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THE EGG AND THE HARE.

Two Different Symbols of the Easter Anniversary.

Of late years there has been a marked and growing tendency on the part of Easter artists and confectioners to substitute the rabbit or hare for the old familiar Easter egg as a symbol of the joyous Easter anniversary. In the well remembered "not long ago" the egg held absolute and undisputed sway as the universal emblem of the resurrection. Then the egg ripened and the fuzzy little chick added its cunning presence to confectioners' window decorations. So far the connection between the symbol and the event was so easily understood that comment or questioning would have been entirely superfluous, but with the advent of the "bunny" tribe the complexity becomes too embarrassing for silence and one is anxious to have an answer to the question Why? The [illegible] dainty little long eared rabbit is certainly cute and attractive, but what has it to do with Easter? No one questions its beauty or effectiveness, but wherein lies its appropriateness?

In seeking an answer to this reasonable inquiry one finds an easy clew in the work of Chinese, Japanese and Hindoo artists, who agree in associating the hare with the moon. In the minds of these authorities the "man in the moon," with whom one is so well acquainted, is not a man at all, but a hare, and it is found in studying the mythology of these countries that the hare and the moon are identical in their symbology, the Chinese representing the moon as a hare pounding rice in a mortar. After establishing the connection between the hare and the moon the rest is easy, for Easter is really a festival of the moon, its date being fixed by the council of Nice in 325 A. D. as the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox.

So the moon being directly related to Easter and the hare being related to the moon, the hare is [illegible] entitled to participate in the Easter cheer.

Of course this only opens the door to a final [illegible] question whose answers are likely to be found in dusty, musty tomes of mythological lore, and the search is too [illegible] and tiresome to be interesting. Just why the hare should have been adopted as the symbol of the moon is not easy to determine satisfactorily, as history on this point is shrouded in the clouds of antiquity and complicated by conflicting testimony. One account has it that Buddha once desired to feed a hungry fellow creature and to do this took the form of a hare. In this form he was transferred to the moon, where he still remains.

Equally reliable is the account of Indra's being at one time in a famishing condition, when the hare, being an extremely sympathetic creature, was naturally heartbroken at such distress. Unable to relieve the great man's hunger in any other way, the hare threw himself into the fire and thus saved Indra from starvation. Out of gratitude for this sacrifice Indra transferred the animal to the moon.

Many more recent bases for linking the hare to the moon could be found, as the fact of its carrying its young a lunar month, being nocturnal in its habits, its young being born with their eyes open and the moon being called the "open eyed," and a superstition that the hare changed its sex annually, the moon's sex being changed from masculine during its waxing period, when it was called the "lord of light," and considered as the sign of new life, and feminine during the waning period.

Many other myths connect the hare with the moon and thus indirectly with Easter, but the [illegible] in such realms makes one long for something tangible, definite, exact and [illegible], something like the present living power of the left hind foot of a graveyard rabbit killed at midnight in the dark of the moon by a cross eyed colored gentleman to bring unceasing good luck to its possessor.

To seek the reason for this wonderful power on the part of the rabbit's foot would again involve one in interminable mythology, so suffice it to say that in the old hieroglyphics the leg [illegible] quarter [illegible] the Khepsh typified the typhon or personified evil. To wear it signifies naturally the triumph over evil. All the other conditions which are now necessary to endow the talisman with power are later accretions, only strengthening the original mythical significance.

An Easter Myth.

One of the most ancient and interesting of myths is that which connects the hare with Easter. The relation is much clearer than would seem possible at first impression. It all comes through the moon. Easter, as is well known, is a movable feast dependent on the phases of the moon. The date of the full moon following the vernal equinox fixes the date of Easter. The frisky hare, it seems, has also its connection with the moon. The moon appears only at night, so does the hare, which is a nocturnal animal and comes out after dark to feed. Each little German child is taught that if his deportment has been satisfactory a white hare will come quietly and hide colored eggs in the house for him to hunt on Easter morning. The practice of presenting eggs, now so universal, was brought down to us from the ancient Magians or Persians. It springs from the old fable of the mundane egg, for which Armuzd, the Persian spirit of good, and Ahriman, the evil spirit, were to contend until the end of the world.

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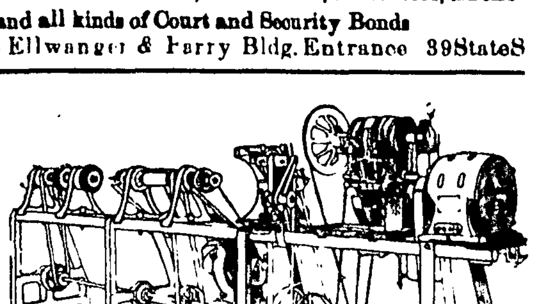

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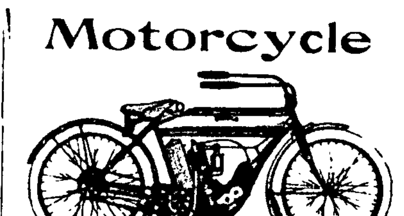

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