

National Capitol a pretty local custom which would never be restored. I have been tempted to write to Mrs. Harrison and ask her to instruct the watchmen to put rude and disturbing children out of the park on that day. Men are spending lots of money to preserve antiquities. Why not give a little attention to the conservation of antique folk customs?

Do you ask how such a queer custom arose in Washington?

I am not inquiring about egg myths, mundane eggs, ovolas in Greek architecture, cosmic eggs, solar eggs, and such matters. These questions would take us many miles from Washington and many centuries back from this blessed Easter Day 1891. But here is a funny custom, confined within very narrow limits, and practiced, so far as we know, in no other part of America. Perhaps my young readers will indulge me in a bit of antiquarian research.

The vicinity of Washington was settled by North England and Scotch people. One of them, named Pope, owned the very hill on which the Capitol stands and where I have gone egg-rolling many a time. He called his hill Rome, and the little stream that issued therefrom Tiber, although it would not fill a two inch pipe. Himself he called the Pope of Rome. At the other end of the town lived Davy Burns, who owned the land on which stands the White House, the Patent Office and the Post Office. Just south of the President's grounds is yet standing the Burn's cottage, a mute witness of Easter happiness for more than a hundred years.

I think I may safely say that the egg-rolling, now confined to the President's grounds, was formerly practised on Easter Monday everywhere in the vicinity of Washington, since this district was settled by Scotch and North England people. In Bohns' antiquarian library, printed in 1883, you will find Brand's *Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*. In this work it is stated that in the North of England, in Cumberland and Westmoreland, the boys were accustomed to beg on Easter Eve for eggs, which they called Paste Eggs. Of course Paste is a corruption of Pasque or Pascua, referring to the Paschal Lamb or Easter Festival. These eggs were boiled hard and dyed with various colours, and the boys played with them in the fields, rolling them like bowls, and tossing them like balls. Mr. Gordon Cumming told us long ago in *Scribners* of a place called Bannock Brae, at Grantown, in Scotland, where from time immemorial the young folks of Strathspey have assembled on May mornings to roll their bannocks or barley cakes as solid as hard tack and their hard-boiled eggs.

And, if you wish to carry the matter back still further, all over Druidical Europe the favourite mode of divination was by rolling some object down a hill side, generally a circle or a wheel of burning wood.

It would be easy to pursue this subject further, inquiring into the origin of the Easter Egg, the story of rabbits laying eggs, of the goddess Oastera after whom the day is named, of dyeing eggs to represent the beauties of Spring when the great sun-egg comes rolling down the sky from the far off south land, but the matter would fill a book.

I only show you how Washington children came by the pretty custom which is altogether their own.

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In reading this account of the charming custom among our friends across the border our teeth are tempted to water at the thought of it. How our little young Canadians would frolic and scamper over our hills and meadows. How the birds and drowsy flies would wake up at the sound of the merry feet. And

how our big men would rejoice to know that we were having a festival like this to draw us together. All over the Provinces we could meet at the Residences of the Governors, at Rideau Hall in Ottawa and in the Capitals of each Province, and shew to the old folks and to each other just how much we loved each other and just how much we would stand up for each other. Children that roll eggs together are not likely to grow up unknown to one another. Let us have it. Let us go direct to our fathers and mothers, to our Members of Parliament and let us not leave them till we have our young people recognized in the country as the important factor they are. Who will take it up in the present Parliament? In a week or two we shall see, and we shall week by week keep our young readers posted up in all about it. We shall see if some old gentleman will earn for himself the gratitude of a million children.

ED. Y. C.

THE YOUNG CANADIAN makes no apology for the following poem by one of our young readers. Already one of our aims is being realized in most unexpected quarters: --

THE MESSENGER FROM THE BATTLE-FIELD.

She rose up in the early dawn,
And white and silently she moved
About the house. Four men had gone
To battle for the land they loved.

And she, the mother and the wife,
Waited for tidings of the strife.
How still the house seemed! and her tread
Sounded like the footsteps of the dead.

The long day passed. The dark night came.
She had not seen a human face.
Some voice spoke suddenly her name.
How loud it sounded in that place!
Where day on day no sound was heard
But her own footsteps. "Bring you word?"
She cried, to whom she could not see--
"Word from the battle-plain to me."

A soldier entered at the door
And stood within the dim fire-light;
"I bring you tidings of the four,"
He said, "who left you for the fight."
"God bless you, friend," she cried, "speak on,
For I can bear it." "One is gone!"
Ay! one is gone," he said. "Which one?"
"Dear lady, he, your eldest son."

A deathly pallor shot across
Her withered face. She did not weep.
She said--"It is a grievous loss;
But God give His beloved sleep.
What of the living--of the three--
And when can they come back to me?"
The soldier turned away his head.
"Lady, your husband, too, is dead."