

list of tomfooleries might be indefinitely extended. After mid-day the fooling was supposed to cease, which is the meaning attached to this couplet:

"April noddy's past and gone,
An' thou's a noddy for thinkin' on."

In France, as all the world knows, the April fool is termed poisson d'avril. Here again super-ingenious explanations are offered, as for instance that the sun quits the sign of the Fish in the Zodiac, or that fish are more easily caught in April when they are young and inexperienced! The real poisson d'avril is the mackerel, hence possibly the phrase, "You silly mackerel." Some quaint superstitions were associated with the day. There was a popular belief that it was unlucky; even the most daring scoffers at the uncanny drew the line at being married on such an occasion as All Fools' Day. Ladies who possessed sapphires were enjoined to wear them as a talisman to keep away evil spirits. These were specially to be feared on the first Monday in April because, according to a very old tradition, that was the day on which Cain was born and on which he slew his brother Abel.

So much for the ancient mummeries for which we have little use in this age; there remains the vacant chair—to whom shall it be given? There are no applications at present; for one reason, the associations scarcely serve to advertise the vacancy. But they will fade, nay they are already passing into limbo, leaving not a wrack behind. Is it too much to hope that the First of April will yet stand for something that is worth while in the national life?

The question has been mooted whether it would be a suitable date for a children's festival and in that connection the association with Childermas is of particular interest, for what is now proposed is the revival of the ancient name and such of the observances as are in accord with modern ideas, but especially to make it a national holiday for all children. As a matter of fact the ancient Childermas has not entirely vanished even yet; something of it survives in Germany to this day. The children have permission to do pretty much as they like and one of the games consists in racing through every house in the neighborhood, all doors being open to them for the occasion. To shut a door against them is regarded as in a special degree unlucky.

The proposal for a new Childermas is of interest to a great number of societies in all parts of the Empire who are engaged in the work of promoting child welfare. Its realization is the ambition of all who approve the idea and it is certainly a fascinating one. The First of April is perhaps, as good a date as could be found for what would be essentially a spring carnival, which if once started would probably develop into a vastly bigger affair than its mediaeval namesake. There are, of course, other suggestions for filling the bill, but none that appeals to the imagination like this one. The High Commissioner for Australia, Sir Joseph Cook, told a London audience the other day that the units of the Empire want to be linked together, not only by the great network of trade and commerce, but by the common tie of the family to which all belong. That is the tie that would be drawn closer by a new Childermas.

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THE PEDDLER

"What's in your pack, good peddler?" questioned I;
"It bulges out on this side and on that;"

I rose and left the housedoor where I sat
And stopped the peddler on the road nearby.

He said, "It holds ten yards of clear blue sky,

"A cosset-lamb, five kittens and a cat,

"And, as you see, I can't pack such things flat,

"So it rounds out, no matter how I try."

I looked the peddler sternly up and down,

He smiled at me and finished his reply.

He'd barter them for tears in "Tiny Town."

That's what he said. He did not mention why.

I said I wanted print for a new gown;

But he was gone, the babies' tears to buy.

—Annie Margaret Pike

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