

# Popular Customs in old Chipping & Leagram

*Luck of the Year.*—In this part of the country, and generally in North Lancashire, it is a matter of great importance who first crosses your threshold on New Year's Day, as good or evil fortune is supposed to depend on it. Should a woman or a light-haired man enter your house the first, bad luck will be the inevitable consequence. To avert this calamity, in some places a black or dark-haired man is engaged to make a round of the different houses in the neighbourhood at an early hour and bring the luck of the year to the inmates: a small gratuity is given by the different parties he calls upon. This custom is generally observed about Leagram, Chipping and Bowland, and throughout the north-eastern part of the county. In some houses the inmates are so particular that they pretend not to hear if they have reason to suspect the caller is an 'unlucky' person.

This very ancient superstition differs in different localities as to the colour of the hair and complexion of the first callers, but in this immediate neighbourhood and generally on the western border, the dark-haired man is most approved.

In some parts of the district the policeman calls first on this day to ensure the safety of the house during the ensuing twelve months.

*Holy Week.*—The children in this part of the country go about from house to house, in Holy Week, "pace or pasch egging," begging for eggs. These eggs are afterwards boiled hard, and coloured different tints, and are used by the children to play with. They are sometimes blown besides being coloured, and strung, and formed into garlands and festoons. The children themselves are often dressed out fantastically with ribbons, and other finery. A few years ago, in Chipping and in the neighbourhood, the custom was more general than it is at present: but several parties of children come yearly to the hall for eggs or money to buy them.



*Mayday Eve.*—This is known as "Mischief Night" in this district from the young men amusing themselves with practical jokes on their neighbours, taking off gates from their hinges, overturning carts, getting them into ditches, removing the wheels, and many other annoying performances.

Besides direct acts of mischief, "May Booming" used to be customary, and is still often done. Young men place boughs of different shrubs and trees, having a particular and recognised signification, at the door of houses where a young woman is one of the family. The thorn is an indication of scorn; the mountain ash or wicken is an expression of endearment, "my dear chicken"; the holly, a folly; an elder branch for a scold; one of ash for a swearer; a plum-tree in bloom, to be married soon; a briar, a liar; a nut, a slut. Sprinkling salt at the door intimates that the young woman enjoys but an indifferent reputation.