

EGG ROLLING on the White House Lawn.



EASTER Monday in Washington is an event in the lives of the children which is ahead of any other day in the year excepting Christmas and Fourth of July.

Why? Because Easter Monday means egg-rolling. For many years the little ones of Washington have congregated by hundreds of thousands to roll eggs Easter Monday in the beautiful grounds surrounding the home of the President of the nation. There is no sign to keep off the grass and there are no restrictions. The children own the place. The green grass of the White House lawns is covered with children, children innumerable, rolling eggs on the grassy slopes.

If the day is pleasant it is a sight to be remembered. The children have been looking forward to the festival for days and weeks and great has been their anticipation. But genuine is the sorrow and many the tears among the little ones if Easter Sunday should be cold and rainy with promise of a bad Monday. Yet no weather has ever been so bad as to keep every one away from the White House grounds on egg-rolling day. There are many hardy little spirits who will not be daunted by snow or cold or rain when it comes to rolling eggs.

But if the day is pleasant and the air balmy and the turf warm and green, what a time the children have. Such games as they invent to be played with their eggs—games of infinite variation and containing infinite amusement. The grounds look more like a juvenile fair than anything else—an egg fair and the biddy hens around Washington must needs have been very diligent for many days before. If the day is fair, too, the glorious Marine Band, the finest band in the country, plays sweet music and the children dance and gam-bol to its strains. Truly it is children's day in Washington.

By 9 o'clock in the morning the grounds are actually taken possession of by the youngsters, little kids with wicker baskets and vari-colored eggs, wonderful eggs of green and blue and red and purple and gold and then eggs of lovely combination, and with beautiful figures, such as would make a wise hen cock her head on one side and wonder greatly what had happened to her plain white eggs.

All sorts and conditions of children find their way to the President's grounds to enjoy an Easter Monday. Some of the children are beautifully dressed in silks and laces and have French nurses to watch over them and carry their eggs for them, while other little ones are dressed in very shabby garments with elbows out and toes peeping from their little shoes. They perhaps have only three or four plainly colored eggs boiled in a piece of purple

or red calico. No French nurses accompany them, carrying eggs with gilt pictures, but they can roll their eggs and themselves on the green grass and soil their frocks and trousers to their hearts' content and they will enjoy the holiday as much as their more fortunate companions. Usually the mothers of these little men and women come with them, tired-faced women, perhaps, looking as though it had been many a long day since they had enjoyed such a time. Here and there are little groups of mothers and older sisters, talking together pleasantly, but keeping watchful eyes to see that the little ones do not get lost in the crowd or stray too far away.

It is a good-natured crowd. The big policemen standing around possess no terror for the little ones on egg-rolling day. They know that all big policemen are for an Easter is to keep big people from interfering with little ones who are rolling eggs. And when the little people get lost now and then the big policemen are there to take them in charge and tell them not to cry until their mothers or sisters find them again. And there are great rivalry among the children. Some of them are regular little gamblers. One little fellow gets hold of a very hard egg and he goes around pecking eggs with his acquaintances or acquaintances he finds and wins their eggs from them until finally he strikes some other little fellow who has a harder egg than his, and then he loses a lot of eggs.

And some of the little rascals gamble on what is a sure thing, with a china egg, sized and painted to resemble a genuine egg, or with a hen's egg run full of plaster of paris they will go around, and, of course, win all the eggs they contest for, until some sharp fellow finds out the game they are playing. As the day advances and the children get hungry the peanut man and the popcorn man and the candy man at the gates do a thriving business, while at noon many are the little groups under the trees, sitting around on blankets and shawls and eating lunches, for they are making a regular picnic of it and staying all day.

President Harrison's two grandchildren witnessed, with great enjoyment, the egg-rolling, from the porch of the White House facing toward the Washington monument and looking past and across the Potomac to Arlington, the former home of General Lee, but where now are spread the silent tents of a vast host of the Union army who have passed across the great beyond.

President Cleveland's two little girls, Ruth and Esther, were real little democrats. They took their own eggs and went out among the crowd of happy children, and they rolled eggs with the other children, as common clay as their associates, not the children of the President of the United States, but the children of an American citizen. Perhaps a little extra watch was kept over them, but they didn't know it and they thought that Easter Monday was the happiest day of their little lives.

There was a time, however, when the children of Washington did not roll eggs in the President's grounds. Not that they did not roll eggs, though. Oh no! They have always rolled eggs on Easter Monday. But they used to roll them in the Capitol grounds, down the steep terrace which was on the west front of the Capitol. Then there came

a time when the Capitol grounds were matted and a big flight of steps were built where the terrace used to be, and somebody objected to the children romping on the smooth grass of the big sward and rolling their eggs.

General Hayes was President then, and he heard of it, and how disappointed the children were because they had no place to roll their eggs that year, and he said: "Why let them roll their eggs on the White House grounds and enjoy themselves." And thus it has been ever since, from year to year.

Easter service in Washington calls to the minds of some of the oldest inhabitants, the Easter Sundays before the war when Sunday service was held in the National Hall of Congress.

The Rev. W. H. Milburn, the blind chaplain of the United States Senate, remembers the time well, for he has himself preached in that hall on Easter Sunday. Dr. Milburn's service in the Government dates back, perhaps, farther than that of any man now occupying a public position. Before John Sherman, now the venerable Secretary of State, came to Congress; before old Senator Morrill, once a leader in that body, but now bent and feeble, and before hosts of others who have grown gray in the Government harness, entered upon their first official duties. Doctor Milburn opened the Senate each morning with his prayer of thanks to God and his plea for almighty protection and guidance in the conduct of the affairs of the nation.

Fifty-two years ago it was when he made his first prayer on such an occasion. That was when the Capitol building presented a far different appearance from the Capitol of to-day. That was before the massive wings of white marble were added and when the Senate met in the room now occupied by the Supreme Court, and the House of Representatives in the Statuary Hall—the old Hall of Representatives where Easter service was celebrated.

There were two chaplains, just as now, one for the Senate and one for the House, but they exchanged duties, so that each bore the burden, at different times, the services of each chaplain. Then, too, in those old days the curious custom prevailed of keeping the Senate clock ten minutes ahead of the House clock, thereby enabling one chaplain to open both houses of Congress, first officiating at the House and then going to the Senate and making its opening prayer. Thus one chaplain could take a long vacation, and returning, allow his colleague a like privilege.

"Yes, there have been great changes in the nation," said Doctor Milburn, shaking me by the hand and looking directly at me with his sightless eyes, "great changes since the time when I first officiated as chaplain of the Senate of the United States. In those days, each Sunday in the Hall of Representatives, one of the chaplains held regular Christian service and no

minister preached to more distinguished congregations. Senators, members, heads of departments and even Presidents were frequent or regular attendants. Many a noted public man was found in his seat on Sunday morning as promptly and regularly as during the remaining six days of the week.

I well remember that John Quincy Adams was always present. Great and distinguished and attentive were the congregations. This custom, however, of holding Sunday service in the Capitol was discontinued during the War of the Rebellion. The new wings of the Capitol were completed at this time and the Senate and the House moved into their elegant and commodious quarters, and with the move the custom of Sunday service died.

"I well remember, too, my first Easter service in the Capitol—over half a century ago; and a half century such as the world has never before seen; a half century in which the nation has made greater progress in many ways than all the rest of her life. Let us hope the most of it has been for the good of the world and Christianity.

"You wish me to say something about Easter. Well, there is much we know about it and much we do not. The subject and the various customs connected with it are involved in so many ancient traditions and legends that much Easter lore approaches very near to the domain of mythology and fairy tales. There are several events which are celebrated by the people of different lands at about the same time, and observances have become somewhat mixed.

"Easter Sunday, commemorative of the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb, is in many respects the most important as it is the most beautiful of the festivals of the Christian church. You will see by a prayer-book that Easter is always celebrated on the first Sunday following the full moon which happens next after March 21. If the full moon occurs on Sunday, Easter is the following Sunday. The manner of thus fixing the time for the celebration was only settled after a long controversy in the early centuries, which caused great feeling.

"The celebration of the feast of the Passover and that of Easter have been practically merged into one. It is only a coincidence that the Jewish Passover festival and the Christian Easter fall on or about the same date. In the French 'Paques,' the Italian 'Pasqua' and the Spanish 'Pasena,' all meaning 'Easter,' we have an unbroken lineage to the Hebrew 'Pesach,' or 'Passover.' We have the historical fact that Christ was crucified at the feast of the Passover, A. D. 32.

"Now came the first trouble in the observance of anniversaries. The first generation of Christians, having been members of the Jewish church, nat-

urally continued to observe the Jewish festival, although it now contained a new meaning for them, and they made it commemorate in actual event rather than a shadow or promise. In this somewhat changed and modified perpetuation of the Jewish Pesach, or Passover, Easter was then called the Paschal Feast. The death and resurrection of Christ were, of course, settled points, but the date upon which the event was to be observed was not finally fixed without a long and bitter struggle. The Jewish Christians thought that the observance of Easter should be immediately following the anniversary of the exact date of the Passover, without regard to the date of the week or month. The Gentiles, however, knew that Christ had risen on Sunday, and they held that, therefore, Sunday should be celebrated as the resurrection festival, without regard to the date of the month. The church of Rome, in 147 A. D., decided in favor of holding the observance on Sunday.

"But there still remained the more difficult question as to what particular Sunday should be celebrated, and this point was not settled for several hundred years. Easter is not a fixed festival like Christmas. Sometimes it comes in April and sometimes in March, depending on the date of the full moon following the vernal equinox. It was necessary in addition to securing its general observance by all churches, to have its time exactly obtainable, as upon its occurrence depends all the movable church feast and fast days through the year. The nine Sundays previous and the eight Sundays following Easter are all dependent upon it.

"Like many other questions of creed and religion which were finally fixed and about which we do not now have to bother, it was the cause of great trouble and bitterness of feeling in the early centuries. I may not perhaps be very generally known that there are millions of people in Eastern Europe and Asia and Africa who are devout Christians—as devout as any in the world, but who do not agree with the Roman and Protestant Christians upon a point of creed which, though a comparatively minor consideration, separates them almost as widely as are Christians from pagans.

"These people of whom I speak include the followers of the Greek Church, or the Eastern Church. In the early centuries, when the center of Christianity was first at Jerusalem, and after the destruction of that city, at Alexandria, Egypt, there was but one Christian church. Later, however, a discussion arose as to the power of the Son of God. One faction contended that the Son and Father had equal power; the other that the Father was all-powerful. Over these two contentions ultimately arose strife and struggles and finally great wars.

GUY E. MITCHELL.

