

EASTER.

BY MRS. JULIA WARD HOWE.

THE AIR Easter is the crown of spring,
When winter folds his icy wing,
And hurries away like a banished king.

They gather the flowers so rich and rare,
They trim the altars, and do not spare,
And the women put on their garments fair.

To greet the glory of soul and sense,
When nature, struggling from long defence,
Walks forth in a rich magnificence.

And out of the old-time doubt and fear,
Like a guide with a voice of holy cheer,
The dear Christ tells us that God is near.

Better than flowery wreath and crown,
Than feathered bonnet and silken gown,
Is the heart that lays its own hardness down,—

The heart that, grieving for sin and pride,
Feels the bright hope-angel near its side,
And thrills with the promise for which
Christ died.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLKS:

Rev. W. H. WITHROW, M.A., Editor.

TORONTO, APRIL 8, 1882.

EASTER DAY.



ON Easter morning, in primitive times, Christians saluted each other with an impressive formula. "Christ is risen!" exclaimed one. "Christ is risen, indeed," replied the brother saluted, "and hath appeared unto

Simon."

This beautiful custom is retained in the Greek Church. In Russia one may still hear these words, which recall the morning when the surprised disciples first listened to the joyful tidings.

There will also be joyfulness throughout Christendom, next Sunday, for it will be the anniversary of our Lord's resurrection. Churches will glow with flowers and vibrate with carol and jubilate. Paschal eggs, dyed in the sacred red, or violet, or blue, will be exchanged by thousands of youth. So Christians did centuries ago, using the Pasch, as the egg was called, to symbolize life bursting the bonds of the sepulchre.

Until the Council of Nice, A.D. 325, there was a difference of opinion, as to when, not as to why, Easter should be celebrated. The council decided that the great feast should be observed upon one and the same day. It fixed the day as the first Sunday

after the full moon which happens upon or next after the 21st day of March, the vernal equinox. If the full moon happens upon a Sunday, the festival is to be observed the Sunday after.

Easter is, therefore, a movable feast, but the event which it commemorates is a fixed fact of history. It is also a fundamental fact of Christianity. For he who denies the literal resurrection of the human body of Jesus Christ should, to be logically consistent, deny the verity of the Christian religion.

The Apostles based their appeals to Jews and Gentiles to become Christians upon this fact. They were plain men, accustomed to observe facts, though slow to apprehend doctrines. They speak as sober-minded witnesses testifying to what they know.

"We affirm," they say in substance, "that after Jesus of Nazareth had died and been buried, He appeared to us on several different occasions. We could not have been deceived, for we saw Him, touched Him, handled Him, spoke with Him, and ate with Him. We obeyed His commands and saw Him perform a miracle. We met Him by appointment, and heard Him bid us go and make disciples of all nations. We, with our own eyes, in broad daylight, saw Him ascend into heaven."

Their evidence cannot be rejected on the ground that they were deceived, by seeing only a vision. A vision is not handled, nor does it eat or work a miracle. The alternative is to believe their testimony, or to reject it as the falsehood of wilful impostors. That supposition is demolished by the character of the Apostles, by their zeal, their success, and their fate.

They were honest men whom the death of their leader had disheartened and scattered. They did not expect to see Him again on earth. Their cause was lost, so they thought, when they saw their dead Lord buried.

But their senses forced them, in spite of their despair and their skepticism, to confess that they saw Jesus in His own body. The sight gathered them again in one band, and filled them with enthusiasm for the "lost cause."

They went everywhere testifying that Christ had risen from the dead, and that they had seen Him. In all places and at all times they witnessed to this fact. In prisons and in courts, before the people who derided them as fanatics, and before the rulers who cursed them as fools, they asserted that they knew their blessed Lord had risen from the dead.

They sealed their testimony with their blood, and the fact they proclaimed revolutionized the world. Were they martyrs to a lie? Did a falsehood change the history of the world? Is the Christian church, the most practical and powerful benevolent institution earth has ever possessed, founded upon an imposture?

In all the trustworthy facts of history, there is not one more certain than the fact that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead with the same body which was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

On Easter morning, therefore, the Christian church stands by an empty sepulchre and gazes into heaven. "His body was there," it says, pointing to



STREET IN HAMILTON, BERMUDA.—(See First Page.)

the open tomb. "His body is there," and it sweeps its right hand towards heaven, as jubilant voices chant, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."—*Youth's Companion*.

"THE RESURRECTION."

It has been remarked that the most eager opposers of the Bible are those who know least about it. The story of two brilliant men who undertook to cast scorn upon the New Testament, and ended by becoming its defenders, is one of the best illustrations of the effect of thoroughly studying the Word of God.

Lord Lyttleton and Gilbert West, both men of influence, but skeptical with regard to Christianity, once made an agreement that each should write a criticism on some New Testament miracle, showing its "absurdity," and holding it up to ridicule. Gilbert West chose the resurrection of Christ. He obtained a Bible, and went carefully through the four accounts of the death of Christ and His burial—and of the wonderful sequel, which he was to explain away.

How should he shape his attack on this story of the resurrection? was his first thought. Should he insinuate "pious fraud," "fictions of blind devotion," "a superstitious mistake," "Mary Magdalen's imagination"—what? The more he thought about it, the more the difficulties grew.

Again he studied the events of that Friday's closing scene; the sealed stone, and the Roman guard; the mysterious opening of the watched sepulchre; the incidents and swift surprises of that first-day's dawn; the meetings, the doubts, the recognitions of that memorable Sunday—the whole record, to the ascension from Mount Olivet. Biographers end their books with the death of their hero; but here he found the writers had all added a chapter, telling what happened afterwards. Was there a parallel case anywhere?

He was not satisfied. He turned back to the beginning, and read the life of Jesus. When he reached the resurrection story again, he began to fear that he was attempting too much. How could he destroy the story?

What sort of man must he have been of whom such a story could be told? Did not a great life and character deserve a great event? Could any common reality explain so grand an idea, that grew with the centuries, and made a living worship in the hearts of millions?

Still unsatisfied, he reviewed the Gospels. His references led him back to the prophecies, and he put the Old and New Testaments together, reading the Epistles, and discovering with what strange power the resurrection pervaded Christian precept and Christian life.

He began to feel its influence on himself. When he finally commenced his treatise, he was a different man. Better acquaintance with his subject had changed him from a hostile critic to a loving advocate. He wrote with increasing light breaking into his mind and glowing under his pen. His work was a triumph, but not at all of the kind he had first intended. It is, in fact, one of the best commentaries we have on the glorious event which Easter Day commemorates.

Lord Lyttleton, who chose the "Conversion of St. Paul" for his subject of ridicule, had an experience very similar, and the result of his first honest study of the Scriptures was the same.

Lyttleton on Paul's Conversion, and West, on the Resurrection, are standard books that will always be thought of together—the monument of two men who were skeptics when they began their work, and believers when they performed and finished it.

LETTER FROM MR. CROSBY.

MY DEAR MR. WITHROW,—Would you be kind enough to put in your paper an account of a subscription towards our Mission-boat at Simpson. A little boy heard about the proposed boat, so he said to his father, "Papa, I will send Mr. Crosby all that is in my bank, so it was sent on (30 cents), thirty cents. I told about this at one place and afterwards I found that six little girls had joined together and were sewing. They told me they were going to work as a little Missionary Society for the Mission-boat, at Port Simpson. Now, if all the children would get to work like this we should get a boat, so we might be saved from much of the hard work of paddling.

Yours truly, T. Crosby.