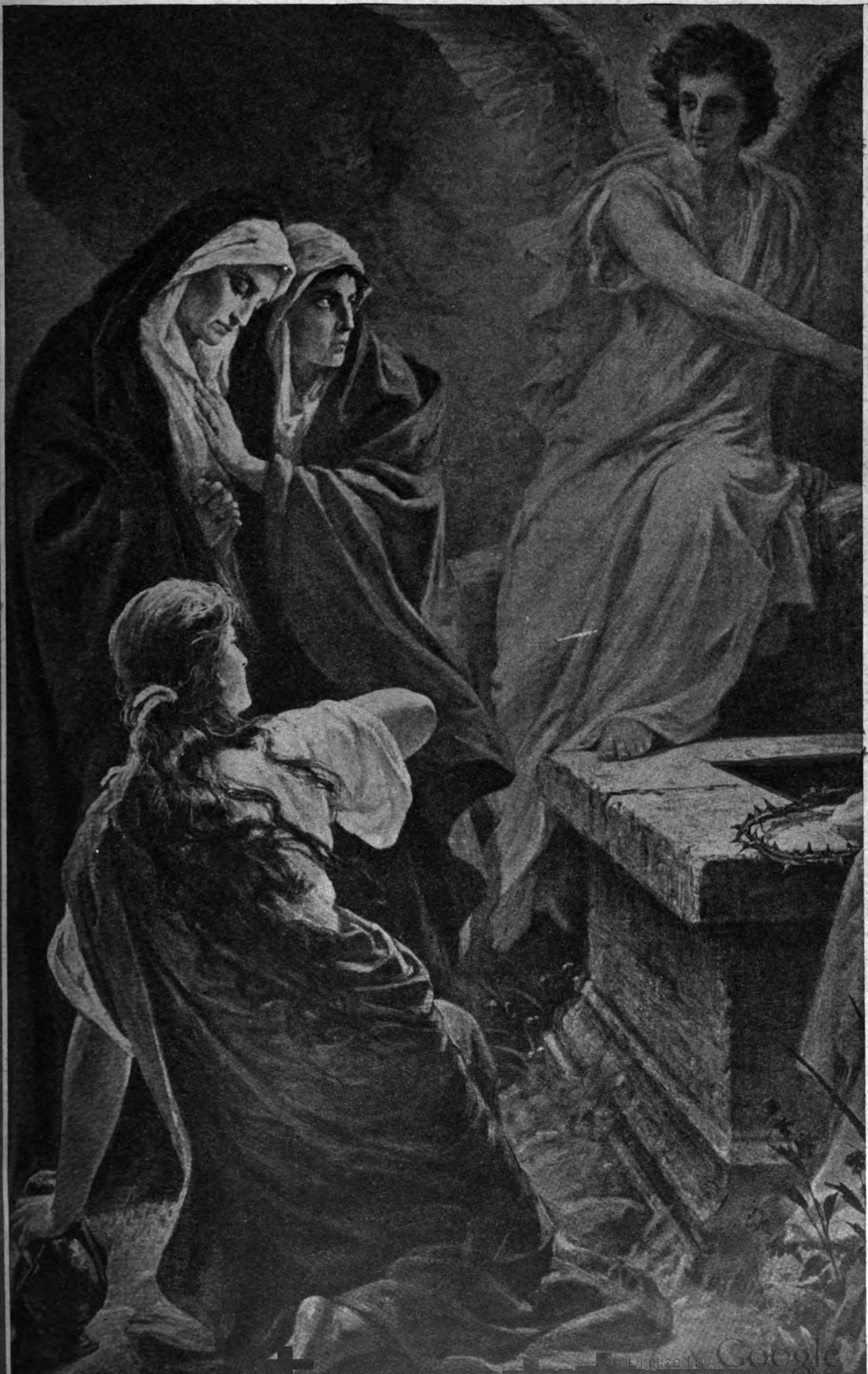


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The Easter Continent

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THE CONTINENT

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Self-Resurrection

"Awake, thou that sleepest,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ shall shine upon thee."

FROM ONE as thoroughly dominated as the Apostle Paul with the conviction that apart from God's enabling grace no man can be capable of achieving a divine life in the world, this quotation is remarkable, if not startling. Paul preached nothing more strenuously than the truth that men dead in trespasses and sins must needs be made alive by the same divine power which accomplished the resurrection of Jesus.

This very epistle to the Ephesians is crowded full of that thought. And yet the reader has scarcely left behind Paul's most exalted rhapsody on the new life that God gives to the dead soul of man until he lights on this other challenge, at first blush so strangely different, which calls on a man to raise himself from the dead—to will and to accomplish his own spiritual resurrection.

If the reader's interest were with theology, it would please him to note how completely this turn of the emphasis acquits Paul of the suspicion of fatalism which often attaches to his high doctrine of the sovereignty of Almighty God. Though he indeed believes God's power is indispensable for man's escape from the deadness of sin, Paul vigorously excludes the inference that man may be brought to newness of life without invoking his own will to ratify God's intent.

Reflections of this kind are little apt, however, to engage the thought of the average pew occupant at Easter worship. The force of this Ephesian text will reach the man in the pew on Easter morning only if he feels in it a moral imperative summoning from him a mighty motion of the will to be a different man.

A host of men will be in church Easter day for only the second or perhaps the first time in the whole of a long year. They will be there because they wish to pay respect to the institution of religion and wish to escape being classified as enemies of the church. But they themselves must be conscious that it is but an impatient respect of which they thus give evidence

—a respect which stops far short of personal enlistment with anything that the church sets forward to be done.

To the man who attends church on Easter only—or simply at Easter and Christmas—it should strike home sharply that Paul's bugle, sounding, "Arise from the dead," means him. If he cannot conceive himself actually dead in trespasses and sins, he has to admit that at all events toward the cause of Christ in the world he is completely dead in indifference and inertia. For the progress and vital success of Christianity he is worth exactly as much as a buried man—a pulseless corpse.

This, to be sure, is not a pleasant picture to be put before a complacent man of the world, used to thinking of himself as intensely alive.

But if the man considers the probable view that heaven gets of his jovial pleasures and his self-serving accumulation of money, he is bound in candor to confess that the picture which rates him dead and in the cemetery is more than apt to represent how he looks to God, viewing him from overhead.

For God certainly cares most to see men realize that they are rightfully his sons and ought therefore to live life as befits his sons—ought especially to be helping his great Divine Son to bring mankind to feel and prize that supreme human dignity.

But this man who goes to church only once a year—how dares he say he is alive to God's purpose—awake to God's desire?

In church on Easter morning then this is the call that sounds through the sanctuary: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead."

Quite likely the Bible lesson from the pulpit will be about Lazarus—how an omnipotent Voice pierced the depths of his sepulchre, crying, "Lazarus, come forth." And the narrative goes on with convincing simplicity: "He that was dead came forth."

What absurdity it would be if the narrative said: "He that was dead rolled over and went to sleep for another year—till the next Easter!"

Do you thus choose another year in the cemetery?

The First Easter Sermon

BY MARION HARLAND

EVEN careful students of the New Testament are inclined to treat what we speak and read of as "The Walk to Emmaus" rather as a holy pastoral than as the most important incident of the first Easter. We talk sentimentally of the quiet stroll in the afternoon along the country road, of the Master and the two humble disciples whom he comforted by such loving counsels as made their "hearts burn within" them while as yet their "eyes were holden that they should not know him." Matthew and John make no mention of the third appearance. John Mark, with reportorial conciseness, sums up the story in two verses: "After that, he appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue. Neither believed they them."

The devout and scholarly Luke devotes half of the last chapter of what, in prefacing the Acts of the Apostles, he modestly calls a "treatise," to the story of the first Easter sermon ever preached to mankind. We are all familiar with it, although we may never have taken to heart the full richness of the lessons it conveys.

Preached to Common Jewish Peasants

The two disciples who set out that afternoon to walk the seven miles from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus were not then, or ever to be, apostles; nor yet were they of the seventy sent forth to preach and to heal under the Master's commission. They were common Jewish peasants and humble believers in the teachings of the young Prophet of Nazareth. Luke names only one of the pair, trudging wearily under the weight that had crushed hope and faith upon "earth's saddest day." Their mien betrayed the spirit's heaviness, for the first remark of the stranger who "drew near and went with them" had to do with their evident dejection: "What manner of communications are these that ye have, one to another, as ye walk and are sad?"

They had the mien of beaten men and of those who sorrow without hope.

"One of them whose name was Cleopas" replied with an expression of surprise that the inquirer had not heard of the public execution and the strange incidents attending it which had been talked of in Jerusalem for the last three days. In specifying "what things" had moved the city, the bitterness wells forth from the heart of the disappointed believer in Jesus of Nazareth, "a prophet, mighty in deed and word": "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel!"

Wayfarer Expounded All the Prophets

Our marginal reference sends us for information of Cleopas to John's list of the women who stood by the cross. The wife of the Cleopas there named was the sister of the mother of the crucified Prophet. We are loth to identify Mary's brother-in-law with him who alludes slightly to "certain women" who "made us astonished" by talk of a "vision of angels" on guard at the empty tomb, "which said that he was alive." If the speaker were the same Cleopas, one of the discredited women was his wife.

The first Easter sermon followed the pessimistic lament of Cleopas. We have the text: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?"

There upon that country road, with no human auditors save a couple of unlearned, disheartened peasants—"Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

It is well to dwell reverently and thoughtfully upon the full significance of what sermon-makers would call "the analysis" of that open air sermon. Learned men, versed in the scriptures, are disputing to this day over what in the canon of Holy Writ are "Messianic" psalms and prophecies.

And by the time the little village of Emmaus came into view, Cleopas and his unnamed and silent companion knew it all!

We have not room for the rest of the

marvelous narrative of the third appearance. I write this paper with a heart full of the fervent desire to open other minds and hearts to the Easter message this episode in the life of our risen Lord bears to the discouraged and sorrowing disciples of this day and hour. Let us ponder it together for a little while.

The warfaring Preacher spoke of Christ's "glory." To the dulllest imaginations the word in this connection brings thoughts of a psalm to which he may have referred in summing up "all things": "Lift up your heart, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in!"

Postpones Reunion to Instruct Travelers

It requires no stretch of fancy to see the everlasting doors, trembling upon their hinges under the impatient hold of warders who knew that ascension must follow resurrection. We find ourselves wondering if our Lord were not homesick for the heaven he had left thirty years ago to suffer and die for sinning man. Yet we see him still wearing the form of mortal man and postponing the Galilee reunion of the "own he had loved to the end," that he might give the latter part of the first Easter day to two nameless peasants whose belief in him had wavered under the scenes of that fatal Friday! The beloved John and the repentant Peter—who had run, side by side, to the tomb to see for themselves if the "certain women's" story were true—might wait a few hours longer to embrace his knees and to feel the touch of the pierced hands upon their heads. He had a mission to these lowly and obscure followers, and his loving heart was "straitened until it was accomplished."

Throughout the ages the lesson of that wayside walk and talk is as true and tender as on that "gladdest day." Commonplace people, lightly esteemed by the world and the church; souls bowed down with an overwhelming consciousness of defeat and failure; the "weak brother," crying out with tears: "Lord! I believe! help thou mine unbelief!" all who walk in darkness and have no light; the perplexed and despairing everywhere and always—may drink of this brook by the way and lift bowed heads and hearts. "The Lord thinketh upon them." The promise is "ordered in all things and sure," for "Jesus himself drew near and went with them."

On Christmas Night

Reflections of an officer in France, son of a Presbyterian pastor.

TODAY I have been reading Browning and "Meeting the Master." Too, I've been thinking of what Christmas means or ought to mean. I think of this day as the anniversary of him who introduced to man's daily life the rule of love. God so loved the world that he gave—giving the results of love. How glorious, how noble love is; how unhappy in its effect is its imitation. The men here reflect, in their lives, the presence of love, or its absence, in their home training.

The life here has helped me immensely: I am learning to catch another's viewpoint. Above all it has strengthened my faith in the teachings of Jesus. Sometimes I dimly realize how far away you are, the dangers of war and the existence of another country where war does not exist. But not often, for one would become blue and despondent. I think of this as a temporary absence, a temporary period of service overseas.

Come what may, Uncle Sam is going to look out pretty well for his boys with the aid of the Red Cross and the Red Triangle. Both of these are doing a great work, but I think the Red Cross rouses the greatest devotion of the men, for Red Cross workers are mostly women, and it is the woman mind and heart which most readily grasps the situation and sympathizes.

Draw a Picture of It?

A political officeholder on the eve of conviction and deposition for wrongdoing defied his assailants.

"I'm up a tree," he declared, "but my back is to the wall, and I'll die in the last ditch, going down with flags flying, and from the mountaintop of democracy hurling defiance at the foe on the wings of triumph, regardless of the party lash that barks at my heels."

"Dar ain' much encouragement," said Uncle Eben, "in forgivin' an enemy who starts sumpin' else every time you forgive 'im."—*Washington Star*:

