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THE DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN,

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Manager and Editor

Ottawa, Wednesday, April 2nd, 1902.

SACRED SEASONS: EASTER.

As Presbyterians, and therefore, we might say, ultra Protestants, we have been wont to pay but little or no attention to so-called sacred days and times which are sanctioned only by ecclesiastical custom or authority. And yet it may at once be admitted that the observance of such days and seasons may serve an important purpose in ministering to the needs of Christian life and conduct. The very general, if not universal observances of such seasons by a vast body of professing Christians is sufficient proof of this. And in the Presbyterian church, the keeping of fast days, so common in the mother country a generation ago, in connection with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is an evidence of the same thing amongst ourselves.

It is certainly easily possible to carry the observance of such days too far, both by unduly increasing their number as in the Roman Catholic church, or in attributing to them a sacredness, as is done in some Protestant churches, superior even to that of the weekly Sabbath. There is also the danger of the keeping of sacred times and seasons degenerating into an empty form. But these do not furnish a sufficient reason to justify utterly ignoring their existence, just as the abuse of any good thing is no argument against its proper use. So there is growing up, along with the broader, kindlier, more tolerant spirit of recent times, a tendency towards the observance in our church of at least some of the sacred days regularly kept by other bodies of professing Christians. Christmas is now, if not, universally, certainly very generally noticed in some way in Presbyterian churches; and in many is marked by special religious services appropriate to the day and the great event which it cele-

brates. It would be difficult, we should think, to produce a reason which would satisfy a Presbyterian for the observance of Christmas, which would not be equally good for the religious observance of Easter. This, which commemorates the glorious resurrection of Christ from the dead, is the greatest event in that sacred life next to his incarnation, and is that which gives all its value to the other. The force of this, or of the practice of other Christian bodies, is gradually making itself felt amongst us Presbyterians, and in many of our congregations. Easter is now, we think, rightly observed by a religious service suitable to the day. Unhappily the whole season is prostituted by very many to most unworthy purposes, to mere amusement, or the making of gain. But the fact that some or even many degrade this day and the whole Easter season, need not prevent others from turning it to good account.

Easter Sunday, to use the common expression, especially, commemorates so unique, so great and significant an event, one that bulks so largely in the Christian religion, and means so much, that it has upon all Christians a peculiar claim to recognition and worthy observance. If any event that ever took place in the history of the human race, has a right to be celebrated with gladness and joy to the end of time, it is the resurrection of Christ, which dispelled forever for all Christians, the darkness and gloom of death and the grave and the life which lies beyond the present. We are not sorry therefore, indeed we are glad that, the marking of this Sunday with some special and becoming religious service, is growing amongst us. This need not detract from every Sabbath day being a reminder of the rising of our Lord from the dead and of His empty tomb.

The great thing is to observe the season and the Sunday in their true spirit, and if this be done it would appear to be obvious, that the fixing of the mind at regularly recurring periods upon some of the great facts of our religion, ought to impress them particularly upon the minds of the young, should give them vividness to the sanctified imagination of all, and so make them helpful in living the Christian life, and increasingly as the passing years enrich these great events with hallowed and precious associations.

In addition to this individual benefit, the observance of days of such unquestioned sacredness as Easter, would bring us into closer fellowship as a church with other bodies of Christians, would strengthen the bond of sympathy, happily constantly growing stronger in these days, between them and ourselves, and form one of those elements which are now making for a broader union among all evangelical denominations. This would only be a reverting to what was the practice of Christians at an earlier day before the church was divided to such an extent as it is now.

It may be of interest to recall here how this season was observed in that earlier time. "All agreed in keeping it as the

most solemn and joyful of all the Christian festivals. The day was ushered in with appropriate salutations and other demonstrations of joy. The Lord's Supper was solemnly celebrated; catechumens were baptized; slaves were set at liberty; and criminals, with the exception of those who had committed very heinous offences, received their pardon from the Christian emperors. Religious assemblies for prayer, preaching and communion were daily held through the Easter week. All games and shows, both of the theatre and the circus were forbidden, not only by the decrees of Councils, but also by the laws of the emperors; and the prohibition extended to Jews and Pagans, that they might not offend the feelings of those who desired to do honour to this holy season. Even the courts of law were closed through the week except for business of extreme urgency."

Oh! day of days! shall hearts set free
No "mimstrel rapture" find for thee?
Thou art the Sun of other days,
Then shine by giving back thy rays.
Enthroned in thy sovereign sphere
Thou shedd'st thy light on all the year;
Sundays by thee more glorious break;
An Easter Day in every week. —Keble.

The state of Illinois has enacted a law imposing heavy fines on those who have been convicted of dealing in futures—a method of trading which is understood to mean to buy or sell, for future delivery, commodities which one does not possess or does not expect to get. The law has been sustained by the supreme court of the United States. Noting these facts the Western Presbyterian says that dealing in future is "very largely of the nature of gambling, amounting to a bet regarding the price which will later be reached by articles bought or sold. Those who have in hand such operations have succeeded in getting a large amount of the funds of people, who were led to expect that they might very suddenly come into great wealth; but the result, as a rule, has been to cause them to lose all that they hazarded. A return to more legitimate methods of dealing will have a healthful influence upon all forms of legitimate enterprise. It will result in less perversion of trust, and misuse of others' money, for which dealings in futures has furnished great temptation." It would be interesting to know how our Canadian laws stand in relation to this question, or whether we have any effective laws dealing with the gambling devices spoken of; for, it is pretty well known that a good many Canadians take a hand in speculating in futures through New York and Chicago brokers. We have not heard of any of them becoming suddenly wealthy, but it is an open secret that not a few Canadians have from time to time been badly bitten, at the same time involving other people in their losses. The whole system is criminally immoral and should be vigorously stamped out. If existing laws are not equal to the emergency they should be made so. The evil usually begins with stock exchange speculations, and is exceedingly demoralizing. Honest men should not allow themselves to be dragged into such schemes.