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FESTAL DECORATION.

No. 1.—EASTER.

BY W. L. D. O'GRADY.

SPRINGTIDE festivals of one kind or another long antedated Christianity and still survive among the devotees of other cults. A sort of ecclesiastical millinery has in all religions been considered eminently proper for the occasion, a manifestation of joy by symbolical wedding garments as it were. Among Christians, particularly of the Catholic faith, whether ranked under the banners of Rome, Canterbury, or the American Bench of Bishops, or Greek Archimandrites, or Armenians, Syrian or Abyssinian Patriarchs, the observance of Easter is marked with great holy joy. We know how it is observed here and how the example has spread among Christians of other denominations, even among the successors of the sternest of the Puritans, who deprecated with active hostility all special tokens of respect to Christmas, Easter, or any other festival of what those worthy, but rather disagreeably austere personages deemed savoring overmuch of Papistry.

We weave floral decorations which make the frescoes of our temples pale, and are only rivaled by the spring bonnets of the ladies and their rosy cheeks. Music lends enchantment to the celebration and processions, with banners of Sunday school folks bear gifts, precious offerings of more or less intrinsic value, supposed to have been garnered by extraordinary efforts of self denial during the preceding forty days of fasting and mortification in Lent.

The sweetness of the singing makes up, as it were, for the sugar the children have deprived themselves of in order to save the dollars and cents their share of the family sugar bowl might amount to, and the "taffy" administered with a godly facetiousness by the gratified rector is a compensation for the butter foregone in the daily rations of the staff of life.

It is all very beautiful, though fleeting, but a certain monotony runs through it all, and putting the religious phase of the matter aside, which indeed does not, appear to be ostensibly brought forward to any great degree in many of our modern celebrations of the great feast, Easter is apt to be remembered like a pleasant ball, till something else pleasant turns up to obliterate the recollection, rarely longer than the cut flowers which have festooned aisles and pillars and pulpits, and are carted away by the garbage contractor, while the plants in pots go back to the florist who hires them out to commemorate the Resurrection of the Saviour, as he will to-morrow for a similar consideration for a wedding party or a political banquet.

Can Christians not learn something from "their friend the enemy"—the heathen, to wit. Some do. The Roman Catholics have never been above taking a hint from any source, and as a rule, while their temporary decorations at Eastertide have a variety and appropriateness rarely shown among the Protestants, they are rarely wholly transitory.

Their Easter offerings are, as a rule, not merely cash, which may be spent and leave no special sign, nor even those delights for good pastors, canceled mortgages, quit-claims and satisfaction pieces, but pictures, new pulpits, new furniture, new altars, new carved work, memorial windows, &c., things of lasting value, often of great value.

This practical and sensible method of crystallizing the emotions, so to speak, catching the bubble of fervor and fastening it imperishably—or for a lengthened period of satisfactory service—was, and is, directly borrowed from the heathen—the early martyrs, who burrowed in catacombs, and even in this coney sort of existence, were a shade better off than their Master, who had not where to lay His head, bestowed little thought on decoration. Their lives were too short for esthetics.

But when prosperity plumed her golden wings and they could come forth from hiding, and thence spread abroad to propagate the gospel, as they conquered the world, so, like all conquerors, they insensibly acquired some of the habits of the conquered, and the acquisition of permanent goods devoutly offered at stated times and especially at the great Spring Feast of Easter was one of the earliest adopted, and adopted as it is to-day by the church which, following St. Paul's advice, makes itself "all things to all men," with great success.

For instance, in India, while the cars of Juggernaut are out in every village with various gods and goddesses in the procession, the white-robed priests of Rome, many of them Europeans only distinguished from Brahmins by their wearing *berettas* instead of turbans, have sundry car-

loads of black Jesuses, Virgins and Saints. The Brahmins gather funds for repairing of temples, maintenance of rest houses for travelers, etc.

The Roman Catholic cathedrals and churches of India are built, painted and generally furnished and adorned out of the proceeds of similarly demanded contributions. In Burmah, it is considered a pious act to gild a pagoda, and a fine reredos or something of that kind is equally acceptable here.

The custom is to be commended. Desultory giving at odd seasons is all very well in its way, but definite donations at Easter of a substantial nature are as desirable in substance and more desirable in the manner of giving for benevolence, like smallpox or crime, is catching. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," and one cheerful giver is apt to make more, and in this case, the more the merrier is emphatically an apposite maxim.

Even in the temporary adornments of the sanctuary at Easter, we might vary the sameness of the decorations by some hints from the Orient. On the last day of the Mohurram, that great Shiah, Mohammedan commemoration of the slaughter of Ali's Sons, Hassan and Hossein, the main feature of the procession is a number of model mausoleums, often of great size, borne on elephants, camels, or like a St. Patrick's Day banner, on a sort of litter by stalwart devotees. These are supposed to typify the last resting places of the martyrs of Arbela, and in theory are either pitched into sea or river when handy, or cremated at the close of the day, like the 5th of November images of Guy Fawkes of unblest memory—except to little English boys who like fireworks, bonfires and mischief generally.

In practice, these mausoleums or *tabûts*, as they are called, are smuggled back and presented to appreciative European gentlemen who have been liberal in contributions toward helping the rabble to have a good time. And very beautiful they are, and worthy of long preservation. Their form is a more or less close imitation of the famous Taj Mahal at Agra, and the exquisite lacework filigree in perfect Saracenic taste is wrought chiefly in the most translucent talc, iridescent as a Venetian goblet, an object of beauty dazzling and brilliant.

Their bulk and comparative fragility preclude their being exported, though it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that nothing sent from India, not even a Valley Cashmere shawl, is more beautiful. They are very costly, as the labor on them is immense, but they are never sold—it would be an unpardonable sin to sell them—and how much they do cost is unknown, for the expenses are defrayed by subscriptions, and Mohammedans when they raise subscriptions for religious purposes, keep no accounts. For the same reason there's no leakage for clerical or other service. It is scarcely too much to say that the price of the Bartholdi monument, statue, pedestal and base, and the first keg of kerosene to light up Liberty's torch included, is raised every year in India in often the most infinitesimal amounts for their *tabûts*.

When at Cochin, I had one of these affairs strung, like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth, in a verandah. Red laterite dust invaded it, and fierce blasts of the Monsoon occasionally ripped it; it was too large to get in any door or window of the house, or it would have had better care, but every such injury only seemed to improve its beauty, to mellow it, even as the rains and winds and sun and dust have chastened the hues of that frozen dream of an unknown Italian genius, the wondrous Taj itself.

Now, instead of the everlasting little silk rags at the end of gilt poles, and like tawdry trumpery or supplementary thereof, cannot some Sunday school of an enterprising turn of mind get up a similar triumph of model architecture in similar material for festal uses in their church? There is no need for slavish imitation of Mussulman arabesque.

A shrine symbolical of the crystal Mansions in "Jerusalem the Golden," might be erected in the purest Gothic architecture. Talc is no doubt procurable, or mica might be substituted, or even gelatine would do. The designing need not be disdained by even the architect of Trinity or the Jefferson Market Court House. The execution might be safely entrusted to the deft fingers of ladies, whose hods would be paste pots, and who would be armed with scissors instead of trowels.

Such a miniature temple—and it should not be too diminutive—would be a decided and pleasing innovation on the usual routine at Easter. Beautiful by day, judiciously arranged display of electric lights would make it more so by night. It should be as permanent a decoration as the font itself, and might, indeed, be utilized as its screen.

GOOD rugs, like good wine, the older the better.

A COMMUNICATION.

New York, January 10, 1884.

To the Editor of The Decorator and Furnisher:

Have just finished the perusal of the last DECORATOR AND FURNISHER, and found in it a little notice of the Marquand electrotypes by M. G. H., so grossly incorrect in so many particulars that it appears almost ridiculous. First, the munificence of Mr. Henry G. Marquand extends further than the mere contribution of these pieces to a "loan exhibition." He has presented them to the museum outright, and the only sense in which they can be said to be "his fine collection" is that he bought and paid for them with the sole and original intention of presentation to the museum, an action equally as commendable as though contributed from "his own fine collection." "Its value cannot be so easily summed up," says M. G. H., in a connection evidently inferring its intrinsic value. But its value, its cost, can be very easily "summed up" to a cent, and may be expressed at round figures as \$30,000. Its value to art is beyond estimate. The pieces, says M. G. H., are found for the most part "either in the Kremlin or the museum at Tourkoe Selo." We will say nothing of the "Tourkoe," as possibly a typographical error, but "just for fun" let's see where they did come from:

The Museum of the Hermitage, St. Petersburg.....	82 pieces.
The Arsenal of Tsarskoë Selo.....	30 "
The Kremlin.....	66 "
The Patriarchal Treasure.....	35 "
The Winter Palace.....	20 "
The Troitsa Museum.....	12 "
The Romanoff House.....	11 "
The Botkine Collection.....	11 "
Other sources.....	36 "

Thus out of 303 pieces 96 only of them were from the sources mentioned by M. G. H. as supplying "the most part." Again M. G. H. especially observed two objects (of Russian and German work respectively) as "salvers," in total oblivion that there ever existed such a thing as a rose water dish, and that there are fine specimens of that obsolete article. It is also amusing to hear the Russian work described as "bold and rich" when such description is not in any way applicable except to such objects as are plainly copied from the styles of other countries. And, lastly, M. G. H. wails over the expensive catalogue when there is none and will not be one for some time. The only book relating to this valuable collection is the little one written by myself and on sale at the museum, but that is in no sense a catalogue. If reasons were wanted for the publication of my review of these pieces, M. G. H. has furnished one most adequate.

Yours truly, J. W. MILES.

It just strikes me that "M. G. H." may be Mary Gay Humphrey, and if so I must express my surprise that a lady whose articles have so often charmed and interested me should be so careless. The articles of Miss Humphrey betray such thorough information usually that I am inclined to think she has somewhat neglected this branch.

J. W. M.

WE have received from Messrs. D. F. Haynes & Co., of Baltimore, several examples of their "Calvert Ware" or "Chesapeake Pottery," sent us as examples of the progress of the firm since making the pieces shown us some months ago.

The ware is fine and beautiful in its texture, and the glaze is even and clean. The colors, of course, are varied, a rich cream being the favorite while the others are olive, blue, and a brilliant, though by no means objectionable, green. In addition to this ware there is a Parian which is equal to any that is imported.

The piece in Parian represents the head of an Alderney cow, the relief being very heavy. The heads are mounted in a plush frame and make neat decorative panels.

In the "Chesapeake" ware the pitchers are fairly good in design, one quite tall with a graceful taper and a square handle in particular is attractive and well adapted to decoration.

Other shapes are circular, square, and with straight sides, all more or less attractive and artistic. Considerable gilt is used in the decoration of the pieces, though it is used in such a manner as to relieve it from the suspicion of tawdriness. The ware in all respects is excellent and will compete, successfully we believe, with the English wares, the Doulton for instance, and others. A card receiver is one of the pieces, the design is rather crude, and the idea of employing the ware for such a purpose appears rather out of place. The only deficiency we can discover is in the selection of designs, which is not good, nor are they strictly applicable. As ware, it is excellent beyond question.