

Meaning of Easter Sunday



Some Reminiscences of the Festival in Omaha

THE GREAT mission was accomplished. The Christ lay dead in His tomb, with the stone door closed and sealed. Already upon the awful scene of Good Friday night's shadow rested. In the night's darkness, with a deeper darkness of inexpressible sorrow in their hearts, some women sit in view of the divine grave. When the twilight grew darker and darker and the stars woke to look down upon sleeping Jerusalem, the devoted women, who clung to the spot enclosing their beloved dead, with a lingering look behind, departed, leaving their dead to be watched by unseen hosts of angels. It was the vigil of love over the infinite sacrifice.

When they who had so lovingly watched the burying of the Great Dead were making their lonely way to the Garden, gray dawn was coloring the sky, but before they came to the hallowed ground the rock-hewn tomb had given up its dead. Be not afraid! Tarry here; listen! He is not here; He is risen as He said.

Linger here a moment, and listen to the voices that rise from the grave. Perhaps to you it is the fresh-made one, or it may be the one already moss-covered, where lies all that is left of the best-beloved of beings. Out of its silence comes the voice teaching you the twofold and difficult art of how you should live, and how you should die.

It was Easter. Always the first Sunday after the full moon, after the vernal equinox memories of the mightiest miracle return. To the Church it is a season of rejoicing,

and memories of our blessed dead are quickened. From its earliest history Omaha's churches have reverently observed its return. The old churches of our fathers echoed with praise, and devout worshippers thronged her sanctuaries. Sermon and choir lifted hearts from the dross of earthiness to the kinship they hold with the skies. In the ministry of the day, too, now as then, is found in the resurrection of the dead one of the great articles of Christian faith, the best cure for heart sorrow. This is how Mr. Fiske puts a thought of the day: "Whether it be in the individual or in the race, we cannot tell just where the soul comes in. A due heed to nature's analogies, however, is helpful in this connection. The maxim that nature makes no leaps is far from true. Nature's habit is to make prodigious leaps, but only after long preparation. Slowly rises the water in the tank, inch by inch through many a weary hour, until at length it overflows and straightway vast systems of machinery are awakened into rumbling life. Slowly grows the eccentricity of the ellipse as you shift its position in the cone, and still the nature of the curve is not essentially varied, when suddenly, presto! one more little shift, and the finite ellipse becomes an infinite hyperbola mocking our feeble powers of conception as it speeds away on its everlasting career. Perhaps in our ignorance such analogies may help us to realize the possibility that steadily developing ephemeral conscious life may reach a critical point where it suddenly puts on immortality." And in the Easter voices of the Church is the witness to the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, who only hath immortality

dwelling in light. Here Christmas receives its larger interpretation in the consummation of love's mission in Christ.

Again Easter returns. It may be memories of the past may delight you. Since this is neither a poem nor a sermon let memory be its justification. The Easter of thirty years ago is reputed to have been very



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cold, its severity unsurpassed the entire winter, and heavy snows delayed the trains on the Union Pacific fully five hours. When Easter came in 1875 the river was not open at Omaha, but in the Centennial year the Missouri river swept away the riprap near Willow slough, four miles south of Council Bluffs, to the annoyance of the Burlington.

Even at Easter men are not all saints. About thirty years ago a gentleman from Oakland, Cal., on returning from the evening services at church lost \$500 at brace fare. It was the time Marshal Snowden had the custody of the culprit who robbed the ticket office of the Omaha & Northwestern. This was the season, too, that the civil rights bill was tested in an Omaha barber shop, when, instead of lather, white paint was applied to the face of a negro who requested a shave.

Twenty-four years ago Easter the steamer General Terry touched at Omaha, enroute from St. Louis for Fort Benton. It was a brand new boat built at Pittsburg, Penn., for the upper Missouri river trade, at a cost of \$18,000, and was loaded with a cargo of 300 tons of merchandise. W. A. Burleigh was captain. At the same time the steamer C. K. Peck reached here.

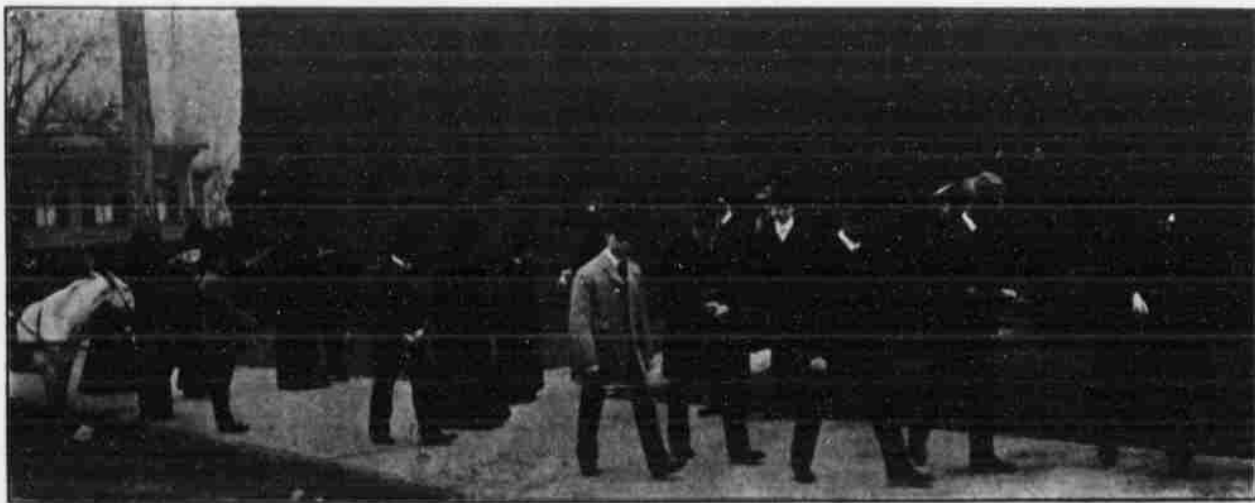
To the Eastertide of old Omaha belong the visits of Colonel Sellers and of Thomas Nast, who lectured on "Caricaturing" in the old Academy of Music.

But with the passing of years interest in Easter in Omaha and elsewhere has grown and hope in its message has gone into the wide human heart suffocating with despair,

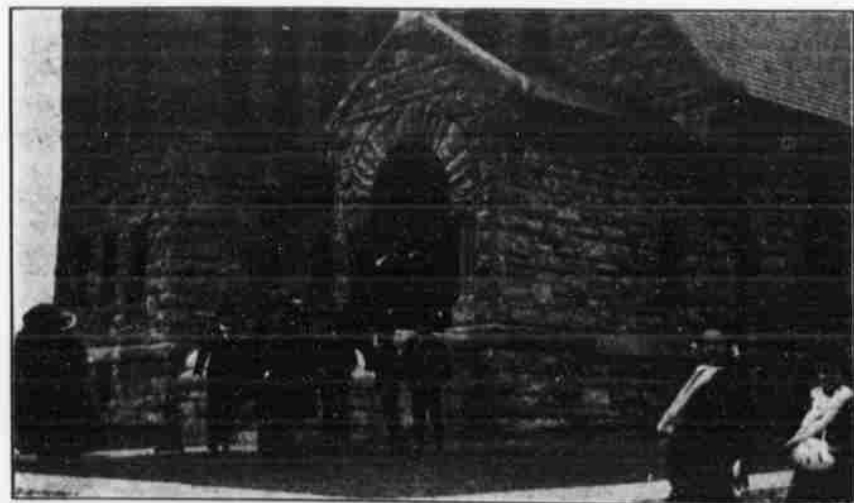
decaying courage, a dying faith as the flood of light poured with heavenly brightness from Christ's open sepulchre upon the world early in the morning, when the Sabbath was past, at the rising of the sun and lit up the trembling soul of Mary Magdalene. It was the birth of a wonderful hope. It makes sorrow bearable. Through the Christian centuries ever since the light Christ brought with Him from the grave has shined upon the earthly path of sojourners and pilgrims. Men have almost lost the power to conceive correctly what the darkness was before Christ died and rose again to greet the world with the inspiring words of faith and hope. All hail!

In his aspirations after ideals forever beyond him in this life man has interpreted his destiny as larger and higher than the flower of the field—in short, an immortality. Though the solemn vision of Easter may vanish and its purest emotions may seem only a dream when we go back to our usual life, often because we forget that other part of Christ's Easter message of the ministry we owe our fellowmen, the grand fact of personality makes man in a high sense a child of the Infinite Father, as the old poet claimed, "We are also His offspring," and justifies the courage of the common human faith which disdains the fate of the grass of the prairie that withers and the beasts that perish. He puts before him the destiny my text gives him: "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

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SUNDAY MORNING AT FIRST M. E. CHURCH, OMAHA—Photo by Staff Artist.



AFTER SERVICE AT ST. MATHIAS, OMAHA—Photo by Staff Artist.

Stories About the Ministry

FRIENDS of Archbishop Ryan of Philadelphia tell this story of his grace: The archbishop was about to take a train for Baltimore at the Broad street station when a young man accosted him, saying: "Your face is familiar. Where in hell have I seen you?"

"I really don't know," said the archbishop blandly. "What part of hell do you come from?"

"Down in South Carolina," says Congressman Talbert, quoted by the New York Tribune, "I once attended a colored church. The preacher, one of those negroes with an oily face and big spectacles, was talking about the prophets. He had taken an hour to discourse upon the major prophets and then he took up the minor ones. In course of time he reached Hosea. 'My breddren,' he exclaimed, 'we come now to Hosea. Let us consider him. Where shall we put Hosea? At that moment an old negro, who had been peacefully slumbering in one of the back pews, woke up and looked at the pastor. 'Hosea can take my seat,' he said. 'I'm so — tired that I am going home.'"

Rev. Alexander Doyle of the Paulist Fathers is a clever speaker and a warm advocate of total abstinence and tight-closed saloons for Sunday, reports the New York Times. When he talks on these topics the ears of opponents tingle.

Lately among his admiring auditors was a country girl who had come to New York and found herself stirred by admiration of everything in it. The preaching of Father Doyle impressed her deeply and she wrote

home to her mother this choice bit of criticism:

"I never get tired of going to hear the sermons in the Paulist church, mother. Father Doyle is such a lovely preacher that you'd think every word he said was true."

A story is told in Youth's Companion of one of the old-time pillars of a New England church who held out firmly for a long time against the innovation of an organ, but when he finally yielded did so without reserve. From violent opposition he became the most strenuous of all the congregation as to the fitness of the instrument to be purchased.

"Seems to me you aren't consistent," said one economical brother, reproachfully. "Here a month ago you couldn't speak harsh enough about organs, and now you go to advocating extra expense in getting the best that's to be had."

"See here," said the deacon, grimly, "if we're going to worship the Lord by machinery, I don't want to putter around with any second-rate running gear."

When called to take up the new mission of the Holy Communion, Chicago, relates the Century, he found busy railway yards close to his chapel. He asked the chief engineer how to reach railway operatives. "Read Lardner's 'Railway Economy' until you are able to ask a question of an engineer and he not think you a fool." So instructed, he dropped in one day on a group cleaning an engine and ventured a question: "Which do you like the better, inside or outside connections?" A torrent of discussion followed on connections, steam

heaters, exhausts, and at the end of a half hour he remarked in leaving: "Boys, I have a free church in Metropolitan hall, where I should be glad to see you." The next Sunday every man was there.

After preaching a sermon on the fate of the wicked, relates the San Francisco Argonaut, an English clergyman, met an old woman well known for her gossiping propensities and he said:

"I hope my sermon has borne fruit. You heard what I said about the place where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth?"

"Well, as to that," answered the dame, "if I 'as anythink to say, it be this: Let them gnash their teeth as has 'em—I ain't!"

Bishop Williams of Connecticut used to tell the following story of the late Dr. Duchet: "One Sunday morning Dr. Duchet arose feeling wretched. After a futile attempt to eat breakfast he called an old and favorite colored servant to him and said: 'Sam, go around and tell Simmons (the sexton) to post a notice on the church door saying that I am too ill to preach today.' 'Now, massa,' said Sam, 'don't you gib up dat way. Just gib him a trial; you get long all right.' The argument went on and resulted in the minister starting off. Service over, he returned to his house looking much brighter. 'How you feel, massa?' said Sam, as he opened the door. 'Better, much better, Sam. I am glad I took your advice.' 'I knew it; I knew it,' said the dandy, grinning until every tooth was in evidence. 'I knew you feel better when you git dat sermon out o' your system.'"

On Jordan's Banks

THE traveler in the Holy Land will witness new sights which will interest him more than that of the Russian pilgrims at the annual Epiphany ceremonies on the banks of the River Jordan. A week before the festival itself crowds of these Slav peasants are seen trudging along the Jericho road, with every imaginable kind of haversack and carryall on their backs. Some of the pilgrims are old and weather-worn, others young and cheerful, while a few, overcome by sleep and fatigue, are lying prone along the roadside. But somehow the whole lot, young and old, manage to reach the banks of the river in good time for the ceremony, says the London Traveler. They spend the night, perhaps, in the Russian hospice at Jericho, like a flock of sheep. Before dawn the rooms are empty and the whole crowd has gathered on the bank, where Greek priests, who will presently drive a most lucrative trade, await them. The principal articles sold are branches of trees from various sacred spots, stones from the Mountain of Temptation hard by, plants from the wilderness and rosaries with olive stones for beads. To whatever religious value is claimed by these articles the Russian peasants implicitly give credence, and they willingly pay their money to obtain them.

During the hours immediately preceding the ceremony the motley crowd is occupied in prayer and silent devotion. To many pilgrims this occasion is one of the greatest life can bring, namely, to be permitted not only to visit the Jordan, but actually to bathe in its sacred waters. Suddenly chanting is heard and the crowd quickly

opens to let a procession of purple-clad ecclesiastics pass to the waters, then the pilgrims close in again and station themselves along the banks, eager and watchful. And now, quite reverently, a jeweled cross is laid by the patriarch on the surface of the stream to bless it, and no sooner does the sacred symbol touch the water than a dive is made into it by the enthusiastic crowd, which splashes and prays and wallows and dips—together a strange scene. Such is the baptism, and the longer it lasts the greater the merit the pilgrim will enjoy. All dripping with water each shroud is now wrung out and stowed away to serve as the cerecloth when the pilgrimage of life is over, and the body is ready for the grave. As the traveler rides away the next day to Jerusalem he will see these childlike peasants, bedraggled with mud and fatigued by constant sleeplessness, plodding along toward the Holy City, chanting and singing as they go, and leaning on their sticks of reed. But there is now a smile on their faces and joy in their hearts, for have they not bathed in the waters of the Jordan?

Terms Reversed

Washington Star: "What is a captain of industry?" asked the boy who is going to be very wise some day.

"It is a term that is applied to the head of a great monopoly when he is at a banquet."

"And what is a robber baron?"
"It's the same man when he is in politics."