

Christian Festival of Easter

THE Christian festival of Easter was grafted onto the pagan feast which ushered in the spring, and so some of our customs belong to one era and some to another. Haven't you often wondered what eggs had to do with the Crucifixion of Christ? As a matter of fact, there is no connection except an incidental one between the two. In pre-Christian days folks celebrated the renewal of spring and sunshine at the time of year when Easter now comes, and the egg, with its suggestion of new life, was the most natural symbol in the world. Christianity consecrated the idea, as it were, by coloring the eggs red as a reminder of the blood spilt on the cross—a custom which survives in France to this day.

The hot cross bun is another curious blend of heathen superstition and Christian symbolism. Many centuries before Christ little round loaves were baked and marked with a cross; some were even discovered in the ruins of Herculaneum, one of the ancient Italian cities which was buried by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius and afterwards uncovered and explored. Some say that these cakes were sacrificed and offered as an act of worship to the heathen gods of the day, particularly to the moon, called the queen of heaven.

Others assert that the cooks of that day were as practical as the toffee-maker of ours, who mark the toffee into small squares, so that it will break up more easily when cold. Then came the Christians, who saw in this bread marked with their own sacred symbol a fit association with Easter. They made their Good Friday cakes from dough first used for the Host, and the buns were blessed by the priest and given out at the end of service in church. Worshippers reverently kissed the cross before eating the symbols, and believed that the eating of one would keep them from harm until next Easter.

For the same reason it used to be customary to hang a bun up in a house to bring good luck, just as the horse-shoe is set over a doorway. In particular it was supposed to guard the house from fire—a real menace in the days when houses were of wood and thatched with straw and fire engines almost unknown.

Were you born on Good Friday? Legend has it that anyone so blessed possesses the gift of second sight. And if you have sufficient fortitude to turn vegetarian just for Easter Sunday, an old superstition promises you good health for a twelvemonth. It seems a small price for so long a benefit, doesn't it?

Another way of insuring good health, which is much more drastic, but was often practiced in olden days by spartan maidens, was to leave a linen cloth out in a field all night, so that it became soaked with the cold spring dew. Then they washed themselves all over with the clear, chilly moisture.

Another quaint superstition is the rather ridiculous custom of lifting or heaving, which is still practiced in some parts of the country. On Easter Monday the men lift the women, and on Easter Tuesday the women lift or heave the men. The process is performed by two lusty men or women joining their hands across each other's wrists; then, making the person to be heaved sit down on their arms, they lift him up aloft two or three times and often carry him several yards along a street. In other parts the men claim the privilege of taking off the women's shoes on Eastern Monday, and the next day the women retaliate.



Her Basket of Easter Eggs



Colored Easter eggs continue to play an important part in the celebration of the day. The colored eggs, packed in a dainty colored basket, appeal to the kiddies.



Easter Lilies

By Mabel W. Phillips



IN THE vast aisles of His temple, Where a hundred soft lights glow, Pouring through the stained-glass windows Over lilies pure as snow; He is walking midst the silence, Listening blossoms bow their heads To His voice so low and gentle That a benediction sheds.

In the dim aisles of His temple, When the lights have ceased to glow, He still lingers midst the fragrance Gently pacing to and fro; Hark! the anthem of the angels Waives the dawn, for Christ is near, Vibrant is each tender flower, For the night is rest of fear.

In the hushed aisles of His temple, As the organ music grows, He is standing midst the lilies, See the light that o'er them flows? Safe they rest upon His bosom Fadeless through eternity, Stooping with the lamb held gently Even thus He stoops to me.



Easter Brings Message of Assurance

ARCHEOLOGISTS exploring the 3,400-year-old tomb of King Tut-Ankh-Amen are impressed with the evidences of the ancient ruler's belief in immortality. Everything in the sepulcher proclaims his expectation of a future life. Ancient Egypt believed as firmly as does modern Christendom that for the soul there is no death.

Indeed, the memory of man runneth not back to the time when he did not look forward to a hereafter and express his belief in some way. This belief, apparently, is inborn in human consciousness, a characteristic of all the ages of the race.

The doctrine of the resurrection is not new. The pagan before the Christian era glimpsed the truth. Nature proclaimed it to him in the bursting of the buds and the song of the birds in the springtime. In the seasons he read a confirmation of his belief.

But the Christian, fortunately, has something more than the pleasing symbols of nature to fortify and strengthen his belief in immortality. The materialist may read his fate in the processes of the natural world, but the Christian finds his assurance in the well-authenticated, personally conveyed message from the Creator Himself.

Before Christ men merely speculated on the future, prompted by their beliefs and wishes. When He broke the bonds of death and became "the first fruits of them that slept," He threw a flood of light upon the gates of eternity that forever solved the mystery and illumined the way to the future for all mankind.

Easter, the anniversary of the resurrection of the Son of God, brings a message of assurance and victory to every soul. It cheers with the proclamation that all are citizens of the eternal. It enables men to look across the grave and hurl defiance at death. With the proper understanding of this divine message, the capability of men becomes unlimited, for they know that this life is only the beginning.

Without the courage that this day inspires, life would not be worth the living.



The Message of Easter

By Rachel Ann Neiswender

LIFE is a gift eternal, How do I know 'tis so? Because I have planted a tiny seed, Then watched a flower grow. I have seen the leaves come tumbling down.

Then spring, and a budding tree, Oh, God's outdoors so big and wide, Has told its secrets to me. Now at this gladsome Easter When the world is bursting with song, Let us face life with high endeavor, Let us bury the old year's wrong, Let us take from it only the lessons, The good, that comes sifting through. Let us cherish the hope that is given And cling to the paths that are true.

The Eternal Life

By Nathan Howard Gist

THE world places a premium on attainment. It praises the man who gets things done. It erects his statue in our parks and public squares that young manhood and womanhood may catch inspiration from his life, and emulate his virtues. Halls of fame give him fitting recognition and a large place. Music, literature, all art immortalize him.

Historical text-books make him the hero who led that others might follow. Great men come in groups. Epochs make them, and they make great epochs. Each is dependent on the other.

Human greatness is largely a matter of attainment. A man is great or small according to what he is able to give the world. But his output must show visible achievements and tangible results.

Now all of this is well enough. No fault can be found with such rewards, except that greatness through attainment never tells the story. The whole story cannot be related because there is much greatness of the heart. It is greatness not through doing, but in being.

In the long last effort, rather than attainment, is the greatness that counts. To disregard effort is to minimize the very force that holds the world together.

Many of the finest achievements of our world are not lasting. They are ephemeral. Books, schools and churches, empires and great nations have all lived their allotted time, accomplished their quota of good, and then perished. Such achievements are not failures by any means, but any of them may suffer the fate of oblivion.

But what about noble efforts? What about character, and service, and righteousness? What about example? Easter is the crowning Sunday of the year because it teaches that lesson year after year. It ever brings forth the potent truth that the life eternal is the life that knows God serves the great teacher Who brought life and immortality to light, and finds life's deepest and truest meaning in service and worthy example.

There is no death when things are considered in that light. The Eternal life is measured by the immortal things of the spirit, and not by the mortal things of the flesh. It is a matter of quality, and not of quantity. It is indestructible because it is of God. It lives for all time. Not long quiescent, it is ever alive and awake to the building of the best world of which human minds, and hearts, and hands, are capable.

This is life Eternal. It is the joy and triumph of the Easter morn.



The Place Where Our Lord Lay

THE place where the Lord lay, from whence He came on Easter Sunday, the first-born from the dead, may not have been the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, after all.

Recent investigations incline many to the belief that Gen. "Chinese" Gordon was nearer right in picking upon a tomb in the rock, which has the form "of a skull," and is probably the Golgotha of the crucifixion outside the city wall of Jerusalem, as being Joseph of Arimathea's appointed burial place. St. John tells us: "Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews' Preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand."



Holy Women at the Tomb.

That presupposes a tomb close to the place of execution, and makes probable General Gordon's presumption. St. Mark says further that the sepulcher "was hewn out of a rock," as is also this tomb.

At any rate so probable did it appear that this was the garden tomb, that in 1894 Miss Louisa Hope, an English lady, and others bought the property and formed a society to keep the garden and tomb "sacred as a quiet spot and preserved on the one hand from desecration and on the other hand from superstitious uses."

Glorious Gospel of Easter Day

By Rev. Stephen Paulson in Grit

And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. . . . Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: Behold the place where they laid Him.—Mark 16:1, 6.

THE Sabbath came and went over the grave of its Lord. Silence reigned in Joseph's garden, broken only by the muffled sentinels who chattered and laughed by the sealed sepulcher. We do not know what the disciples did on the Sabbath day. Probably they spent the day in close retirement in some upper room. Their thoughts were nailed to that Cross on Calvary, and their spirits were under the heavy pall of that tragedy of Good Friday.

We can never understand the utter misery and desolation of those hours between Christ's death and His Resurrection. Our faith rests on the centuries; and when we read of the Crucifixion we have in mind the glory of Easter morning. But to the disciples, all their hopes had been shattered, all their plans frustrated, and all their love buried in Joseph's tomb. A resurrection did not enter into their thoughts at all, and therefore their testimony is the more valuable. True, they had heard Jesus say that He would rise again, but they had interpreted that in a sort of future and symbolic sense.

Before dawn, the women mentioned in our text, perhaps with some others, started for the sepulcher bearing their spices and ointments with which they expected to finish the embalming of the blessed body of their Lord. A resurrection had no place in their thoughts. They came to minister to the dead, not to greet the living. Their one great concern was: Who would help them to roll away the stone which sealed the tomb, and which was too great for their united strength? As they draw near they see that the stone is rolled away, and so little did they think of a resurrection, that the open tomb brought them only perplexity and grief.

The Gospels were not written for the curious, but for the devout. They are most silent therefore, where myth and legend would be most garrulous. Here we are told nothing of the wondrous Resurrection. Did He awake alone? Or was He attended by the hierarchy of heaven? We are told only what concerns mankind, viz., the sufficient manifestation of Jesus to His people of His Resurrection.

We can reconstruct something of the events of that first Easter morning from the Gospel accounts. First the women come and find the tomb empty. Mary Magdalene immediately runs back to the city and tells Peter and John about it. They rush out to the garden of Joseph, John, the younger man, taking the lead. The women have left. Peter enters the tomb and sees the linen clothes which had covered the body of Jesus, and there begins to dawn upon them something of the meaning of the words of Jesus, "On the third day I shall rise again."

Mary comes back and Peter and John have gone, and no one is there to explain what has taken place; so she stands by the sepulcher and pours out her distress in tears.

Now comes the first revelation of the risen Christ. "Mary," He says, in the well-known voice of love and tenderness, and in a moment all her sorrow is turned into joy. It is always so when the risen Christ comes into a life. The living Christ is the world's great joy-bringer. Without Him, our thoughts can only be thoughts of death. With Him we enter into the conception of the larger life, of which this is only the outer court.

Life! Death! They seem to be the very antipodes of thought. We have come to look upon them as mutually exclusive, but Jesus has taught us that out of life death is to arise.

The Resurrection of Jesus is the anchor of our Christian faith. We live in a day when men seek positive grounds of thought and action, and the enduring power of the Resurrection is not a sentiment but a fact. A sentiment has its day. Phases of mere feeling pass rapidly over the generations of men, like clouds over our heads, but the fact of the Risen Christ remains. In the strength of that certainty Paul went forth to his great missionary labors. In the strength of that, Peter went unafraid to his own crucifixion. In the strength of that, the soldiers of Christ in all ages have stood fast in the faith, quit themselves like men, and endured unto the end.

The Easter Gospel is the Gospel of all comfort. "If Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." So says St. Paul, and then comes his triumphant shout of certainty: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." That is the Gospel of comfort which this world of sorrow and death needs so much. That is the glad and glorious Gospel of Easter Day. Today we seek, not a dead Christ, but a living one, and then, may it soon be our bliss to see the Risen Savior face to face, as did Mary on that very first Easter morning.

Easter Dawn

By Elvye Tash Sater



"T IS Easter dawn," the lilies say, "And Christ, our Lord, is risen today. Let every heart be glad. But in God's acre far away, 'Ye lies, who once was blithe and gay, My heart with dole is sad."

"What means the Easter dawn to me?" I asked in gray despondency; "My life is drenched and dead." The lilies quivered as in pain, "The one you love will live again, And ever live," they said.

"Since Jesus lives, we cannot die, For us He came on earth to buy A life eternal. There Within a mansion safe, they, too, Now live, the dearest ones we knew, Secure from pain and care."

"O lilies, teach my heart to sing This anthem of your risen King, 'That I may learn to live.' Their fragrant censers looked at me, 'In love, and whispered tenderly: 'Yourself more freely give.'"



Jerusalem, Holy City of the Jews

NEW cities in the world have had a history so varied and tragic as Jerusalem, the holy city of the Jews and the sacred city to which at Easter all Christian eyes are turned.

So catastrophic have been the changes that have taken place that the modern traveler in Jerusalem can scarcely visualize the city as it existed in the time of Christ. So complete was the destruction of the old city that it has been only with the greatest difficulty that the sites mentioned in the life of Christ have been even approximately identified.

It was probably in the year 29 that the crucifixion occurred, and in 70 the city was completely destroyed by Vespasian and Titus. With the exception of several towers left as monuments to Titus, and a quarter of the city on high ground, Jerusalem was razed to the ground, and for a period of 60 years lay in ruins. It was not until 136 that the Emperor Hadrian built on the old site the new city of Aelia Capitolina as a home for veteran soldiers. Jews were rigorously excluded from Aelia, which became a typical Greek city, reflecting all the phases of Byzantine development. When the emperors became Christians the name of the city was changed back to Jerusalem, and Christian rather than Jewish memories were cherished.

In the Seventh century the Saracens captured Jerusalem, holding it until 1099, when it was wrested from the Moslems by the Crusaders, who held it for a stormy and uncertain 90 years. The Crusaders were driven out by Saladin in 1187, and from that time until the capture of Jerusalem by the British in the great World war the city was under the rule of the Moslems. Saracen calligraphs, Egyptian sultans and Ottoman Turks in turn were masters of the Holy City, but it was not until 1840 that the European powers officially recognized Moslem sovereignty in Jerusalem. Through the long centuries of misrule and oppression, Christian and Jew dreamed of the day when the crescent would be driven out of Palestine forever, a day that has only recently dawned.

Taken as a whole, the Jerusalem of today is a typical Saracen city. Its more conspicuous features date from the time of Saracen occupation, and even where Saracen builders used old material they gave the remodeled architecture their own peculiar stamp that makes it Moslem. The Temple area is Saracen; the old city walls are Saracen, although the foundations are Roman. The older churches and a number of substantial structures date from the occupation of the Crusaders. Of ancient Jerusalem there is little to be discovered and much less to be seen. Little remains as it was prior to the coming of the Saracens and the Crusaders. Only a few tombs and the substructure of the Temple are left to tell the story of the Jerusalem of Christ, of David and Solomon.

An Easter Message of Hope

"CHRIST is risen!" Is the regular salutation all over eastern Christendom on Easter Sunday morning. It is the re-echo of the wonder cry of the first Christians as the realization at last forced itself upon them that the impossible had happened; Christ is risen! They had found it such a bitter thing to lay their beloved Master dead in the grave. Death always is bitter, usually almost impossible to bear up against.

Of His death the disciples were certain; of their grief there could be no doubt. Every one of us who owns a little plot of holy ground, consecrated to us by what we could see through tears of an open grave, of falling clouds of earth going to earth, can sympathize with them. We know what the blackness of that darkness is, from whence there comes no response to our cry.

"Christ is risen!" The message came on the first day of the week, with the risen Savior Himself as its proof. Sorrow fled, the blackness of the grave was changed into brightness of joy unspeakable; "Christ is risen!" The grave had not imprisoned Him! Death had not conquered Him! His own pierced body was there again, endowed with thrilling life once more. Ask His mother. She knows her Son. In the ecstasy of love, too full of joy even to wonder, hear her answer—"He is 'Isen, indeed!"

Ay, Christ is risen! And the grave has not hurt Him. Nay, He is the more glorious for it! His body is now superior to time and space, or to any of their laws; just as the Easter lily is superior to the bulb you hid in the ground; or, as the waving corn field is better than the bare grain in the sack.

And the loved ones, even the little ones we laid with such sorrow in the grave, they, too, will rise in like manner, all the better; ay, ever so much better for the death which makes the resurrection possible! Just as we, too, taken apart, bit by bit, by the tender alchemy of the grave, as the watch-maker takes apart a watch, shall be put together again, purified, glorified, to go on forever, and forevermore.



Easter Day

By Mary Graham Bonner

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THE churches are filled with flowers. Many people are wearing flowers.

The church bells are ringing, people are hurrying to church in a new, vigorous, glad spirit. The choirs are singing. The congregations sing, too.

"Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!" The air still holds some of the winter's chill within it, but there is, too, the warmth of spring to be felt.

Everyone feels it. Everyone is smiling, happy, gay.

They are wishing each other "A Happy Easter."

Children have been given gay Easter eggs and they have been given cho-



late bunnies with sweet chocolate expressions on their little chocolate faces; even their ears are alert in their chocolate fashion.

New clothes are being worn. Or old ones are spruced up.

There is new life, new courage, new joyousness in the air.

"Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!"

Risen With Christ

It is not possible to be risen with Christ and yet remain on the level of those who neither know nor serve Him.