

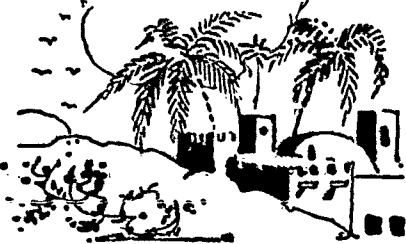
GRACE



Alleluja! Christ is Risen

PHOTO BY WILHELM BRUNER

Easter Really Beginning of Another Year



Easter is now generally looked upon as nature's spring-opening day! Fresh flowers, new hats, light clothing are its accompaniments—weather permitting. There is an old custom of always wearing something new, which is responsible, I suppose, for the householder's principal expense, the Easter hat for the lady who makes a home of the house! And if something new, which will add to the charm of the day, really has to be worn, where could it be set to better advantage than above milady's fair face?

Once New Year's Day.

It is right enough this inclination toward newness on Easter day. Because Easter so often came about March 25, just the vernal equinox, England made that her New Year's day down to 1751. William the Conqueror made it a law that January 1, his coronation day, should begin the year. But even that doughty warrior could not make English people change their custom. "The Observer" writes in the Montreal Family Herald. It seemed so natural to follow nature's clock, and begin the year with her, when spring went round with her resurrection touch and told flowers and herbage in their winter stillness that it was time to get up, and begin another season's blooming. In fact it was a distinct sign of the growth of science—true science that takes no account of sentiment or pious imagination, but aims only to unfold truth—when Christianity gave heed to the astronomers and agreed upon January as the nearest approach to an actual New Year's day, as had Julius Caesar centuries before. England was, I think, the last of all the countries, to agree to that change.

Promise of Eternal Life.

Perhaps it is very human, but it may mark a considerable change in public opinion and appreciation, that Christmas is made of much more importance, as a holiday, than Easter. It was not so at first, you remember. The fact that One had risen from the dead as He had promised, thereby averting Himself to be as He had

claimed, God the Son, was the main feature of the teaching of the church in its earliest, most successful days. Death is such an appalling fact! Human nature instinctively dreads and rebels against it. It is something imported into humanity, which after all these years still comes as a shock to it. We were not intended, not designed to meet that shock! None can escape it. Death comes to every one as a stop to all worldly activities. That One had actually overcome death, and proved that it was for the future to be a gate to another, larger, compensating life, and no longer a prison gate swinging open only one way, inwards, because of sin, was amazing news to the world. Only the Creator of man, and his Judge, could have accomplished change like that! The man who accepted the well-attested historical fact of the Easter Resurrection, accepted with it the belief, the fact, that Jesus of Nazareth was God as well as man, and professed Himself to be a Christian. Easter was in short the festival of the Almighty Godhead of Jesus Christ, as Christmas was the anniversary of His miraculous birth as Son of Man. It was a festival of the deepest joy. The earliest Christians made the Resurrection on the first day of the week to be a weekly festival, by transferring their rest day from the seventh, which recalled the Creation and the exodus from Egypt to the first day of every week, under the guidance of course of the Holy Ghost. As well, Easter day was by far the greatest festival of the year. In the first centuries of our era.

Beginning New Life.

Is it correct, I wonder, to say that there has been a strong tendency in our days to dwell more upon the humanity than upon the divinity of the Savior? You notice how our preachers emphasize the example, the leadership, the sufferings of the Master as the perfect Guide, Leader and Man of Sorrows, how apt they are to dwell lightly upon His eternal Godhead and power! I have the idea that the exaltation of Christmas is due to that tendency. Sometimes I wonder if we have not lost something by magnifying the man rather than the God in the blessed Savior. Man has been kicking at and trying to open the gate of death for centuries and never could open it. Only the Master of life and death could do that. It was the God in Jesus that mattered and made all the difference. Ancient England, in fact, before Pope Gregory's missionaries arrived there, had really made Christmas New Year's day, and began the year with the coming of God to the world. But that country changed its opinion, as I have said, and decided, rather, that the world of men's new life began when nature be-

EASTER LILIES

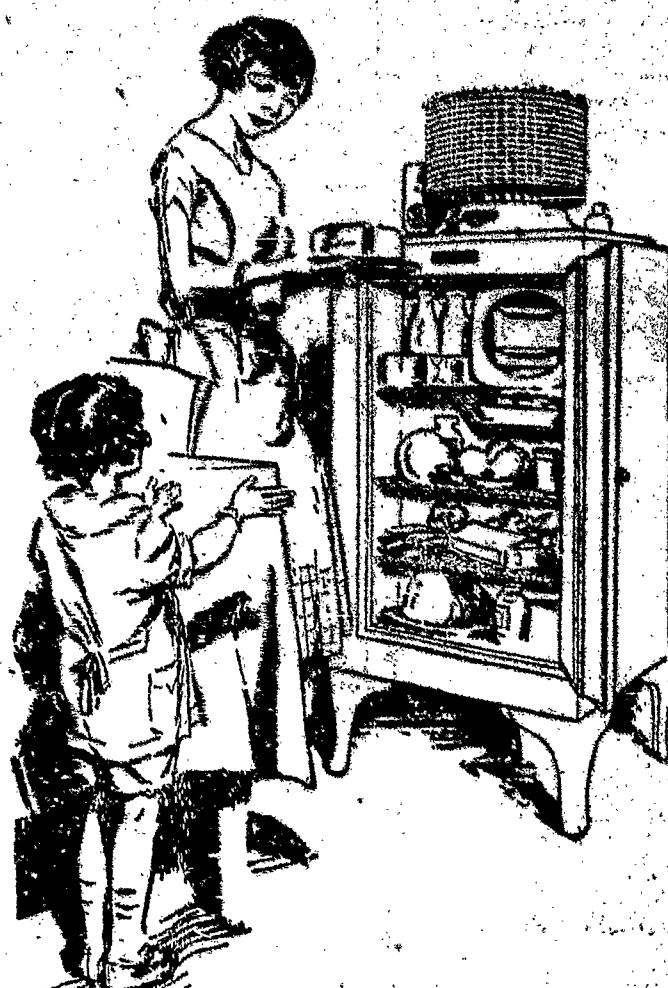


"Dear Lord," the Angels cried, "unshod of sin Around Thy throne we cluster. Should we tell not rather do we spin But we have light and Easter."

gan her year, and so shifted their New Year beginning to Easter and the spring!

Easter's Glorious Promise.

It really makes no difference to an intelligent world whether the calendar year begins at Easter or in January. Calendars do not control the season or the weather, though an acquaintance rather given to follow astrology stopped me in the street a few days ago to tell me of a wonderful almanac published in another country which foretold exactly what the weather was to be. I did not know that there was a single man living outside of a lunatic asylum who believes in weather almanacs these days, though I fancy I can remember when a good many believed in their money-catching guesses. But it is admirably befitting that Easter, with its certain hope of the resurrection life of man, which came to us out of the grave in a Jerusalem garden at the season when earth is showing signs of renewed, arisen life, should be celebrated just at this time of year. It is good to be reminded by the lovely growths that come from wintering graves in gardens, fields and woods that "we shall be changed," when the gleaming Easter "Sun of Righteousness shall arise," and all the graves will open. Changed, as the lily is changed from the dry bulb we plant, into something so much more beautiful, so wonderfully more enduring than we are to be sown! Changed, so that all tears, all sorrows shall be done away, and all things, mankind included, shall become "New."



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