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## Easter---It's Origin and Customs

By E. L. Chicaudt

At Easter we celebrate the resurrection of Christ, and whilst for all Christian peoples the origin of the feast is, of course, the stupendous miracle of the rising from the tomb, most people are nevertheless unaware that the feast, tho' apparently of distinctly Christian expression, has many pagan associations. The word "Easter" itself is especially significant, coming down to us, as it does, from pre-Christian days, whilst the customs belonging to the spring festival are mainly survivals of pagan worship and festivity.

The word "Ostara," or "Eastre," from which our modern "Easter" is evolved, means a breaking or bursting forth, and in the mythology of Northern Europe, Eastre was the goddess of spring. In the days following the disappearance of the snows, when the grass began to sprout and the trees to bud, when winter had been surely banished and spring had commenced her reign, then the feast of Eastre, the spring goddess, was celebrated with much ceremony and merry-making. Thus in the symbolic bursting forth of spring from her wintry tomb, which they observed, there was a figure of that greater "Eastre" which in future years was to be substituted for the old festival and celebrated until the end of time.

### In Pagan England

When the Angles and Saxons came to Britain they still clung tenaciously to their pagan mythology, and among the feasts which they set up in their new home was that of the spring goddess. Then came the Roman missionaries, and England, Christianized, banished all her ancient deities and their feasts except that of Eastre, which, now endowed with a newer and fuller significance, retained its pagan name and many of its more innocent associations. Annually on this day the altars were decorated with flowers, the first tokens of spring, whilst the whole populace, young and old, gave itself up to enjoyment.

And so from the days of our pagan forefathers we get the feast of Easter and all the pomp and ceremony with which we usher in the feast and the festivity and merry-making with which it has long been associated are relics of the homage paid centuries ago to the goddess of spring.

It is doubtless from the ancient worship of the constellations and material elements that the vagaries of the sun have always been so intimately connected with Easter. A stanza of an old poem runs:

"But oh, she dances such a way  
No sun upon an Easter day  
Is half so fine a sight."

It was a general belief in England that the sun danced on Easter Sunday morning, and people rose with the dawn to see the interesting spectacle; and even to this day in Ireland nurses hold their charges to the window in anticipation of this phenomenon.

### Easter Eggs

Eggs are still intimately connected with Easter, and this, too, is traceable to ancient times. In the earliest systems of philosophy the egg was the emblem of life, containing as it does all the elements of life. Their use at the spring festival symbolized the awakening of the earth to a new existence, whilst the colorings of the eggs represented the tints of renaissance nature. On the continent and in parts of England, the custom of coloring eggs at this season is still prevalent. Cochineal, logwood and other coloring matters are used for tinting these "pace eggs," as they are called—probably from Passch—or they are stained by boiling with ribbons of various hues. Then at a picnic held on Easter Monday, the principal feature consists of rolling these eggs against each other on the grass until they are broken, when the merry-makers proceed to eat them.

In olden times, an egg laid on Good Friday was held to have special properties, and the shells were carefully kept,

as it was believed that a piece thrown upon a burning house would immediately extinguish the fire.

### A Curious Custom

A curious old custom, probably symbolic of the resurrection, used, at Eastertide, to be celebrated in various English counties and especially in the north. This was known as "heaving." On Easter Monday the men lifted the women, and on Tuesday the reverse took place and the women "heaved" the men.

Weather proverbs have been associated with this season from time immemorial. In Hertfordshire there is a saying:

"A good deal of rain on Easter Day,  
Gives a crop of good grass but little good hay."

And another version runs:

"If it rains on Good Friday and Easter Day,  
There'll be plenty of grass and a little good hay."

Also in many agricultural districts it is a firm belief that the weather experienced at Eastertide will occur also at harvest.

### The End of the World

Another strange belief, associated with this season, is that the end of the world will come when Good Friday occurs on the Feast of St. George, April 23, but, as far forward as astronomers have computed, these two feasts do not coincide.

One more survival of Druidical times exists at Easter, and this is the custom still extant in many places of making offerings to the clergy, which are known as "Easter dues." On the authority of Southey we have it, that on the kindling of the sacred fire a man who had not paid his dues was refused a spark. Nor might any of his neighbors assist him, and he and his family were deprived of it until his debt to the priests was discharged.

And so is one of our most sacred and solemn festivals have we so curiously assimilated the Christian observances and the customs which in pagan days were tributes to the goddess of spring.

### Farm Women's Problems

Continued from Page 42

minced and potato roll is both economical and filling, try it! A cup of mashed potatoes, a cup of flour, a tablespoon of butter, a little baking powder and salt. Work into a paste, roll as thin as possible and spread with minced meat. Then roll as for jelly roll and bake in a hot oven. It is nice either with or without gravy. This recipe also makes an excellent crust for deep meat pies, a little water can be added, if necessary, to bind it.

Of course, we all make pancakes, but did you ever try bread dough, fried in a similar manner? Cut off small pieces as lightly as possible and fry a golden brown, taking care, at the same time, that they are cooked thru. Hot, with syrup they are delicious.

Another thing that only costs the trouble of making is buttermilk cheese, but since it is a butter saver it is worthy of consideration, especially when butter is short as it so often is just now.

My boys are very fond of it for their school lunches.

(When I intend making it I run the buttermilk right off into a saucepan and leave it to stand until the following day, when I put it on the stove and let it get thoroughly hot. Then I take it off and let it stand until quite cold, when it will be found that the curds have all settled at the bottom and that most of the whey can be carefully poured off. Then I sprinkle the curds with salt and tie up in a muslin bag to drain, when it is ready for use.)

War prices make economy more necessary than ever, but on the farm, at least, we are fortunate in being able to raise much wholesome food for our little ones.

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