

more general opinion is that it was first observed by their immediate successors, about A.D. 68. The Council of Arles in 314, and the Council of Nicaea, in 325, decreed that the day for keeping this festival should be the 11th day of the March moon; but by the alteration of the calendar by Gregory XIII. in 1582, the first Sunday after the full moon immediately following the 21st of March was fixed as Easter Day.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, MARCH 28, 1896.

EASTER.

The word "Easter" suggests to our minds something of heathen as well as Christian custom. It is derived from the word "Eostre," meaning the Anglo-Saxon goddess of Spring, to whom the fourth month of the year, April, was devoted as a time of worship. Therefore we see that although kept in a very different way and for a very different purpose, yet it was then, as ours is now, a festival of joy and thanksgiving. Writers attribute the introduction of this festival into the Christian Church as a perpetuation of an old usage, just as many other customs have been established. The first Christians were of course very closely connected with the Jews, and naturally continued to observe some of the Jewish festivals, though in a different way, and in a totally different spirit from that of their ancestors. The Passover, which had been cultivated for so many years by God's chosen people, in time became the Christian Easter. Easter is commemorating the greatest theme of our religion, the greatest blessing of our lives, the redemption of our souls by the death and resurrection of our blessed Lord, has always been regarded as the chief festival of the year and has always been observed with more or less ceremony. A great deal of trouble has been experienced as to the date on which Easter should fall, but after great discussion among the fathers of the early Christian church, it was finally decided that the Sunday following the full moon after the twenty-first of March, should be the date of celebration. This accounts for the diversities of the time on which we keep this anniversary. We see from this that Easter cannot fall upon any Sunday earlier than the twenty-third of March, or later than the twenty-fifth of April.

Many curious customs are still in vogue in the celebration of the Easter season, some of which might be mentioned here. In Great Britain the lower classes have great faith in the medicinal powers of a loaf of bread baked by the housewife on the morning of Good Friday. This is kept throughout the year to ward off many diseases. Another custom common to "Good Friday" which is in vogue in

most every civilized country, is the eating of hot cross buns on this day. This is supposed to protect the household from fire throughout the whole year. Then we must not forget the custom so prevalent in our own day, that of sending pretty dainty Easter eggs, thus showing our dear friends that we remember them in the joy and happiness of Easter-time. Above all we must not forget the beautiful, fragrant lilies. What church is complete on Easter morn without its floral decoration? What hospital ward is not the cheerier because of the presence of the beautiful waxen blossoms. What face is not the brighter for having looked upon these delicate beauties of nature? What thoughts are not the purer and the honer after having thought of the Creator of these flowers to which Christ himself is likened; symbolic of purity, beauty and meekness? Let us not forget as we are nearing this Easter-tide all that we owe to our blessed Lord and let us rejoice anew at our redemption from all sin and for the gift of eternal life.—The Sunbeam.

SOME QUEER EASTER EGGS.

BY OLIVE M. WEATHERBY.

Way out in Kansas on a large prairie farm lived Ned and Jamie Black. They had a pleasant cottage home, and with their dogs, chickens, and pony, spent many happy hours.

Their holidays were but few, and they always looked forward with great delight to them, and especially to Easter. They would begin several weeks before Easter came to hide eggs, taking a few each night when they hunted them, till they had a great nest full; and then what fun on Easter morning to take in a big basket full and surprise mamma.

One evening, the first of March, they were all around the bright fire in the sitting-room; papa and mamma were reading, Ned was playing with Snowball—the kitty—and Jamie was curled up in the lounge, intently studying an almanac. Presently he arose and went into the other room, beckoning to Ned to follow.

"Say, Ned," he began in a whisper, "do you know three weeks from next Sunday is Easter and we have not begun to hide any eggs yet."

"That's so," said Ned, "we will commence to-morrow."

So the next day when they gathered the eggs, they took five of them to hide.

"Now," said Ned, "we must find a warm place for them, for it gets pretty cold nights, you know."

"Let's make a place in the hay mow," replied Jamie. So they fixed a nice warm place in the hay, and put them there.

The next day they had five more eggs to add to the first. When they went to put them with the others, Jamie said, "Why, here are six; I thought we hid only five." "Maybe we made a mistake," said Ned. So they left them as before.

Again, on the following day, they had five more to hide, and on counting them all, they found seventeen. "Surely we did not put six in last night," said Ned; "I don't see how it is."

Before they had decided the matter, they heard a call, and upon answering it found their Uncle Charlie from his cattle ranch twenty miles away, who had come to take them on a long promised visit to his home to see their cousins, Ralph and Lela. They were soon ready, you may be sure, and started on their long ride. They were to stay till mamma and papa came for them.

Many pleasant days they spent, and forgot all about their Easter eggs up in the hay-loft at home. On Saturday before Easter, mamma and papa came to take them home; Ralph and Lela were going, too, to spend Easter with them.

Bright and early the four cousins were up the next morning at home and ready for the day, when all of a sudden Jamie cried out, "Oh, Ned, there are our eggs; I had forgotten about them."

"What eggs?" said Ralph.

"Oh, some we hid before we went to see you," replied Ned. "Let's go and get them and roast them for ourselves. Come on!"

So they followed Ned to the barn, and climbed up to the loft. "Ca, ca! peck, peck, peep! peep!" were what the frightened boys heard as they saw Ned ahead grabbing at something. "Peck,

snapp! let me alone!" and what do you think the boys found! On their precious Easter eggs was an old black hen. Ned lifted her up, and instead of Easter eggs, there were eighteen little white and brown and buff chickens. "Look at our eggs, Ralph," said Ned, "the old hen has got ahead of us."

Then they knew that the hen had found their nest, and that accounted for those extra eggs.

The boys were off to the house to tell their story; papa said that was the old hen's Easter, so they put her and her eighteen little babies in a coop, and gave them a nice breakfast. By the next Easter old Blackie's chickens were sold, big as their mother they were then, and five bright shining dollars the boys had to give for their Easter offering.

"Those were the best Easter eggs we ever had, weren't they, Ned," said Jamie, and Ned thought they surely were.

Springtide and Easter.

BY MARY D. BRINE.

Oh, time of glad awakening
To sunshine and to song!
Oh, time when hearts long grieving,
Grow glad again and strong,
Oh, springtide ever welcome,
With skies so blue and fair,
And scent of new-born blossoms
Upon the balmy air!
Our hearts awake to greet thee
Amid the bells' sweet chime,
For lo! with thee there cometh
The blessed Easter time.
Hear loud hosannas ringing
For joy that Christ is king;
Hear merry chimes up-springing
To swell the songs we sing!
We sing of Jesus' triumph,
And victory over pain,
We sing of sins forgiven,
And pardon won again,
Shine out, ye stars so tender!
Shine for the Easter day,
For winter's chill is over,
His reign has passed away.

And then, oh, risen Saviour,
Look from thy throne above,
And fill us with the Easter
Of thy most wondrous love.
Disperse the clouds of sadness,
Till sorrowing be done,
And Lenten woes be banished,
Before the Easter's sun,
Bless to our use the springtide,
And all its gifts from thee,
And in our hearts may joy-bells
Ring ever ceaselessly,
And prayers, like morning incense
Most gratefully arise,
As smoke from altar fires
Soars upward to the skies.

BRING FLOWERS.

Get all the flowers you can for the church on Sunday afternoon, dear boys and girls, but do more than that. Put flowers in the home; put flowers in mother's room; put a few flowers in baby's crib. Make the home light and bright with lovely blossoms everywhere. If there is a dear old grandmamma or an auntie, or a sick person in the home, be very sure that such a one has plenty of Easter flowers.

We gather the flowers and put them in the churches because we are so glad that Christ is not dead and buried and gone away from us, but that he is alive and with us, although we cannot see him.

When we are asleep at night he watches over and cares for us. When we are at our lessons, if we just lift our thoughts up to him, he will help us to think clearly and to remember quickly. When we are at work, if the work is hard for us, the thought of him just at hand and ready to carry our burden, will make it much easier; and when we are at play, then, too, he is watching to see that we are careful to be fair and kind, and that we try to make others have a good time as well as to have a good time ourselves.

He is not a dead, far-away friend, but just a living, every-day, close friend, with us wherever we are and whatever we do. He cares very tenderly about us, too, and the one thing that he is most watchful and most anxious about is

that in our hearts there should be just such feelings, and just such love, and just such kindness toward everybody as is in his great loving heart, and when the same feelings are in us that are in him, and we do as he would do, you see it is his beautiful living that is becoming a part of our living, too.

In other words, if you will understand it better, the good in us is Christ being alive in us. We can keep the doors of our hearts wide open and have him in there all the time, making our lives most beautiful, or we can shut the doors of our hearts with evil words, and actions, and thoughts, which will be like the stones that shut the door of the tomb, and so we can keep him from living within us, and helping us to live in him.

But to shut him out is not what our boys and girls wish to do. They wish to have him for their best friend. Let us see if more and more, from this beautiful Easter time on, we shall not be able to be more like him. Then not only the Easter day, but all the other days will be most happy ones to us.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

April 5, 1896.

It pays to be good.—Psalm 1. 1-3.

The word "blessed" means "happy." Everybody wants to be happy, but only those enjoy the blessing who act in the manner here described.

WHAT SUCH A PERSON AVOIDS.

Verse 1. Read it carefully. Bad company has ruined thousands. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not," is Solomon's caution. Untold misery would be avoided if the wise man's caution was obeyed.

SEE THE PROGRESS OF A SINFUL COURSE.

Walks not in the wicked counsel, does not keep company with bad persons, but avoids their society, and will not sit with them. Evil is progressive. Once do wrong and a second wrong will soon follow, for sinners invariably go from bad to worse. They do not intend to come to such an end, but they are led on until they land beyond the hope of amendment.

THE POSITIVE CHARACTER.

Verse 2. See what the happy man delights in! "The law of the Lord." He hides in it his heart, and meditates on it by night and by day. This is a treasury from which he derives indescribable pleasure, the result of which is seen in his everyday life and conduct.

WHAT HE RESEMBLES.

Verse 3. The tree thus planted will be in a good situation for bringing forth fruit. Being well watered, the ground will always be full of moisture. The person described will not be like a withered leaf, but one that is bright and attractive.

THE EXTENT OF HIS SUCCESS.

"Whatever he doeth shall prosper." "The path of the just is as the shining light," that is all the while becoming brighter. "Godliness is profitable unto all things." Let all the Juniors who may study this lesson, aspire to be such a person as is here described.

THE WISE JUNIOR LEAGUE

SUPERINTENDENT.

Is gentle.
Is never late.
Doesn't scold.
Is an optimist.
Uses blackboard.
Won't chew gum.
Speaks distinctly.
Wears Junior badge.
Cultivates simplicity.
Prepares a programme.
Requires Juniors to lead.
Speaks a kind word often.
Sits in church with Juniors.
Lays stress on small duties.
Grets Juniors on the street.
Thinks scowling abominable.
Looks up topic weeks before.
Has a prayer in her heart always.
Has monthly missionary programme.