and splendor they never imagined the beautifully colored eggs now displayed in every town and city, for the settlers in the west in those days never thought of buying anything for a festival. The little citizens were left to their own devices, and wonderful ingenuity did they often display. The commonest device was to wrap the egg tight in flowered calico and boil it thus; the colored patterns were faithfully transferred to the white egg, with gorgeous results. Hence for many weeks before Easter, there was a great demand for calico scraps of bright and unusual patterns. Sometimes strips of some intensely green vegetable were fastened on the egg, but it required rare talent to make this process a success. A perfectly pure pink, uniform over the egg, was thought a great triumph of decorative cookery; and when one genius succeeded in producing brilliant stripes of red, white and blue around the egg, with a white star here and there and a rude eagle at the end, his performance was hailed with patriotic delight.

In all this there was no religious significance whatever, and not one child in a thousand then knew why the day was celebrated. Although a church here and there began to observe the day with religious ceremonies, generally the singing of the Easter anthem and a sermon on the resurrection; and now Easter in the west is rather more a religious festival than Christmas. Among the children, except perhaps the very poorest, the "calico egg" has become a mere tradition, and the progress of history is shown by the wonderfully colored articles of all kinds, the egg, except for a model in form, being a comparatively insignificant thing.

An Old Time Easter Gift.

Among the pretty old time German customs was the one illustrated in the accompanying picture, and which met with equal favor with decorative eggs as an Easter gift. It was an emblematic print



ALL THINGS GOOD ARE THREE.
of three hens holding on their united beaks a basket containing three eggs, upon which were traced pictures of the resurrection, and written beneath the following lines:
All good things are three,
Therefore I present you three Easter eggs.
Faith and Hope, together with Charity."

EASTER WEDDINGS.

Advent marriage doth deny;
But Hilary gives thee liberty;
Septagesima says thee nay;
Eight days from Easter says you may;
Egation bids thee to contain;
But Trinity sets thee free again.

The above verse commemorates the times considered inauspicious for wedding in the earlier days. Whitsuntide was fancied a most favorable season, while the superstition against marrying on childermas, or "Innocent's day," Dec. 28, was exceedingly strong. Mothers forbade their sons and daughters from joining hands with other sons and daughters on this anniversary, which commemorated Herod's massacre of the children, believing a union formed at this time would bring only disappointment and trouble.

Marry in Lent
You will live to repent,
is a saying widely circulated and largely influencing not only the people who lived ages ago, but society folk in our own day and generation. It is supposed to have originated in the east of England, from whence came a great many of the popular superstitions.

There are no two seasons in the whole year more prolific in weddings in New York city than the few weeks preceding Lent and the interval between Easter Sunday and the first of May.

Now that Lent is over, the world of fashion that has spent, for the most part, the penitential season at Atlantic City, Lakewood, Old Point Comfort, Florida and other different fashionable resorts, is returning homeward, and ere Easter week has passed will have begun again the whirl of gayeties interrupted when Ash Wednesday appeared. Conspicuous in these festivities will be the wedding. The Lenten season furnished ample time to prospective brides and their modistes for extensive preparations in way of trousseaux. Happy are the brides who, marrying on the threshold of the spring season, are provided with absolutely new styles in gowns and bonnets.

Wedding presents, which have to play a very important part at fashionable weddings, will at this season bring with them a flavor of Easter, as the so-called "Easter novelties" will notably lead. Numbered with said novelties are prayer books in silver bindings and decorated with white enamel or etched with scriptural texts and designs. Silver candlesticks and candelabra will also prove popular, not only because these, with their wax candles, are exceedingly fashionable just now; but because wax candles and tapers have somehow come to be associated with Easter. The flowers, which will be as plentiful as wedding bells are merry, will be largely the early spring productions.

EASTER STORY FOR LITTLE PEOPLE.

Numbered with other pretty stories about Easter, is one of a pious queen who sought refuge from her enemies in a remote valley, where the poor people by whom she was surrounded had never seen a fowl.

As time went on a faithful servant of the queen brought to his mistress a number of the strange birds. Directly the lord of the flock set up such a victorious crowing that the inhabitants of the valley fled in fright. But when one day a brood of downy chickens crept from their nest and walked abroad on their little pink feet the children forgot their fright, and ere long there was scarcely a household without one small specimen of the feathered race to pet and rear.



THE HARE THAT LAYS THE EASTER EGGS.

Easter came, and the good queen sorrowed greatly that she had no gifts to offer to the people, who in her trouble had been always thoughtful and kind. What could she do? She searched the forest far and wide for barks and roots, with which she made rare and beautiful dyes. Then she gathered all her eggs, and with skillful hand decorated them in many a tasteful design, hiding them here and there in nests about her garden, after which the children were bidden to search for the concealed treasures. Imagine their wonder and delight. Eggs, to be sure, but eggs so transformed they could not believe but what the fairies must have left them there.

At length one saw a hare leap from the vicinity of a nest, and cried out:
"Oh, it is a hare that lays the Easter eggs!"
And to this day the children of that distant valley believe that "hares lay all the Easter eggs."

EARTH AND HEART KEEP EASTER.

In the bluebird's silvery singing,
In the emerald grasses springing,
In the songs the brooks are bringing,
Lo! the earth keeps Easter day!
From the tomb of winter's keeping,
From the silence and the sleeping,
Flowers are waking, buds are breaking,
Lo! the earth keeps Easter day!

In the soul's glad returning,
In our life's glad, upward yearning,
In the light, still brighter burning,
Lo! the heart keeps Easter day!
From the tomb of silent sorrow,
That was ours each gloomy morrow,
Hope is breaking, gladness waking,
Lo! the heart keeps Easter day!

In the promise of the sweetest
Of the summer's rich completeness,
And the story of its glory—
Lo! the earth keeps Easter day!
In God's promise never failing—
Every hope and joy unvailing—
Ever gracious, ever precious,
Lo! the heart keeps Easter day!
—George Cooper.

The Second New Year's Day.

In some remote districts of France it is still customary for the priest of the parish to go round to each house on Easter and bestow on it a blessing. In return he receives eggs both plain and painted. Easter with its joy bells is likened to a second New Year's day. The peasant bestows on his child an egg dyed with scarlet, like the cloak of a Roman cardinal, and supposed to come from Rome.

THE PASSION FLOWER.

MYSTERIES HIDDEN IN ITS WONDROUS PETALS

The Plant That Bosio with Holy Zeal Interpreted as Being Symbolical of Many Precious Truths—History of the Discovery of the Flower.

In Lockhart's story of Valerius, a Christian maiden is described as gathering in the gardens of a stately villa a certain flower, which symbolized in a wonderful manner some of the deepest mysteries of her religion. The passion flower, no doubt, is intended. This is altogether an anachronism; the passion flower, if we may believe authorities on such subjects, was not known in Europe till the beginning of the Seventeenth century, when its first appearance created an extreme sensation.

In the year 1610, Jacomo Bosio, the historian of the Knights of Malta, published at Rome his famous religious work, in which is contemplated and described the cross from all possible points of view. While Bosio was at work on it, there arrived in Rome an Augustinian friar, a native of Mexico. He brought with him and showed to Bosio the drawing of a flower so marvelously amazing, so stupendous, that Bosio was for some time in doubt whether it would be prudent to mention it in his book. But in the meantime some Mexican Jesuits, who happened to be in Rome, confirmed all the marvels of the flower, and certain Dominicans at Bologna engraved and published a drawing of it, accompanied by the poems and "ingenious compositions" of many learned



THE PASSION FLOWER.

and accomplished persons. Bosio, therefore, says clearly that it was his duty to give it to the world as the most marvelous example of the cross triumphant hitherto discovered in forest or in field.

The flower represents, he tells us, not so directly the cross of our Lord as the great mysteries of his passion. It is a native of the Indies, of Peru and of New Spain, where the Spaniards call it "the flower of the five wounds."

Bosio, who had never seen the flower, described it, however, in his book. The description was as stupendous as was the idea of the flower, but full of errors. The stir, however, which his work and the ingenious persons of Bologna caused among the botanists and theologians of Italy, soon brought about the introduction of the plant itself, and before the year 1625 it had established itself and blossomed at Rome. Its native Indian name was maracot, but in Italy it was usually known as the passion flower, the name which it has retained throughout Europe to this day.

Aldous, a man of science as well as a Christian, gives a very beautiful description of the flower, in which he shows what investigators, religiously inclined, may find in it:

"The nails on the top are represented so exactly that nothing more perfect can be imagined. They are sometimes three, sometimes four, in number; and there is a difference of opinion as to the number of nails used in fastening our Lord to the cross. In the open flower they are twisted and marked with dark, blood like spots, as if they had been already removed from the cross.

"The small undeveloped seed vessel may be compared to the sponge full of vinegar offered to our Lord. The star form of the half open flower may represent the star of the wise men; but the five petals, fully opened, the five wounds. The base of the ovary is the column of the flagellation. The filaments represent the scourges spotted with blood, and the purple circle on them is the crown of thorns, blood covered. The white petals symbolize the purity and brightness of our Lord, and his white robe. The sub-petals, white inside and green without, figure hope and purity, and are sharply pointed, as if to indicate the ready eagerness with which each one of the faithful should embrace and consider the mysteries of the passion. The leaves of the whole plant are set on singly, for there is one God, but are triply divided, for there are three persons. The plant itself would climb toward heaven, but can not do so without support. So the Christian, whose nature it is to climb, demands constant assistance. Cut down, it readily springs up again, and whoever holds the mysteries of the passion in his heart can not be hurt by the evil world. Its fruit is sweet and delicate, and the passion of our Lord brings sweet and delectable fruit to us."

It is probable that the first passion flower seen in England was not brought from Italy, but was introduced from Virginia. At any rate, the Incarnata, a Virginian species, is that described by John Parkinson, one of the earliest English botanists. Parkinson proposed to call it Clematis Virginiana, the virgin climber; partly with reference to the province from which it came, and partly (as the province itself had been named) in honor of the "bright occidental star," Queen Elizabeth, the glories of whose reign were still freshly remembered. But the passion flower has retained its Italian name (Flor della Passione), and much of its early significance. It has been accepted, especially in recent church decoration, as a worthy companion of the rose and the lily—sacred symbols from the most ancient times.

Nearly every one has read of the famous rose of Jericho, or holy rose, a low, gray leaved annual, utterly unlike a rose, growing abundantly in the arid wastes of Egypt and elsewhere. It exhibits, in a rare degree, a hygroscopic action in its process of reproduction. During the hot season it blooms freely, growing close to the ground, bearing its leaves and blossoms upon its upper surface; when these fall off, the stems become dry, curving upward and inward until the plant becomes a ball of twigs, containing its closed seed vessels in the center, and held to the sand by a short, fibrous root. In this condition it is readily freed by the wind, and blown across the desert until it reaches an oasis or the sea, when, yielding to the "open sesame" of water, it uncloses, leaving nature to use its jealously guarded treasures at her will.

FAIR CROCUSES AND SNOWDROPS.

Give flowers to all the children
This blessed Easter day;
Fair crocuses and snowdrops,
And tulips brave and gay;
Bright nodding daffodils,
And purple iris tall,
And sprays of silver lilies,
The loveliest of all.
And tell them—tell the children—
How in the dark, cold earth,
The flowers have been waiting
Till spring shall give them birth.
Then tell the little children
How Christ our Saviour, too,
The flower of all eternity,
Once death and darkness knew.
How like these blossoms silent
Within the tomb he lay,
Then rose in light and glory,
To live in heaven for aye.
So take the flowers, children,
And be as pure as they,
And sing to Christ our Saviour,
This blessed Easter day.

COMMERCIAL VIEW OF EASTER.

The advent of Easter in the commercial world means the ending of winter and the beginning of the spring season. Latterly we have our Easter openings in the various shops, just as we have our holiday openings, and no lady of fashion dreams of attending church Easter morning without being arrayed in the so called Easter bonnet and a new spring wrap and gown. Even in places remote from great business centers the feminine mind inclines to new apparel on Easter day. This is in part due, doubtless, to the old superstition that warns against appearing on Easter day in apparel, lest there be a dearth of new things during the remainder of the year. Not only is there a revival of trade in all things pertaining to personal apparel, but an impetus is felt in other directions. With the putting on of spring bonnet and gown women with housewifely proclivities begin preparations for the annual house cleaning, which means new furnishings in various home departments. Hence the fresh arrays of new goods in the furniture stores, at the picture dealers and the shops given over to various household decorations.

At Easter, when sweetmeats are as much in request as during the holidays, the windows of the bonbon establishments are filled with Easter eggs of the gayest colors and made of sugar. There are elegant nests of eggs, baskets of eggs, cradles full of eggs, and figures of coquettish looking peasant girls carrying eggs to market. Birds of brilliant plumage are sitting on the nests on hovering over them, while the eggs in the baskets and cradles repose on the softest swansdown or the richest lace and satin. There are eggs, too, rivaling in size Sinbad the Sailor's famous roc's egg, bound with ribbon and filled with bonbons.

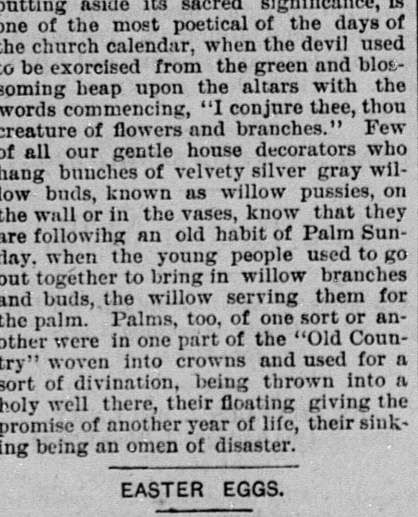
Then there are figures of dolls artistically designed and in gorgeous costumes. These on being decapitated disclose, of course, an inside treasure of delicious bonbons or some pleasing gift.

Poetical Days in the Church Calendar.

There comes, not very long before Easter, that is to say, in mid-Lent, in Old England, the pretty remembrance of "Mothering Sunday," when every lad and lassie away from home, or out at service, goes "a mothering," that is, to see the mother at home, and carry her a cake or a little present of some description. An old adage associated with this custom is to the effect that "who goes a mothering finds violets in the lane."

After that comes Palm Sunday, which, putting aside its sacred significance, is one of the most poetical of the days of the church calendar, when the devil used to be exorcised from the green and blossoming heap upon the altars with the words commencing, "I conjure thee, thou creature of flowers and branches." Few of all our gentle house decorators who hang bunches of velvet silver gray willow buds, known as willow pussies, on the wall or in the vases, know that they are following an old habit of Palm Sunday, when the young people used to go out together to bring in willow branches and buds, the willow serving them for the palm. Palms, too, of one sort or another were in one part of the "Old Country" woven into crowns and used for a sort of divination, being thrown into a holy well there, their floating giving the promise of another year of life, their sinking being an omen of disaster.

EASTER EGGS.



Who Eats the Easter Bonbons?

An immense quantity of bonbons is made in France, England, Spain, Russia, Turkey and the United States are the chief consumers. More of the acid bonbons are consumed in England, just as more of those of an oily character are eaten in Spain. The bulk of bonbons sent to Turkey and Egypt is consumed by the ladies of the harem. In the United States, special confections for Easter are made in all of the large cities, and are indiscriminately eaten by men, women and children.

An Easter Custom.

Each day, during Easter week, in ancient times, had its peculiar sports, as well as religious observances, some of which, in this enlightened day, seem utterly devoid of meaning or sentiment. For instance, may be cited the custom in some parts of England, for the men to take off the women's shoe buckles, which can only be redeemed by a present. Then the women retaliate in like manner on the following day.

THE JOY BELLS OF EASTER.

The Dance of Eggs by Marguerite of Austria and the Duke of Savoy.

Most things in this world have their poetical as well as their material side. What can be more commonplace than the egg, and yet in all ages and in every country it has been the subject of poetical myths and legends. The ancient Finns believed that a mystic bird laid an egg on the lap of Vaimanion, who hatched it in his bosom. He let it fall into the water and it broke. The lower portion of the shell formed the earth, the upper portion the sky, the liquid white became the sun, and the yolk the moon, while the little fragments of broken shell were changed into stars.



THE MERRY EGG DANCE.

English and Irish nurses instruct children when they have eaten a boiled egg always to push the spoon through the bottom of the shell, in order "to hinder the witches from making a boat of it." In France a similar custom prevails, but the reason assigned for it is that magicians formerly used the egg for their diabolical witcheries. They emptied it adroitly and traced on the interior cabalistic characters able to cause much evil. The faithful were therefore instructed to break at the same time the shell and the spell.

It is difficult to ascertain the precise origin of the graceful custom of offering eggs at the festival of Easter. The Persians gave each other eggs at the New Year, the Russians at the festival of Easter. Among the Romans the custom began at Easter, as it did among the Franks under the Capets. Mutual presents were bestowed, and as the egg is the emblem of the beginning of all things, nothing better could be found as an offering. The symbolic meaning is striking. Eggs are the germ of fecundity and abundance, and we wish our friends all the blessings contained within the slender shell when we offer this gift, whose fragility represents that of happiness here below.

In some remote districts of France the belief still lingers that during Passion week the bells of the churches set out for Rome in order to get themselves by the pope. During this period of mourning the bells are mute in their bellfries and remain so until their return on the morning of the resurrection, when they send forth joyous peals. Easter to these simple folks was like a second New Year's day, and on Easter Monday came the dance of eggs by high and low.

The "marriage aux œufs" between the beautiful Marguerite of Austria and Philibert the Handsome, Duke of Savoy, forms a picturesque page in the romantic chronicles of Savoy and Austria. The royal lady had come on a pilgrimage into the charming district of Bresse, lying on the western slope of the Alps, where, according to legend, a young girl may insure indefinitely her youth and beauty. The castle of Brou was gay, Marguerite had taken up her abode there, and serfs and nobles alike shared her hospitality. Philibert the Handsome, who was hunting in the neighborhood, came to the castle in order to render homage to the fair princess of Austria.

It was Easter Monday, high and low danced together on the green. The old men drew their bows on a barrel filled with wine, and when one succeeded in planting his arrow firmly in it he was privileged to drink as much as he pleased. A hundred eggs were sent on a level space covered with sand, and a lad and a lass holding each other by the hand came forward to execute a dance of the country. According to the ancient custom, if they succeeded in finishing the "branze" without breaking a single egg, they became affianced; even the peep of their parents might not avail to break their union.

Three couples had already tried it unsuccessfully, and shouts of laughter derided their failure, when the sound of a horn was heard, and Philibert of Savoy, radiant with youth and happiness, appeared on the scene. He bent his knees before the noble chateleine and besought her hospitality. And as the games continued he proposed to his hostess to essay with him the merry dance of eggs. How beautiful they looked as they stepped forward hand in hand! "Savoy and Austria!" shouted the crowd. The dance was finished without the breaking of an egg, and the blushing Marguerite allowed her hand to remain within that of Philibert, as he said:

"Let us adopt the custom of Bresse." So they were affianced, and their marriage soon took place. A few years of exquisite happiness were their portion, but an untimely death carried off the husband. Marguerite lived long, but never forgot her beloved Philibert. She caused to be built, and in 1511 dedicated to his memory, the beautiful church of Notre Dame of Brou. Within it is his tomb, and there Marguerite, too, rests by the side of her beloved husband. Visitors still admire the magnificent architecture which enshrines the buried love of Marguerite and Philibert.

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