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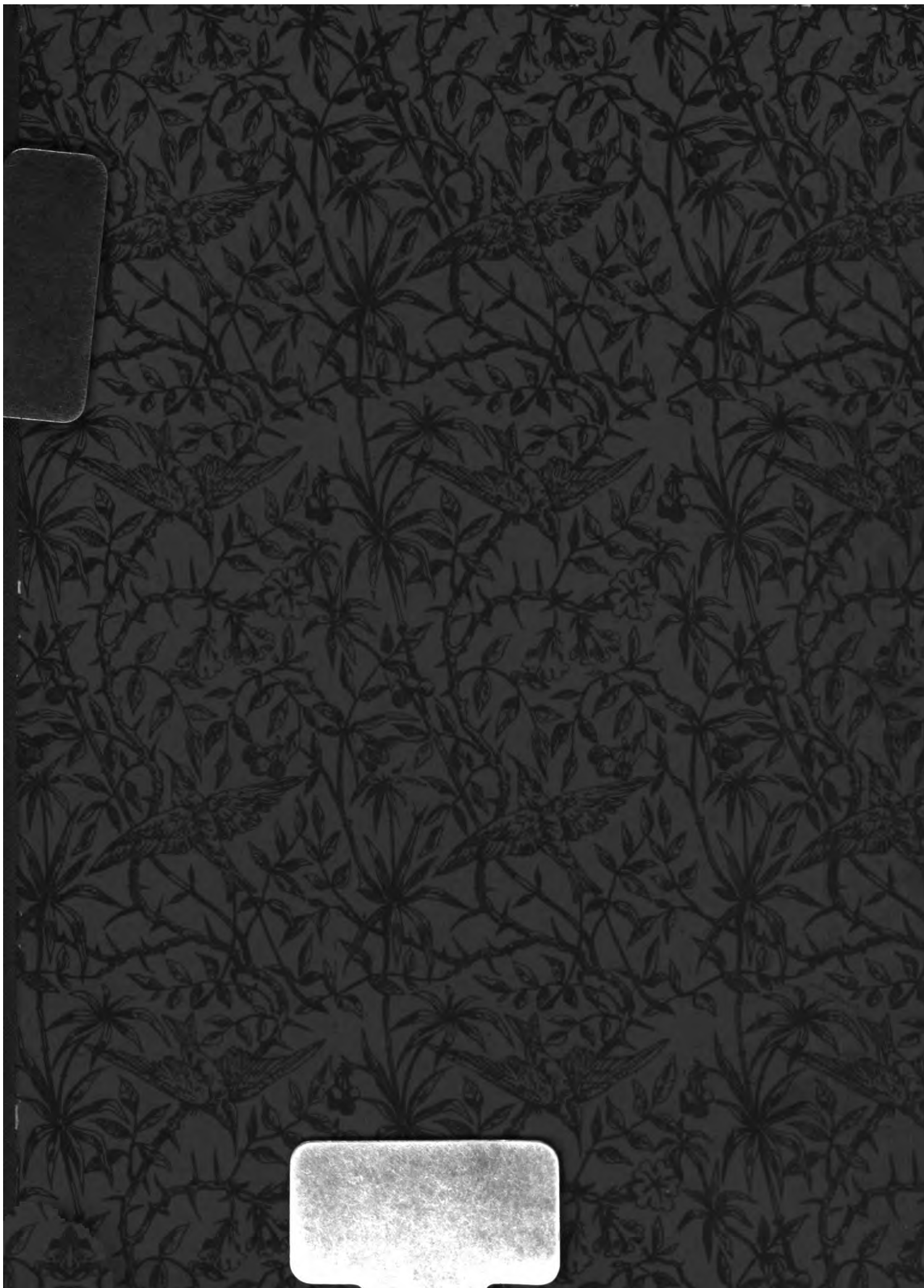
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ALL ROUND
THE
YEAR

A MONTHLY GARLAND

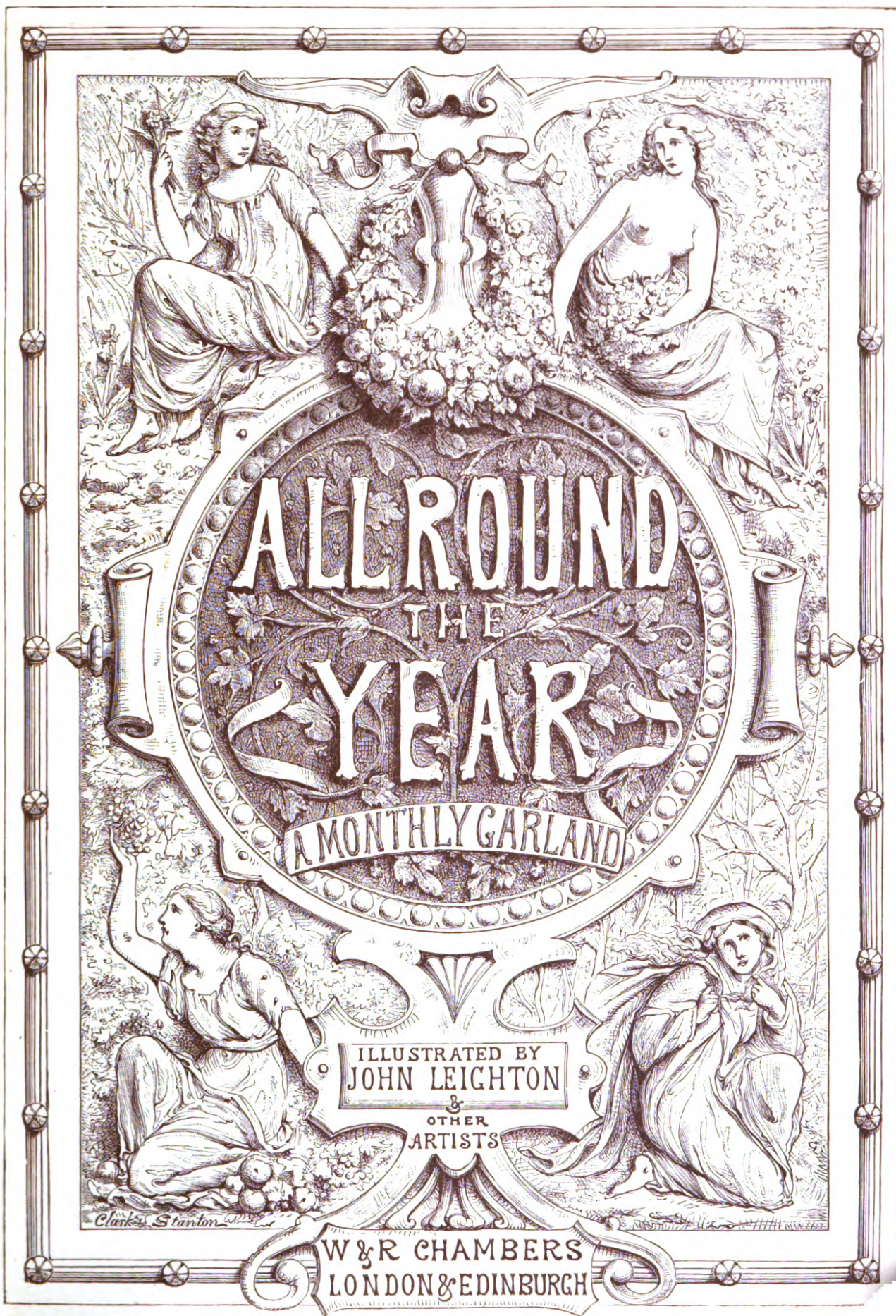








ALL
ROUND THE YEAR



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A MONTHLY GARLAND

ILLUSTRATED BY
JOHN LEIGHTON
&
OTHER
ARTISTS

Clankin Stanton

W & R CHAMBERS
LONDON & EDINBURGH

ALL
ROUND THE YEAR

A MONTHLY GARLAND BY

THOMAS MILLER

AUTHOR OF 'ENGLISH COUNTRY LIFE,' ETC.

And Key to the Calendar

WITH TWELVE ALLEGORICAL DESIGNS

By JOHN LEIGHTON, F.S.A.

AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS



W. & R. CHAMBERS
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

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Preface.



THE fresh and natural descriptions of the varied aspects of rural life which formed the introduction to the twelve months of the year in the *Book of Days*, are here gathered into one volume, and in their new setting it is hoped they may prove as acceptable as when they first appeared. These descriptions of the months are from the pen of the late THOMAS MILLER, who, in his own department, was perhaps as successful in giving accurate pictures of English rural life, as have been Miss Mitford, the Howitts, or even our latest master in the art, Richard Jefferies. Taking the reader into his confidence, the author discourses pleasantly of the varied aspects of the country during the twelve months of the year, and in a series of charming sketches depicts the pleasure which such observations unfailingly impart to the seeing eye and understanding heart.

The *Key to the Calendar* is a reproduction from Chambers's *Information for the People*, and may prove useful as a guide to and explanation of the more remarkable days in the Calendar. The many illustrations scattered throughout the book will, it is hoped, help the text in guiding the eye and mind of the reader pleasantly and profitably ALL ROUND THE YEAR.



JOHN. LEIGHTON

JANUARY

— came old January, wrapped well
In many weeds to keep the cold away ;
Yet did he quake and quiver like to quell,
And blowe his nayles to warm them if he may ;
For they were numbed with holding all the day
An hatchet keene, with which he felled wood,
And from the trees did lop the needlesse spray ;
Upon an huge great Earth-pot Steane he stood,
From whose wide mouth there flowed forth the Romane flood.

SPENSER.



JANUARY is the open gate of the year, shut until the shortest day passed, but now open to let in the lengthening daylight, which will soon fall upon dim patches of pale green, that show where spring is still sleeping. Sometimes between the hoary pillars—when the winter is mild—a few wan snowdrops will peep out and catch the faint sunlight which streams in coldly

through the opening gateway, like timid messengers sent to see if spring has yet stirred from her long sleep. But it is yet too early for the hardy crocus to throw its banded gold along the pathway; and as for the 'rathe primrose,' it sits huddled up in its little cloak of green, or is seen peeping through its half-closed yellow eye, as if watching the snowflakes as they fall. Only the red-breasted robin—his heart filled with hope—sings his cheerful song on the naked hawthorn spray, through which the tiny buds are striving to break forth, like a herald proclaiming glad tidings, and making known, far and wide, that ere long 'the winter will be over and gone,' and the moonlight-coloured May-blossoms once again appear.

All around, as yet, the landscape is barren and dreary. In the early morning, the withered sedge by the water-courses is silvered over with hoary rime; and if you handle the frosted flag-rushes, they seem to cut like swords. Huddled up like balls of feathers, the fieldfares sit in the leafless hedges, as if they had no heart to breakfast off the few hard, black, withered berries which still dangle in the wintry wind. Amid the cold frozen turnips, the hungry sheep look up and bleat pitifully; and if the cry of an early lamb falls on your ear, it makes the heart sorrowful only to listen to it. You pass the village churchyard, and almost shiver to think that the very dead who lie there must be pierced by the cold, for there is not even a crimson hip or haw to give a look of warmth to the stark hedges, through which the bleak wind whistles.

Around the frozen pond the cattle assemble, lowing every now and then, as if impatient, and looking back-

ward for the coming of the herdsman to break the ice. Even the nose of cherry-cheeked Patty looks blue, as she issues from the snow-covered cow-shed with the smoking milk-pail on her head. There is no sound of the voices of village children in the winding lanes—nothing but the creaking of the old carrier's cart along the frost-bound road, and you pity the old wife who sits peeping out between the opening of the tilt, on her way to the neighbouring market-town. The very dog walks under the cart in silence, as if to avail himself of the little shelter it affords, instead of frisking and barking beside his master, as he does when 'the leaves are green and long.' There is a dull, leaden look about the sky, and you have no wish to climb the hill-top on which those gray clouds hang gloomily. You feel sorry for the poor donkey that stands hanging his head under the guide-post, and wish there were flies about to make him whisk his ears, and not leave him altogether motionless. The *Jolly Farmer* swings on his creaking sign before the roadside alehouse, like the bones of a murderer in his gibbet-irons; and instead of entering the house, you hurry past the closed door, resolved to warm yourself by walking quicker, for you think a glass of ale must be but cold drink on such a morning. The old hostler seems bent double through cold, as he stands with his hands in his pockets, and his pitchfork thrust into the smoking manure heap that litters the stable-yard.

A COUNTRY WALK—THE WOODMAN AND DITCHER.

A walk in the country on a fine frosty morning in January gives the blood a healthy circulation, and sets a man wondering why so many sit 'croodling' over the

fire at such a season. The trees, covered with hoar-frost, are beautiful to look upon, and the grass bending beneath its weight seems laden with crystal; while in the distance the hedges seem sheeted with May blossoms, so thickly, that you might fancy there was not room enough for a green leaf to peep out between the bloom. Sometimes a freezing shower comes down, and that is not quite so pleasant to be out in, for in a few moments everything around is covered with ice—the boughs seem as if cased in glass; the plumage of birds is stiffened by it, and they have to give their wings a brisk shaking before they are able to fly. As for a bunch of red holly-berries, could they but retain their icy covering, they would make the prettiest ornaments that could be placed on a mantel-piece.

This is the time of year to see the beautiful ramification of the trees, for the branches are no longer hidden by leaves, and all the interlacings and crossings of exquisite network are visible—those pencillings of the sprays which too few of our artists study. Looking nearer at the hedges, we already see the tiny buds forming, mere specks on the stem, that do but little more than raise the bark; yet by the aid of a glass we can uncoil the future leaves which summer weaves in her loom into broad green curtains. The snails are asleep; they have glued up the doorways of their movable habitations; and you may see a dozen of their houses fastened together if you probe among the dead leaves under the hedges with your walking-stick; while the worms have delved deep down into the earth, beyond the reach of the frost, and thither the mole has followed them, for he has not much choice of food in severe frosty weather. The woodman looks cold,

though he wears his thick hedging gloves, for at this season he clears the thick underwood, and weaves into hurdles the smooth hazel-wands, or any long limber twigs that form the low thicket beneath the trees. He knows where the primroses are peeping out, and can tell of little



bowery and sheltered hollows, where the wood-violets will ere long appear. The ditcher looks as thoughtful as a man digging his own grave, and takes no heed of the pretty robin that is piping its winter song on the withered gorse bushes with which he has just stopped up a gap in

the hedge. Poor fellow, it is hard work for him, for the ground rings like iron when he strikes it with his spade; yet you would rather be the ditcher than the old man you passed a while ago, sitting on a pad of straw and breaking stones by the wayside, looking as if his legs were frozen.

BIRD AND INSECT LIFE.



Head of Golden-
crested Wren.

That was the golden-crested wren which darted across the road, and though the very smallest of our British birds, it never leaves us, no matter how severe the winter may be, but may be seen among the fir-trees, or pecking about where the holly and ivy are still green. If there is a spring-head or watercourse unfrozen, there you are pretty sure to meet with the wagtail—the smallest of all our walking birds, for he marches along like a soldier, instead of jumping as if tied up in a sack, as most of our birds do when on the ground. Now the blue titmouse may be seen hanging by his claws, with his back downward, hunting for insects in some decaying bough, or peeping about the thatched eaves of the cottages and outhouses, where he will pull out the straw to stir up the insects that lie snug within the thatch. In the hollows of trees, caverns, old buildings, and dark out-of-the-way places, the bats hibernate, holding on by their claws, while asleep, head downwards, one over another, dozens together, there to await the coming of spring, along with the insects which will then come out of their hiding-places.

But unsightly as the bat appears to some eyes, there is no cleaner animal living in spite of all our poets have written against it; for it makes a brush of its droll-looking little head, which it pokes under its umbrella-like wings, not leaving a cranny unswept, and parts its hair as carefully as a ringleted beauty. As for the insects it feeds upon, they are now in a state of torpor; most of the butterflies and moths are dead; those summer beauties that used to sit like folded pea-blossoms swinging on the flowers, have secured their eggs from the cold, to be hatched when the primrose-coloured sky of spring throws its warm light over the landscape. None of our clever warehouse packers can do their work so neatly as these insects; for, after laying their eggs in beautiful and regular order, they fill up the interstices with a gum that hardens like glue, and protects them in the severest weather.

Those who wish for a good crop of fruit now hunt among the naked branches for these eggs, which are easily found through the dead leaves, to which they adhere; when these are destroyed, there is no fear of young grubs gnawing and piercing the bloom, nor can there be a better time to hunt for these destroyers of melting plums and juicy apples than in January. No doubt, the soft-billed birds that remain with us all the year round devour myriads of these eggs, and they serve to eke out the scanty subsistence these hardy choristers find strewn so sparingly in severe winters. How these birds manage to live through the killing frosts has long been a puzzle to our ablest naturalists, and after all their research, He alone knoweth without whose permission not a sparrow falls to the ground.

MOSSES.

There is no better time than during a walk in January to get a good view of the mosses that grow on and around the trees, for at this season they stand boldly out in all their beautiful colourings, falling on the eye in masses of rich red, silver-gray, umbered brown, and gaudy orange; while the yellow moss is almost as dazzling as sunshine, and the green the most beautiful that gladdens the earth. In some places we see it fitted together like exquisite mosaic work, in others it hangs down like graceful fringe, while the green looks like fairy trees springing from a cushion of yielding satin. The screw moss is very curiously formed; it grows plentifully on old walls, and looks like dark-green flossy velvet. Now, if closely examined, a number of slender stems will be found springing from this soft bed, crowned with what botanists call the fruit. On this is a cap, just like that found on the unblown and well-known *eschscholtzia*; when this extinguisher-shaped cap is thrown off (it may be lifted off), a beautiful tuft of twisted hairs will be found beneath, compressed at the neck, and forming just such a brush as one can imagine the fairies use to sweep out the pollen from the flowers. Place this beautiful moss in water, and this brush will uncoil itself, if left above the surface, and release the seed within.

Another of the scale mosses is equally curious, and if brought into a warm room, with a drop of water applied to the seed-vessel, it will burst open and throw out a little puff of dust; and this dust, when examined by a powerful glass, will be found to consist of links of little chains, not unlike the spring of a watch. But the most

beautiful of all is the 'siller' cup moss, the silvery cup of which is shaped like a nest—while the sporules inside look like eggs—such as a bird no larger than a gnat might build to breed in. This moss is commonly found on decayed wood. Sometimes, while hunting for curious mosses at the stems of aged trees, we have aroused the little dormouse from his wintery sleep, as he lay coiled up like a ball in his snug burrow, where his store of provision was hoarded; for, unlike the fabled ant, he does lay in a stock for this dark season, which the ant does not.

A WINTER LANDSCAPE.

Snow in the streets is very different from snow in the country, for there it no sooner falls than it begins to make more dirt, and is at once trampled into mud by a thousand passing feet on the pavement, while in the roadway the horses and vehicles work it into 'slush,' which only a brisk shower of rain can clear away. In the country, snow is really white; there is none of that gray dirty look about it which is seen in localities that neighbour upon town, but it lies on the fields, as Milton says, like

A wintry veil of maiden white.

The embankments look like stately terraces formed of the purest marble, and the hills in the distance are scarcely distinguishable from the fleecy clouds that crown their summits; while the wild open moors and hedgeless commons look like a sea of foam, whose waves were suddenly frozen into ridgy rest, the buried bushes only showing like loftier crests. Vehicles pass along the scarcely distinguishable road with a strange, dull, muffled

sound, like objects moving before the eye in a dream, so much do we miss the gritty and grinding noise which the wheels make in the dust of summer.

What a different aspect the landscape presents when viewed from some neighbouring eminence! But for a few prominent landmarks, we should hardly know it was the same scene that we looked upon in summer; where the hedges then stretched like green walls across the country, we see but whitened barriers; for the only dark object that now catches the eye is the river that goes rolling between its powdered banks. The appearance of the village, too, is altered; the picturesque thatched roofs of the cottages have vanished, and but for the smoke that curls above the scene, you might fancy that all the inhabitants had fled, for neither flocks nor herds are seen or heard bleating and lowing from the fields, and all out-of-door employment has ceased. You hear the ringing of the blacksmith's hammer, and as you return when the day darkens, will see the light of his forge fall with a crimson glare across the snow-covered road. Even the striking of the church clock falls upon the ear with a deadened sound, and the report of the sportsman's gun dies away as soon as heard, leaving no prolonged echo behind.

While watching the snow fall, you can almost fancy that the flakes are white blossoms shaken from a land of flowers that lies somewhere above the sky; those that touch the river are gone in an instant, while some, as they fall slantways, unite together before they touch the earth. Science has seized upon and pictured the fantastic shapes the falling snow-flakes assume, and they are 'beautiful exceedingly.' Not less so is frostwork, which

may be seen without stirring abroad on the window-panes; what a mingling of fern leaves and foliage of every shape, rare network and elfin embroidery, does this silent worker place before the eye, such as no pattern-drawer ever yet seized upon, although

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.—KEATS.

LIFE ON THE FARM.

The farmer must attend to his cattle during this 'dead season,' for they require feeding early and late; and it is his business to put all the meat he can on their backs, so that they may weigh heavy, and realise a good price in the market. For this purpose, he must be active in cutting swedes and mangel-wurzel. Without this care, the farmer cannot keep pace with his neighbours. He gets rid of his saleable stock as soon as he can; he says, he 'likes to see fresh faces in his fields.' It is a pleasant sight to see the well-fed, clean-looking cattle in the straw-yard, or sniffing about the great barn-doors, where the thresher is at work, waiting for the straw he will throw out. It is a marvel that the poultry escape from those great heavy hoofs; as for a gamecock, he will make a dash at the head of an ox, as if he cared not a straw for his horns; and as for sucking pigs, they are farrowed to be killed.

The teams are also now busy taking the farm produce to market, for this is the season when corn, hay, and straw realise a good price; and a wagon piled high with clean white turnips, or laden with greens or carrots, has a pleasant look moving through the wintry landscape, as it conjures up before the hungry pedestrian visions

of boiled beef and mutton, which a walk in frosty weather gives a hearty man a good appetite to enjoy. Manure can also be carted better to the fields during a frost than at any other time, for the ground is hard, and the wheels make but little impression on rough fallow lands. Let a thaw come, and few persons, unless they have lived in the country, can know the state the roads are in that lead to some of our out-of-the-way villages in the clayey districts. A foot-passenger, to get on at all, must scramble through some gap in the hedge, and make his way by trespassing on the fields. In the lane, the horses are knee-deep in mire every step they take; and as for the wain, it is nearly buried up to the axles in places where the water has lodged. In vain does the wagoner keep whipping or patting his strong well-fed horses, or clapping his broad shoulder to the miry wheels: all is of no avail; he must either go home for more horses, or bring half-a-dozen men from the farm to dig out his wagon. It is of no use grumbling, for perhaps his master is one of the surveyors of the highways.

THE GORSE—FLOWERS OF JANUARY.

The gorse, furze, whin, or 'fuzz'—country-people sometimes calling it by the last name—is often in flower all the year round, though the great golden-bellied baskets it hangs out in summer are now nearly closed, and of a pale yellowish green. Although its spikes are as sharp as spears, and there is no cutting out a golden branch without wearing thick gloves, still it is one of the most beautiful of our wayside shrubs, and we hardly wonder at Linnæus falling on his knees in admiration the first time he saw it. Many a time have we cut a branch in

January, put it in water, and placed it in a warm room, when in two or three days all its golden lamps have lighted up, and where it stood it seemed to 'make sunshine in the shady place.'

Where gorse grows abundantly, and bees have ready access to the bloom, there the finest-coloured and sweetest honey is produced. In a very mild season, we have seen, under sheltered hedges that face the south, the celandine in flower in January. Even when not in bloom, its large bright green leaves give a spring look to the barren embankments; but when out, its clear yellow star-shaped flowers catch the eye sooner than the primrose, through their deep golden hue. Country children call it the hedge buttercup, and their little hearts leap with delight when they see it springing up from among the dead leaves of winter. The common red or dead nettle may also occasionally be found in flower. Let those who would throw it aside as an unsightly weed, examine the bloom through a glass, and they will be amazed at its extreme loveliness; such ruby tints as it shows, imbedded in the softest bloom, never graced the rounded arm of beauty. The blue periwinkle is another beautiful flower that diadems the brow of January when the season is warm. It must be looked for in sheltered situations, for it is not at all a common wild-flower: once seen, it can never be mistaken, for the twisted bud before opening resembles the blue convolvulus. Nor must the common chickweed be overlooked, with its chaste white star-shaped flowers, which show as early as the snow-drops. The large broad-leaved mouse-ear chickweed flowers later, and will be sought for in vain in January, though it sheds its seed and flowers frequently six times

during the summer. Many other flowers we might name, though they are more likely to be found in bloom next month.

BIRD-HABITS.

Many rare birds visit us occasionally in winter, which never make their appearance on our island at any other season. Some are only seen once now and then in the course of several years, and how they find their way hither at all, so far from their natural haunts, is somewhat of a mystery. Many birds come late in the autumn, and take their departure early in spring. Others remain with us all the year round, as the thrush and blackbird, which often commence singing in January. Wrens, larks, and many other small birds never leave our country. Flocks of wild-geese and other water-fowl also visit our reedy marshes and sheltered lakes in winter; far up the sky, their wild cries may be heard in the silence of midnight, as they arrive. Rooks now return from the neighbouring woods, where they have mostly wintered, to their nest-trees; while the smaller birds which drew near to our habitation during the depth of winter, begin to disappear. Those that require insect food go and forage among the grass and bushes; others retreat to the sides of stagnant pools, where, during the brief intervals of sunshine, gnats are now found. Others hunt in old walls, or among decayed trees, where insects are hidden in a dormant state, or are snugly ensconced in their warm cocoons, awaiting the first warm touch of spring, when, in the words of Solomon, 'the flowers appear on the earth and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.'

Characteristics of January.

The deity Janus was represented by the Romans as a man with two faces, one looking backwards, the other forwards, implying that he stood between the old and the new year, with a regard to both. To this circumstance the English poet Cotton alludes in the following lines :

Hark, the cock crows, and yon bright star
Tells us, the day himself's not far ;
And see where, breaking from the night,
He gilds the western hills with light.
With him old Janus doth appear,
Peeping into the future year,
With such a look as seems to say,
The prospect is not good that way.
Thus do we rise ill sights to see,
And 'gainst ourselves to prophesy ;
When the prophetic fear of things
A more tormenting mischief brings,
More full of soul-tormenting gall
Than direst mischiefs can befall.
But stay ! but stay ! Methinks my sight,
Better informed by clearer light,
Discerns sereneness in that brow
That all contracted seemed but now.
His reversed face may show distaste,
And frown upon the ills are past ;
But that which this way looks is clear,
And smiles upon the new-born year.

In the quaint drawings which illuminate the Catholic missals in the middle ages, January is represented by

'the figure of a man clad in white, as the type of the snow usually on the ground at that season, and blowing on his fingers as descriptive of the cold; under his left arm he holds a billet of wood, and near him stands the figure of the sign Aquarius, into which watery emblem in the zodiac the sun enters on the 19th of this month.'—
BRADY.

January is notedly, in our northern hemisphere, the coldest month in the year. The country-people in England state the fact in their usual strong way :

Janiveer—
Freeze the pot upon the fier.

They even insist that the cold rather increases than decreases during the course of the month, notwithstanding the return of the sun from the Tropic of Capricorn, remarking :

As the day lengthens,
The cold strengthens;

or, as it is given in Germany, where the same idea prevails :

Wenn die Tage beginnen zu langen,
Dann komm erst der Winter gegangen —

the fact being, we suppose, that it only does so in some instances, while those of an opposite character pass unnoticed.

In the middle of the month, the sun at London is only 8 h. 20 m., at Edinburgh, 7 h. 34 m., above the horizon. There is a liability to severe and lasting frosts, and to heavy falls of snow. Vegetation lies dead, and it is usually 'sore times' for the animal creation; the farmer

has his bestial, including the sheep, if he keeps any, much upon his hands for artificial supplies. The birds of the field and wood, reduced to great extremities, come nearer to the residences of men, in the hope of picking up a little food. The robin is especially remarkable for this forced familiarity. In unusually severe seasons, many birds perish of cold and hunger, and consequently, when the spring comes on, there is a marked diminution of that burst of silvan song which usually makes the season so cheerful.

When frost occurs without a snow-fall—what is called in the north a *black frost*—the ground, wholly without protection, becomes hard for several inches deep. In Canada, it is sometimes frozen three feet down, so that any sort of building not founded considerably deeper, is sure to be dislodged at the next thaw. Even a macadamised road will be broken up and wholly ruined from this cause. In our country, and on the continent of Europe, a snowless frost gives the means of several amusements, which the rural people are enabled with good conscience to indulge in, as being thrown off from all more serious employments by the state of the ground.

Now in the Netherlands, and where the Rhine
Branched out in many a long canal, extends,
From every province swarming, void of care,
Batavia rushes forth; and as they sweep,
On sounding skates, a thousand different ways
In circling poise, swift as the winds along,
The then gay land is maddened all to joy.
Nor less the northern courts, wide o'er the snow,
Pour a new pomp. Eager, on rapid sleds,
Their vigorous youth in bold contention wheel
The long-resounding course. Meantime to raise

The manly strife, with highly blooming charms
 Flushed by the season, Scandinavia's dames,
 Or Russia's buxom daughters, glow around.

THOMSON.

In Holland, the peasantry, male and female, take advantage of the state of the waters to come to market on skates, often bearing most part of a hundredweight on their heads; yet proceeding at the rate of ten miles an hour for two or three hours at a stretch.

CURLING.

In England, skating is on such occasions a favourite amusement; nor do the boys fail to improve the time by forming slides on lake, on pond, yea, even on the public highways, notwithstanding the frowns of old gentlemen and threatenings of policemen. All of these amusements prevail during dry frost in Scotland, with one more, as yet little known in the south. It bears the name of *Curling*, and very much resembles bowls in its general arrangements, only with the speciality of flat stones to slide along the ice, instead of bowls to roll along the grass.

Two parties are ranged in contention against each other, each man provided with a pair of handled stones somewhat in the form of a cheese, and a broom, for sweeping the ice clean. They play against each other, to have as many stones as possible lying near a fixed point, or *tee*, at the end of the *rink*. When a player happens to impel his stone weakly, his associates sweep before it to favour its advance. A *skip*, or leader, stands at the *tee*, broom in hand, to guide the players of his party as to what they should attempt; whether to

try to get through a certain open channel amongst the cluster of stones guarding the tee, or perhaps to come smashing among them, in the hope of producing



Curlers.

rearrangements more favourable to his side. Incessant vociferation, frequent changes of fortune, the excitation of a healthy physical exercise, and the general feeling of sociality evoked, all contribute to render curling one of the most delightful of amusements. It is further remarkable that, in a small community, the curling rink is frequently surrounded by persons of all classes—the laird, the minister, and the provost being all hail-fellow-well-met on this occasion with the tailors, shoemakers, and weavers, who at other times never meet them without a reverent vailing of the beaver. Very often a plain dinner of boiled beef and ‘greens’ concludes the merry meeting.

PROVERBS REGARDING JANUARY.

If the grass grows in Janiveer,
It grows the worse for’t all the year.

A January spring
 Is worth naething.
 Under water, dearth ;
 Under snow, bread.
 March in Janiveer,
 January in March, I fear.
 If January calends be summerly gay,
 'T will be winterly weather till the calends of May.
 The blackest month in all the year
 Is the month of Janiveer.

Key to the Calendar.

JANUARY and February are said to have been added to the list of months by the second Roman king, Numa Pompilius, in the year before Christ 672. The name of the former month is unquestionably from Janus, the god of the year in the Roman mythology, to whom the first day was sacred, and in whose honour it was celebrated with riotous feastings and givings of presents. We learn from Ovid's *Fasti* that a Roman workman did not spend the Calends or 1st of January entirely in debauchery: he wrought a little at his trade, for the sake of good-luck throughout the year.

1. **Circumcision.**—A festival of the Romish Church, from about the year 487, and of the Church of England since 1550, in honour of the circumcision of Christ. The banks and public offices are shut on this day. As the first day of the year, it is celebrated throughout the modern Christian world with festive rejoicings, too often approaching or exceeding the bounds of propriety. In England, till a period not very remote, it was customary to usher in the year by drinking spiced liquor from

the *Wassail Bowl*, so called from the Anglo-Saxon *Waes-hael* (Be healthy), the toast used on the occasion. The custom, without the name, still exists in Scotland. It was also customary on this day to give and receive gifts, originally with the superstitious design of securing good-fortune for the year, and afterwards for affection and to promote good neighbourhood. Even the kings of England accepted presents from their courtiers on this morning. The 1st of January, under the name of *Le Jour de l'An*, continues in France to be distinguished by a universal system of present-giving. It has been calculated that sweetmeats to the value of £20,000 are sold in Paris on this day.

6. The **Epiphany**, a festival in honour of the manifestation of the infant Jesus to the three wise men of the East, who came to worship him. It began to be celebrated in 813. This continues to be observed as a festival in the English Church, and is marked by the shutting of many of the public offices. The popular name for the festival is *Twelfth-day*, with reference to its occurring twelve days after Christmas. Twelfth-day, and more particularly Twelfth-night, are distinguished by joyful observances. It is a tradition of the Romish Church that the three wise men were kings, and many sets of names have been furnished for them—Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar being the set best known; their remains were said to have been recovered in the fourth century by the Empress Helena, and the skulls are still shown, under circumstances of great pomp and ceremony, in the great church at Cologne. Perhaps it is owing to this idea of the regal rank of the wise men, that a custom has existed from early ages throughout Europe of choosing a person to act as king on Epiphany. In England, this custom has blossomed out a little. Both a king and queen were chosen. It was done by placing beans on a large cake. The cake was divided among the company, and whoever of the male sex got a bean was king; whoever of the female sex, queen. The twelfth-night cake continues to be eaten by merry companies, and the characters of

king, queen, &c. being drawn in that manner, are supported amidst much jocularly till midnight.

Shakspeare has shown the respect in which the observances of Twelfth-night were held in the Elizabethan age, by applying it as a title to one of his most delightful dramas, although he does not appear to have introduced any of the festivities peculiarly appropriate to that season, with the exception, perhaps, of the gross orgies of Sir Toby Belch and his boon-companions.

The day after Twelfth-day was a popular rustic festival, under the mock-name of *St Distaff's* or *Rock Day*. (Rock is the appellation given to a quantity of lint put upon a distaff.) It seems to have been a sort of farewell to the festivities of Christmas.

18. **Septuagesima Sunday.***—Quadragesima is an ancient name of Lent, as meaning the forty days' fast. The first Sunday in Lent hence received the name of Quadragesima. Early in the seventh century, Pope Gregory appointed three Sundays of preparation for Lent, and assuming a decimal reckoning for convenience, they were respectively called, reckoning backwards, Quinquagesima, Sexagesima, and Septuagesima.

21. **St Agnes's Day**, a festival of the Church of Rome. The annals of canonisation present no image of greater sweet-

* It is necessary here to mention that the Movable Feasts and Holidays of the Church are nearly all regulated by Easter—that is, so long before or after Easter. Easter, the great festival of the Church, is itself movable. According to canonical regulations, Easter-day is always the first Sunday after the full moon, which happens upon, or next after, the 21st day of March; and if the full moon happens upon a Sunday, Easter Sunday is the Sunday after. The first of these movable feasts is Septuagesima Sunday, which occurs on 18th January, when Easter Sunday is on 22d March. In this place we propose setting down the movable feasts on the earliest days on which they ever occur; and Septuagesima Sunday is therefore put under 18th January. All the rest will follow in order, as in the calendar for a year on which they occur on the earliest possible day.

ness and purity than St Agnes. She is described as a very young and spotless maid, who suffered martyrdom in the tenth persecution under Diocletian, in the year 305. A few days after her death, her parents, going to make the offerings of affection at her tomb, beheld a vision of angels, amidst which stood their daughter, with a snow-white lamb by her side. She is therefore usually represented with a lamb standing beside her. Perhaps this legend has been partly founded on the resemblance of the name Agnes to *Agnus*, Latin for a *lamb*, for mere coincidences of sound often led to very important ideas in the middle ages. At Rome, on St Agnes's Day, during mass, and while the Agnus is saying, two lambs as white as snow, and covered with finery, are brought in and laid upon the altar. Their fleeces are afterwards shorn and converted into palls, which are highly valued.

Throughout the Christian world, and in England as much as elsewhere, it was customary for young women on St Agnes's Eve to endeavour to divine who should be their husbands. This was called *fasting St Agnes's Fast*. The proper rite was to take a row of pins, and pull them out one after another, saying a Pater-noster, and sticking one pin in the sleeve. Then going to rest without food, their dreams were expected to present to them the image of the future husband. In Keats's poem entitled *The Eve of St Agnes*, the custom is thus alluded to :

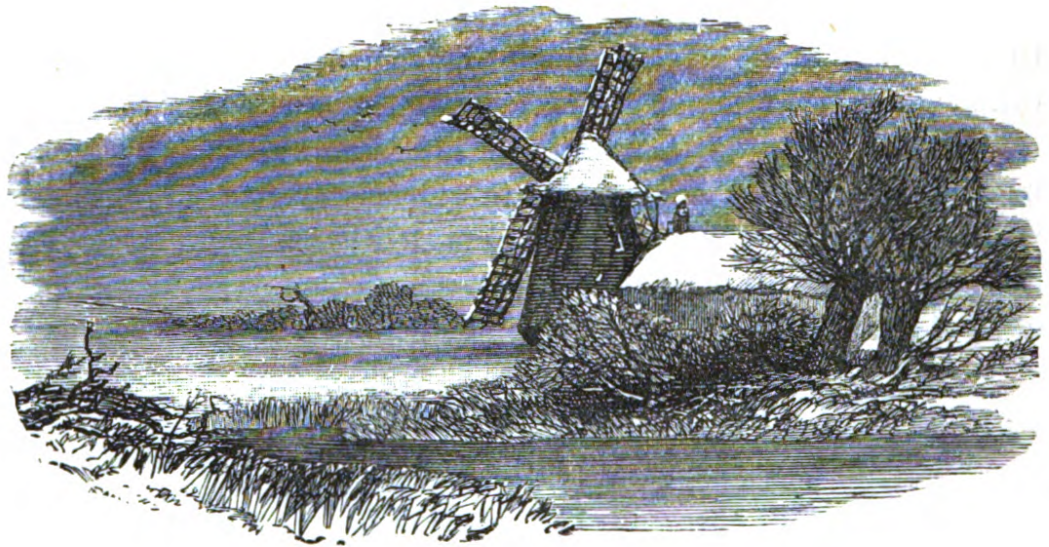
They told her how upon St Agnes' Eve,
 Young virgins might have visions of delight,
 And soft adorings from their loves receive,
 Upon the honeyed middle of the night,
 If ceremonies due they did aright ;
 As, supperless to bed they must retire,
 And couch supine their beauties, lily-white ;
 Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
 Of heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

25. Sexagesima Sunday ; eight weeks before Easter.
 Conversion of St Paul.—A festival of the Romish and

English Churches. The populace in former times thought this day prophetic as to the weather of the year :

If St Paul's Day be fair and clear,
It doth betide a happy year ;
If blustering winds do blow aloft,
Then wars will trouble our realm full oft ;
And if it chance to snow and rain,
Then will be dear all sorts of grain.

In Germany, when the day proved foul, the common people used to drag the images of St Paul and St Urban in disgrace to duck them in the river.





— Then came old February, sitting
In an old wagon, for he could not ride,
Drawn of two fishes for the season fitting,
Which through the flood before did softly slide
And swim away ; yet had he by his side
His plough and harness fit to till the ground,
And tools to prune the trees, before the pride
Of hasting prime did make them bourgeois wide.

SPENSER.



FEBRUARY comes in like a sturdy country maiden, with a tinge of the red, hard winter apple on her healthy cheek, and as she strives against the wind, wraps her russet-coloured cloak well about her, while with bent head, she keeps throwing back the long hair that blows about her face, and though at times half blinded by the sleet and snow, still continues her

course courageously. Sometimes she seems to shrink, and while we watch her progress, half afraid that she will be blown back again into the dreary waste of winter, we see that her course is still forward, that she never takes a backward step, but keeps journeying along slowly, and drawing nearer, at every stride, to the Land of Flowers.

Between the uplifted curtaining of clouds, that lets in a broad burst of golden sunlight, the skylark hovers like a dark speck, and cheers her with his brief sweet song, while the mellow-voiced blackbird and the speckle-breasted thrush make music among the opening blossoms of the blackthorn, to gladden her way; and she sees faint flushings of early buds here and there, which tell her the long miles of hedgerows will soon be green.

Now there is a stir of life in the long silent fields, a jingling of horse-gear, and the low wave-like murmur of the ploughshare, as it cuts through the yielding earth, from the furrows of which there comes a refreshing smell, while those dusky foragers, the rooks, follow close upon the ploughman's heels. Towards the end of the month the tall elm-trees resound with their loud 'cawing' in the early morning, and the nests they are busy building show darker every day through the leafless branches, until spring comes and hides them beneath a covering of foliage. Even in smoky cities, in the dawn of the lengthening days, the noisy sparrows come out from under the blackened eaves, and, as they shake the soot from off their wings, give utterance to the delight they feel in notes that sound like the grating jar of a knife-grinder's dry wheel.

LIFE IN THE WOODS AND FIELDS.

Now and then the pretty goldfinch breaks out with its short song, then goes peeping about as if wondering why the young green groundsel is so long before putting forth its dull golden flowers. The early warbling of the yellowhammer is half drowned by the clamorous jackdaws that now congregate about the gray church steeples. Then Winter, who seems to have been asleep, shows his cloudy form once more above the bare hill-tops, from whence he scatters his snow-flakes; while the timid birds cease their song, and again shelter in the still naked hedgerows, seeming to marvel to themselves why he has returned again, after the little daisy buds had begun to thrust their round green heads above the earth, announcing his departure. But his long delay prevents not the willow from shooting out its silvery catkins, nor the graceful hazel from unfurling its pendulous tassels; while the elder, as if bidding defiance to Winter, covers its stems with broad buds of green.

The long-tailed field-mouse begins to blink at intervals, and nibble at the stores he hoarded up in autumn; then peeping out and seeing the snow lie among the young violet leaves, at the foot of the oak amid whose roots he has made his nest, he coils himself up again after his repast, and enjoys a little more sleep. Amid the wide-spreading branches over his head, the raven has begun to build; and as he returns with the lock of wool he has rent from the back of some sickly sheep to line his nest, he disturbs the little slumberer below by his harsh, loud croaking. That ominous sound sends the affrighted

lambs off with a scamper to their full-uddered dams, while the raven looks down upon them with hungry eye, as if hoping that some one will soon cease its pitiful bleating, and fall a sacrifice to his horny beak. But the silver-frilled daisies will soon star the ground where the lambs now race against each other, and the great band of summer-birds will come from over the sunny sea, and their sweet piping be heard in place of the ominous croaking of the raven.

THE SQUIRREL—BIRD-CATCHING.

The mild days of February cause the beautifully-formed squirrel to wake out of his short winter sleep, and feed on his hoarded nuts; and he may now be seen balanced by his hind legs and bushy tail, washing his face, on some bare bough near his dray or nest, though at the first sound of the voices of the boys who come to hunt him, he is off, and springs from tree to tree with the agility of a bird. It is only when the trees are naked that the squirrel can be hunted, for it is difficult to catch a glimpse of him when 'the leaves are green and long;' and it is an old country saying, when anything unlikely to be found is lost, that 'you might as well hunt a squirrel when the leaves are out.'

Country boys may still be seen hiding at the corner of some outbuilding, or behind some low wall or fence, with a string in their hands attached to the stick that supports the sieve, under which they have scattered a few crumbs, or a little corn, to tempt the birds, which become more shy every day, as insect-food is now more plentiful. With what eager eyes the boys watch, and what a joyous shout they raise, as the sieve falls over

some feathered prisoner! But there are still ten chances to one in favour of the bird escaping when they place their hands under the half-lifted sieve in the hope of laying hold of it. The long dark nights are still cold to the poor shepherds, who are compelled to be out on



the windy hills and downs, attending to the ewes and lambs, for thousands would be lost at this season were it not for their watchful care. In some of the large farmhouses, the lambs that are ailing, or have lost their dams, may be seen lying before the fire in severe weather; and a strange expression—as it seemed to us—beamed from their gentle eyes, as they looked around, bleating for something they had lost; and as they licked our hands, we felt that we should make but poor butchers. And there they lie sheltered, while out-of-doors the

wind still roars, and the bare trees toss about their naked arms like maniacs, shaking down the last few withered leaves in which some of the insects have folded up their eggs. Strange power! which we feel, but see not; which drives the fallen leaves before it, like routed armies; and ships, whose thunder shakes cities, it tosses about the deep like floating sea-weeds, and is guided by Him 'who gathereth the winds in His fists.'

FEBRUARY FILL-DIKE—THE FENS.

'February fill-dike' was the name given to this wet slushy month by our forefathers, for when the snow melted, the rivers overflowed, the dikes brimmed over, and long leagues of land were under water, which have been drained within the last century; though miles of marshes are still flooded almost every winter, the deep silt left, enriching future harvests. It has a strange appearance to look over a wide stretch of country, where only the tops of the hedgerows or a tree or two are here and there visible. All the old familiar roads that led along pleasant streams to far-away thorpe or grange in summer, are buried beneath the far-spreading waters. And in those hedges water-rats, weasels, field-mice, and many another seldom-seen animal, find harbourage until the waters subside: we have there found the little harvest-mouse, that when full grown is no bigger than a large bee, shivering in the bleak hedgerow.

And in those reedy fens and lonesome marshes where the bittern now booms, and the heron stands alone for hours watching the water, while the tufted plover wails above its head, the wild-fowl shooter glides along noise-

less as a ghost in his punt, pulling it on by clutching the overhanging reeds, for the sound of a paddle would startle the whole flock, and he would never come within shot but for this guarded silence. He bears the beating rain and the hard blowing winds of February without a murmur, for he knows the full-fed mallard—feathered like the richest green velvet—and the luscious teal will be his reward, if he perseveres and is patient. In the midnight moonlight, and the gray dawn of morning, he is out on those silent waters, when the weather almost freezes his very blood, and he can scarcely feel the trigger that he draws; while the edges of frosted water-flags which he clutches to pull his punt along, seem to cut like swords. To us there has seemed to be at such times ‘a Spirit brooding on the waters,’ a Presence felt more in those solitudes than ever falls upon the heart amid the busy hum of crowded cities, which has caused us to exclaim unawares, ‘God is here!’

BUTTERFLIES—GARDENING.

Butterflies that have found a hiding-place somewhere during winter again appear, and begin to lay their eggs on the opening buds, which when in full leaf will supply food for the future caterpillars. Amongst these may now be found the new-laid eggs of the peacock and painted-lady butterflies, on the small buds of young nettles, though the plants are only just above ground. Everybody who has a garden now begins to make some little stir in it, when the weather is fine, for the sweet air that now blows abroad mellows and sweetens the newly-dug earth, and gives to it quite a refreshing smell. And all who have

had experience, know that to let the ground lie fallow a few weeks after it is trenched, is equal to giving it an extra coating of manure, such virtue is there in the air to which it lies exposed. Hard clods that were difficult to break with the spade when first dug up, will, after lying exposed to the sun and frost, crumble at a touch like a ball of sand.

It is pleasant, too, to see the little children pottering about the gardens, unconscious that, while they think they are helping, they are in the way of the workmen; to see them poking about with their tiny spades or pointed sticks, and hear their joyous shouts, when they see the first crocus in flower, or find beneath the decaying weeds the upright leaves of the hyacinth. Even the very smallest child, that has but been able to walk a few weeks, can sit down beside a puddle and help to make 'dirt-pies,' while its little frock slips off its white shoulders, and as some helping sister tries to pull it on again, she leaves the marks of her dirty fingers on the little one's neck. But a fire kindled to burn the great heap of weeds which winter has withered and dried, is their chief delight. What little bare sturdy legs come toddling up, the cold red arms bearing another tiny load which they throw upon the fire; and what a clapping of hands there is, as the devouring flame leaps up and licks in the additional fuel, which cracks again as the February wind blows the sparks about in starry showers! Pleasant is it also to watch them beside the village brook, after the icy chains of winter are unloosened, floating their sticks and bits of wood which they call boats—all our island children are fond of water—while their watchful mothers are sewing and gossiping at the open cottage doors, round which the

twined honeysuckles are now beginning to make a show of leaves.

All along beside the stream the elder-trees are showing their emerald buds, while a silvery light falls on the downy catkins of the willows, which the country children call palm; while lower down we see the dark green of the great marsh-marigolds, which ere long will be in flower, and make a golden light in the clear brook, in which the leaves are now mirrored. Happy children! they feel the increasing warmth, and find enjoyment in the lengthening of the days, for they can now play out-of-doors an hour or more longer than they could a month or two ago, when they were bundled off to bed soon after dark, 'to keep them,' as their mothers say, 'out of mischief.' Sometimes, while digging in February, the gardener will turn up a ball of earth as large as a moderate-sized apple; this when broken open will be found to contain the grub of the large stag-beetle in a torpid state. When uncoiled, it is found to be four inches in length. About July it comes out a perfect insect—the largest we have in Britain.

BIRD LIFE IN WINTER.

Many a meal do the birds now gather from the winter greens that remain in the gardens, and unless the first crop of early peas is protected, all the shoots will sometimes be picked off in a morning or two, as soon as they have grown a couple of inches above ground. The wild wood-pigeons are great gatherers of turnip-tops, and it is nothing unusual in the country to empty their maws, after the birds are shot, and wash and dress the tender green shoots found therein. No finer dish

of greens can be placed on the table, for the birds swallow none but the young eye-shoots. Larks will at this season sometimes unroof a portion of a corn-stack, to get at the well-filled sheaves. No wonder farmers shoot them: for where they have pulled the thatch off the stack, the wet gets in, finds its way down to the very foundation, and rots every sheaf it falls through. We can never know wholly what birds find to feed upon at this season of the year; when the earth is sometimes frozen so hard, that it rings under the spade like iron, or when the snow lies knee-deep on the ground. We startle them from under the sheltering hedges; they spring up from the lowly moss, which remains green all through the winter; we see them pecking about the bark and decayed hollow of trees; we make our way through the gorse bushes, and they are there: amid withered grass, and weeds, and fallen leaves, where lie millions of seeds, which the autumn winds scattered, we find them busy foraging; yet what they find to feed upon in many of these places is still to us a mystery.

We know that at this season they pass the greater portion of their time in sleep—another proof of the great Creator's providence—so do not require so much food as when busy building and breeding, in spring and summer. They burrow in the snow, through little openings hardly visible to human eyes, beneath hedges and bushes, and there they find warmth and food. From the corn-house, stable, or cart-shed, the blackbird comes rushing out with a sound that startles us as we enter; for there he finds something to feed upon; while the little robin will even peck at the window frame if you have been in the habit of feeding him. On the plum-tree

before the window at which we are now writing, a robin has taken his stand every day throughout the winter, eyeing us at our desk as he waited for his accustomed crumbs. When the door was opened and all still, he would hop into the kitchen, and there we have found him perched on the dresser, nor did we ever attempt to capture him. If strangers came down the garden-walk, he never flew farther away than the privet-hedge, until he was fed. Generally, as the day drew to a close, he mounted his favourite plum-tree, as if to sing us a parting song. We threw his food under a thorny, low-growing japonica, which no cat could penetrate, although we have often seen our own Brownny girring and swearing, and switching his tail, while the bird was safely feeding within a yard of him.

PRIMROSE TIME—SPRING AT HAND.

Primroses are now abundant, no matter how severe the winter may have been. Amid the din and jar of the busy streets of London, the pleasant cry of 'Come, buy my pretty primroses,' falls cheerfully on the ear, at the close of February. It may be on account of its early appearance, that we fancy there is no yellow flower so delightful to look upon as the delicately-coloured primrose; for the deep golden hue of the celandine and buttercup is glaring when compared with it. There is a beauty, too, in the form of its heart-shaped petals, also in the foliage. Examined by an imaginative eye, the leaves when laid down look like a pleasant green land, full of little hills and hollows, such as we fancy insects—invisible to the naked glance—must delight in wandering over. Such a world Bloomfield pictured as he watched an insect

climb up a plantain leaf, and fancied what an immense plain the foot or two of short grass it overlooked must appear in the eye of a little traveller, who had climbed a summit of six inches.

In the country they speak of things happening at 'primrose-time:' he died or she was married 'about primrose-time;' for so do they mark the season that lies between the white ridge of winter and the pale green border of spring. Then it is a flower as old and common as our English daisies, and long before the time of Alfred must have gladdened the eyes of Saxon children by its early appearance, as it does the children of the present day. The common coltsfoot has been in flower several weeks, and its leaves are now beginning to appear, for the foliage rarely shows itself on this singular plant until the bloom begins to fade. The black hellebore is also in bloom, and on account of its resemblance to the queen of summer, is called the Christmas-rose, as it often flowers at that season. It is a pretty ornament on the brow of winter, whether its deep cup is white or pale pink, and in sheltered situations remains a long time in flower.

Every way there are now signs that the reign of Winter is nearly over; even when he dozes he can no longer enjoy his long sleep, for the snow melts from under him almost as fast as it falls, and he feels the rounded buds breaking out beneath him. The flush of golden light thrown from the primroses as they catch the sunshine, causes him to rub his dazed eyes, and the singing of the unloosened meadow-runnels falls with a strange sound on his cold, deadened ear. He knows that Spring is hiding somewhere near at hand, and that all nature is waiting

to break out into flower and song, when he has taken his departure.

A great change has taken place almost unseen. We cannot recall the day when the buds first caught our eye—tiny green dots which are now opening into leaves that are covering the lilac-trees. We are amazed to see the hawthorn hedge, which a week or two ago we passed unnoticed, now bursting out into the pale green flush of spring—the most beautiful of all green hues. We feel the increasing power of the sun; and windows which have been closed and rendered air-tight to keep out the cold, are now thrown open to let in the refreshing breeze, which is shaking out the sweet buds, and the blessed sunshine—the gold of heaven—which God in his goodness showers alike upon the good and the evil.

Characteristics of February.

The average temperature of January, which is the lowest of the year, is but slightly advanced in February; say from 40° to 41° Fahrenheit. Nevertheless, while frosts often take place during the month, February is certainly more characterised by rain than by snow, and our unpleasant sensations during its progress do not so much arise from a strictly low temperature, as from the harsh damp feeling which its airs impart. Usually, indeed, the cold is intermitted by soft vernal periods of three or four days, during which the snowdrop and crocus are enabled to present themselves above ground. Gloomy, chilly, rainy days are a prominent feature of the month, tending, as has been observed, to a flooding of the country; and we all feel how appropriate it is that the two signs of the

zodiac connected with the month—Aquarius and Pisces—should be of such watery associations.

At London, the sun is above the horizon on the 1st of February from 7 h. 42 m. to 4 h. 46 m., in all 9 h. 4 m. At the last day of the month, the sun is above the horizon 10 h. 35 m.

PROVERBS REGARDING FEBRUARY.

The tendency of this month to wet, and its uncertain temperature, as hovering between Winter and Spring, are expressed proverbially :

February fill the dike [ditch]
Either with the black or white ;

that is, either with rain or snow. Popular wisdom, however, recognises an advantage in its adhering to the wintry character, the above rhyme having occasionally added to it,

If it be white, it's the better to like ;

while other rhymes support the same view. Thus, in Ray's collection of English proverbs, we have :

The Welshman would rather see his dam on her bier,
Than see a fair Februeer ;

and from the Scotch collections :

A' the months o' the year
Curse a fair Februeer.

The Norman peasant pronounces virtually to the same purpose :

Février qui donne neige,
Bel été nous pleige.

Key to the Calendar.

The establishment of February as the second month of the year by Numa Pompilius has already been mentioned. According to Ovid in his *Fasti*, a curious record of Roman customs, all objects which were thought to have the effect of moral purgation in the religious ceremonies of that people were called Februa. Ceremonials of this kind took place at this season; hence the name of the month. The vanity of Augustus is said to have been the cause of this month being so much shortened. The arrangement of Julius Cæsar seems to have contemplated an alternation of months of thirty with those of thirty-one days. August was one of thirty days; but when Augustus gave it his name, he could not endure that it should be one of the shorter class, and therefore gave it an additional day, at the expense of February, already one of that class. Our ancestors called February *sprout kale*, from the sprouting of the cabbage, still called kale in Scotland.

1. Quinquagesima Sunday; seven weeks before Easter: called also Shrove Sunday.

2. Candlemas-day, or the Purification of the Virgin, a festival of the Church of Rome, and holiday in the English Church. It is said to have been founded upon Roman rites in which candles were carried. The early Fathers of the Church held it in commemoration of the attendance of Mary in the Temple, forty days after childbirth, as commanded by the law; and it was their custom on this day to bless candles and distribute them among the people, by whom they were carried in solemn procession. The saying of Simeon respecting the infant Christ in the Temple, that he would be a *light* to lighten the Gentiles, probably supplied an excuse for adopting the candle-bearing procession of the heathen, whose external religious practices

the founders of the Romish Church made a practice of imitating, in order to take advantage of the habits of the people. Apparently in consequence of the celebration of Mary's purification by candle-bearing, it became customary for women to carry candles with them when, after childbirth, they went to be *churched*.

Candlemas-day is called a Grand Day in the Inns of Court, a Gaudy Day at the two universities, and a Collar Day at St James's, being one of the three great holidays, during the terms, on which all legal and official business is suspended.

There is an ancient superstitious notion, universal in Europe, that if Candlemas be a sunshiny day, the winter is not half finished. The Germans say : 'The badger peeps out of his hole on Candlemas-day, and if he finds snow he walks abroad ; if he sees the sun shining, he draws back again into his hole.'

3. St Blaise's Day.—St Blaise, who has the honour of a place in the Church of England calendar, was a bishop of Sebaste, in Armenia, and suffered martyrdom in 316. He is the patron saint of the craft of wool-combers, and his name was once considered potent in curing sore throats. At Bradford there is still a septennial procession of the wool-trade upon his day. Formerly, it was celebrated extensively by fires lighted on hills, and this is still done in Scotland on the previous evening, under the name of the Candlemas Blaze, the resemblance of the name Blaise to blaze having apparently suggested the practice.

Shrove Tuesday.—According to the plan already laid down, we place Shrove Tuesday upon this day of the month of February. As the day before the commencement of Lent, it has been from an early age celebrated throughout Christian Europe by feasting and merry-making of the most extravagant nature. The name is derived from the ancient custom of being *shrived* or *shrove*—that is, obtaining absolution—on this day. It is the concluding day of the time of Carnival, which in various Catholic countries is of greater or less extent, but celebrated with most

distinction at Venice and Rome. Carnival is obviously a term from *caro* and *vale*, as meaning a farewell to flesh, this article of food being unused during the whole of Lent. In these two Italian cities, and partially in many others, the Carnival is distinguished by shows, masquerades, races, and a variety of other exhibitions and amusements. The people may be said to live for several days in public. The wealthier classes parade about in their carriages, from which they pelt each other with sweetmeats. Whim and folly are tolerated in their utmost extent, so that only there be nothing said or done to burlesque ecclesiastical dignitaries.

The main distinction of Shrove Tuesday, in the early times of our own history, was the eating of pancakes made with eggs and spice. The people indulged in games at football, at which there was generally much license; also in the barbarous sport of *throwing at cocks*. In the latter case, the animal being tied by a short string to a peg, men threw sticks at it in succession, till an end was put to its miseries and its life at once. Cock-fights were also common on this day, not only amongst the rustics, but at the public schools, the masters condescending to receive the defeated and slain cocks as a perquisite.

4. **Ash Wednesday**, the first day in Lent, a holiday of the Church of England, observed by the closing of all the public offices, excepting the Stamps, Excise, and Customs. The palms or substitute branches, consecrated and used on Palm Sunday of one year, were kept till the present season of another, when they were burnt, and their ashes blessed by the priest and sprinkled on the heads of the people: hence the name given to the day. This sprinkling of ashes was performed with many ceremonies and great devotion. On this day also persons convicted of notorious sin were put to open penance. In England it is still a season for the saying of the 'commination' in the Prayer-book, by which the doers of certain kinds of wickedness are cursed.

8. **First Sunday in Lent.**—The Wednesday, Friday, and

Saturday after this Sunday are called Ember Days, and the week in which they occur Ember Week. On Ember Days our forefathers ate no bread but what was baked in a simple and primitive fashion under hot ashes: hence the name. The other Ember Days of the year are the Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays after the Feast of Pentecost, Holy-rood Day (September 14), and St Lucia's Day (December 15).

14. **St Valentine's Day.**—St Valentine was a priest of Rome, martyred in the third century, but he seems to have had no connection with the notions and practices to which his day has since been given up. This, it is scarcely necessary to say, is a day thought to be especially devoted to the business of Cupid and Hymen. Possibly its being about the season when the birds choose their mates may be the origin of this belief. Antiquaries have also pointed out that the Lupercalia—feasts of ancient Rome in honour of Pan and Juno—were held at this time, and that amongst the ceremonies was a game in which young persons of the opposite sexes chose each other jocularly by lot.

St Valentine's Day is now almost everywhere a degenerated festival, the only observance of any note consisting in the sending of anonymous letters containing pictorial squibs, or *billets-doux*, accompanied by tags of wretched verse, expressive of the sentiment of the sender. These are paltry frivolities compared with the observances of St Valentine's Day at no remote period. The true and proper ceremony then was the drawing of a kind of lottery, followed by ceremonies not much unlike what is generally called the game of forfeits. Misson, a learned traveller of the early part of the last century, gives apparently a correct account of the principal ceremonial of the day. 'On the eve of St Valentine's Day,' he says, 'the young folks in England and Scotland, by a very ancient custom, celebrate a little festival. An equal number of maids and bachelors get together; each writes his or her true or some feigned name upon separate billets, which they roll up, and draw by way of lots, the maids taking

the men's billets, and the men the maids'; so that each of the young men lights upon a girl that he calls his *valentine*, and each of the girls upon a young man whom she calls hers. By this means each has two valentines; but the man sticks faster to the valentine that is fallen to him than to the valentine to whom he is fallen. Fortune having thus divided the company into so many couples, the valentines give balls and treats to their mistresses, wear their billets several days upon their bosoms or sleeves, and this little sport often ends in love.'

The common people seem to have imagined that an influence was inherent in the day, which rendered in some degree binding the lot or chance by which any youth or maid was now led to fix attention on a person of the opposite sex. It was supposed, for instance, that the first unmarried person of the other sex whom one met on St Valentine's morning in walking abroad, was a destined wife or husband.

15. Second Sunday in Lent.

22. Third Sunday in Lent.

24. St Matthias the Apostle.—A festival of the Church of England. St Matthias was chosen by lot after the Crucifixion, in place of the traitor Judas (Acts i. 23).







MARCH

— Sturdy March, with brows full sternly bent,
And armed strongly, rode upon a ram,
The same which over Hellespontus swam,
Yet in his hand a spade he also hent,
And in a bag all sorts of weeds, y same
Which on the earth he strewed as he went,
And filled her womb with fruitful hope of nourishment.

SPENSER.



MARCH is the first month of Spring. He is nature's Old Forester, going through the woods and dotting the trees with green, to mark out the spots where the future leaves are to be hung. The sun throws a golden glory over the eastern hills, as the village clock from the ivy-covered tower tolls six, gilding the hands

and the figures that were scarcely visible two hours later a few weeks ago.

The streams now hurry along with a rapid motion, as if they had no time to dally with and play round the impeding pebbles, but were eager to rush along the green meadow-lands, to tell the flowers it is time to awaken. We hear the cottagers greeting each other with kind 'Good-morning,' across the paled garden fences in the sunrise, and talking about the healthy look of the up-coming peas, and the promise in a few days of a dish of early spinach. Under the old oak, surrounded with rustic seats, they congregate on the village green, in the mild March evenings, and talk about the forward spring, and how they have battled through the long hard winter, and, looking towards the green churchyard, speak in low voices of those who have been borne thither to sleep out their long sleep since 'last primrose-time,' and they thank God that they are still alive and well, and are grateful for the fine weather 'it has pleased Him to send them at last.'

Now rustic figures move across the landscape, and give a picturesque life to the scenery. You see the ploughboy returning from his labour, seated sideways on one of his horses, humming a line or two of some love-lorn ditty, and when his memory fails to supply the words, whistling the remainder of the tune. The butcher-boy rattles merrily by in his blue coat, throwing a saucy word to every one he passes; and if he thinks at all of the pretty lambs that are bleating in his cart, it is only about how much they will weigh when they are killed. The old woman moves slowly along in her red cloak, with basket on arm, on her way to supply her customers with

new-laid eggs. So the figures move over the brown winding roads between the budding hedges in red, blue, and gray, such as a painter loves to seize upon to give light and colour to his landscape. A few weeks ago those roads seemed uninhabited.

PLAYFUL LAMBS—THE OSIER-PEELERS.



The early-yearned lambs have now become strong, and may be seen playing with one another, their chief amusement being that of racing, as if they knew what heavy weights their little legs will have to bear when their feeders begin to lay as much mutton on their backs as they can well walk under—so enjoy the lightness of their young lean days. There is no cry so child-like as that of a lamb that has lost its dam, and how eagerly it sets off at the first bleat the ewe gives: in an instant it recognises that sound from all the rest, while to our ears that of the whole flock sounds alike. Dumb animals we may call them, but all of them have a language which they understand; they give utterance to their feelings of joy, love, and pain, and when in distress call for help,

and, as we have witnessed, hurry to the aid of one another. The osier-peelers are now busy at work in the osier-holts; it is almost the first out-of-door employment the poor people find in spring, and very pleasant it is to see the white-peeled willows lying about to dry on the young grass, though it is cold work by a windy riverside for the poor women and children on a bleak March day. As soon as the sap rises, the bark-peelers commence stripping the trees in the woods, and we know but few country smells that equal the aroma of the piled-up bark. But the trees have a strange ghastly look after they are stripped—unless they are at once removed—standing like bleached skeletons when the foliage hangs on the surrounding branches. The rumbling wagon is a pretty sight moving through the wood, between openings of the trees, piled high with bark, where wheel never passes excepting on such occasions, or when the timber is removed. The great ground-bee, that seems to have no hive, goes blundering by, then alights on some green patch of grass in the underwood, though what he finds there to feed upon is a puzzle to you, even if you kneel down beside him, as we have done, and watch ever so narrowly.

‘MARCH MANY-WEATHERS’—ANTS—POND LIFE.

How beautiful the cloud and sunshine seem chasing each other over the tender grass! You see the patch of daisies shadowed for a few moments, then the sunshine sweeps over them, and all their silver frills seem suddenly touched with gold, which the wind sets in motion. Our forefathers well named this month ‘March many-weather,’ and said that ‘it came in like a lion, and went

out like a lamb,' for it is made up of sunshine and cloud, shower and storm, often causing the horn-fisted ploughman to beat his hands across his chest in the morning to warm them, and before noon compelling him to throw off his smock-frock and sleeved waistcoat, and wipe the perspiration from his forehead with his shirt sleeve as he stands between the plough-stilts at the end of the newly-made furrow. Still we can now plant our 'foot upon nine daisies,' and not until that can be done do the old-fashioned country-people believe that spring is really come. We have seen a gray-haired grandsire do this, and smile as he called to his old dame to count the daisies, and see that his foot fairly covered the proper number.

Ants now begin to run across our paths, and sometimes during a walk in the country you may chance to stumble upon the nest of the wood-ant. At a first glance it looks like a large heap of litter, where dead leaves and short



withered grass have been thrown lightly down upon the earth; perhaps at the moment there is no sign of life about it, beyond a straggler or two at the base of the mound. Thrust in the point of your stick, and all the ground will be alive in a moment; nothing but a mass of moving ants will be seen where you have probed. Nor will it do to stay too long, for they will be under

your trousers and up your boots, and you will soon feel as if scores of red-hot needles were run into you, for they wound sharply. If you want the clean skeleton of a mouse, bird, or any other small animal, throw it on the nest of the wood-ant, and on the following day you will find every bone as bare and clean as if it had been scraped. Snakes may now be seen basking in some sunny spot, generally near a water-course, for they are beautiful swimmers and fond of water. They have slept away the winter under the dead leaves, or among the roots and in the holes of trees, or wherever they could find shelter. In ponds and ditches may also be seen thousands of round-headed long-tailed tadpoles, which, if not devoured, will soon become nimble young frogs, when they have a little better chance of escaping the jaws of fishes and wildfowl, for no end of birds, fishes, reptiles, and quadrupeds feed on them. Only a few weeks ago the frogs were in a torpid state, and sunk like stones beneath the mud. Since then they left those black spots, which may be seen floating in a jellied mass on the water, and soon from this spawn the myriads of lively tadpoles we now see sprang into life. Experienced gardeners never drive frogs out of their grounds, as they are great destroyers of slugs, which seem to be their favourite food.

Amongst the tadpoles the water-rat may now be seen swimming about and nibbling at some leaf or overhanging blade of grass, his tail acting as a rudder, by which he can steer himself into any little nook wheresoever he may take a fancy to go. If you are near enough, you will see his rich silky hair covered with bright silver-like bubbles as they sink into the

water, and he is a most graceful swimmer. The entrance to his nest is generally under the water; throw a stone, and he will dive down in a moment, and when he has passed the watery basement, he at once ascends his warm dry nest, in which, on one occasion, a gallon of potatoes was found that he had hoarded up to last him through the winter. Pleasant is it on a fine March day to stand on some rustic bridge—it may be only a plank thrown across the stream—and watch the fishes as they glide by, or pause and turn in the water, or to see the great pike basking near the surface as if asleep in the sunshine. Occasionally a bird will dart out from the sedge, or leave off tugging at the head of the tall bulrush, and hasten away between the willows that seem to give a silvery shiver every time the breeze turns up the underpart of their leaves to the light. In solitary places, by deep watercourses, the solemn plunge of the otter may sometimes be heard, as he darts in after his prey, or you may start him from the bank where he is feeding on the fish he has captured.

VIOLETS AND DAISIES.

Violets, which Shakspeare says are 'sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,' impregnate the March winds with their fragrance, and it is amazing what a distance the perfume is borne on the air from the spot where they grow: and, but for thus betraying themselves, the places where they nestle together would not always be found. Though called the wood-violet, it is oftener found on sunny embankments, under the shelter of a hedge, than in the woods; a woodside bank that faces the south may often be seen diapered with both violets and primroses.

Though it is commonly called the 'blue violet,' it approaches nearer to purple in colour. The scentless



Violets.

autumn violets are blue. No lady selecting a violet-coloured dress would choose a blue. The 'dark-velvet' is a name given to it by our old poets, who also call it 'wine-coloured;' others call the hue 'watchet,' which is blue. But let it be compared with the bluebell, beside which it is often found, and it will appear purple in contrast. Through the frequent mention made of it by Shakspeare, it must have been one of his favourite flowers; and as it still grows abundantly in the neighbourhood of Stratford-on-Avon, it may perhaps yet be found scenting the March air, and standing in the very same spots by which he paused to look at it. Like

the rose, it retains its fragrance long after the flower is dead.

The perfume of violets and the song of the blackcap are delights which may often be enjoyed together while walking out at this season of the year, for the blackcap, whose song is only equalled by that of the nightingale, is one of the earliest birds that arrives. Though he is a droll-looking little fellow in his black wig, which seems too big for his head, yet, listen to him! and if you have never heard him before, you will hear such music as you would hardly think such an organ as a bird's throat could make. There is one silvery shake which no other bird can compass; it sinks down to the very lowest sound music is capable of making, and yet is as distinct as the low ring of a silver bell. The nightingale has no such note: for there is an unapproachable depth in its low sweetness. While singing, its throat is wonderfully distended, and the whole of its little body shivers with delight. Later in the season, it often builds its compact nest amid the sheltering leaves of the ivy, in which it lays four or five eggs, which are fancifully dashed with darker spots of a similar hue.

Daisies, one of the earliest known of our old English flowers that still retains its Saxon name, are now in bloom. It was called the day's-eye, and the eye-of-day, as far back as we have any records of our history. 'It is such a wanderer,' says a quaint old writer, 'that it must have been one of the first flowers that strayed and grew outside the garden of Eden.' Poets have delighted to call them 'stars of the earth,' and Chaucer describes a green valley 'with daisies powdered over,' and great was his love for this beautiful flower. He tells us how he

rose early in the morning, and went out again in the evening, to see the day's-eye open and shut, and that he often lay down on his side to watch it unfold. But beautiful as its silver rim looks, streaked sometimes with red, 'as if grown in the blood of our old battle-fields,' says the above-quoted writer, still it is a perfect compound flower, as one of those little yellow florets which form its 'golden boss' or crown will show, when carefully examined. Whatever may be said of Linnæus, Chaucer was the first who discovered that the daisy slept, for he tells us how he went out,

To see this flower, how it *will go to rest,*
For fear of night, so hateth it the darkness.

He also calls the opening of the daisy 'its resurrection,' so that nearly five centuries ago the sleep of plants was familiar to the Father of English Poetry.

BIRDS AND FLOWERS OF MARCH.

Now the nests of the blackbird and thrush may be seen in the hedges, before the leaves are fully out, for they are our earliest builders, as well as the first to awaken Winter with their songs. As if to prepare better for the cold, to which their young are exposed, through being hatched so soon as they are, they both plaster their nests inside with mud, until they are as smooth as a basin. They begin singing at the first break of dawn, and may be heard again as the day closes. We have frequently heard them before three in the morning in summer. The blackbird is called 'golden bill' by country-people, and the 'ouzel cock' of our old ballad poetry. It is not easy to tell males

from females during the first year, but in the second year the male has the 'golden bill.' If undisturbed, the blackbird will build for many seasons in the same spot, often only repairing its old nest. No young birds are more easily reared, as they will eat almost anything. Both the nests and eggs of the thrush and blackbird are much alike.

Sometimes, while peeping about to discover these rounded nests, we catch sight of the germander-speedwell, one of the most beautiful of our March flowers, bearing such a blue as is only at times seen on the changing sky; we know no blue flower that can be compared with it. The ivy-leaved veronica may also now be found, though it is a very small flower, and must be sought for very near the ground. Now and then, but not always, we have found the graceful wood-anemone in flower in March, and very pleasant it is to come unaware upon a bed of these pretty plants in bloom; they show such a play of shifting colours when stirred by the wind, now turning their reddish-purple outside to the light, then waving back again, and showing the rich white-gray inside the petals, as if white and purple lilacs were mixed, and blowing together. The leaves, too, are very beautifully cut; and as the flower has no proper calyx, the pendulous cup droops gracefully, 'hanging its head aside,' like Shakspeare's beautiful Barbara. If—through the slightest breeze setting its drooping bells in motion—the old Greeks called it the wind-flower, it was happily named, for we see it stirring when there is scarce more life in the air than

— on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feathered grass.

The wheatear, of which country children say, 'some bird blackened its eye for going away,' now makes its appearance, and is readily known by the black mark which runs from the ear to the base of the bill. Its notes are very low and sweet, for it seems too fat to strain itself, and we have no doubt could sing much louder if it pleased. It is considered so delicious a morsel, that epicures have named it the British ortolan, and is so fat it can scarcely fly when wheat is ripe. Along with it comes the pretty willow-wren, which is easily known by being yellow underneath, and through the light colour of its legs. It lives entirely on insects, never touching either bloom or fruit like the bullfinch, and is of great value in our gardens, when at this season such numbers of insects attack the blossoms.

But one of the most curious of our early comers is the little wryneck, so called because he is always twisting his neck about. When boys, we only knew it by the name of the willow-bite, as it always lays its eggs in a hole in a tree, without ever troubling itself to make a nest. When we put our hand in to feel for the eggs, if the bird was there it hissed like a snake, and many a boy have we seen whip his fingers out when he heard that alarming sound, quicker than ever he put them in, believing that a snake was concealed in the hole. It is a famous destroyer of ants, which it takes up so rapidly on its glutinous tongue, that no human eye can follow the motion, for the ants seem impelled forward by some secret power, as one writer observes, 'as if drawn by a magnet.' This bird can both hop and walk, though it does not step out so soldier-like as the beautiful wagtail.

Sometimes, while listening to the singing birds in

spring, you will find all their voices hushed in a moment, and unless you are familiar with country objects, will be at a loss to divine the cause. Though you may not have heard it, some bird has raised a sudden cry of alarm, which causes them all to rush into the hedges and bushes for safety. That bird had seen the hovering hawk, and knew that, in another moment or so, he would drop down sudden as a thunderbolt on the first victim that he fixed his far-seeing eyes upon; and his rush is like the speed of thought. But he always remains nearly motionless in the air before he strikes, and this the birds seem to know, and their sight must be keen to see him so high up as he generally is before he strikes. In the hedges they are safe, as there is no room there for the spread of his wings; and if he misses his quarry, he never makes a second dart at it. Sometimes the hawk catches a Tartar, as the one did that pounced upon and carried off a weasel, which, when high in the air, ate into the hawk's side, causing him to come down dead as a stone, when the weasel, who retained his hold of the hawk, ran off, not appearing to be the least injured after his unexpected elevation.

MARCH DUST—THE ROOKERY.

What a change have the March winds produced in the roads; they are now as hard as they were during the winter frost. But there was no cloud of dry dust then as there is now. When our forefathers repeated the old proverb which says, 'A peck of March dust is worth a king's ransom,' did they mean, we wonder, that its value lay in loosening and drying the earth, and making it fitter to till? In the old gardening books a dry day in

March is always recommended for putting seed into the ground.

To one who does not mind a noise there is great amusement to be found now in living near a rookery, for there is always something or another going on in that great airy city overhead, if it only be, as Washington Irving says, 'quarrelling for a corner of the blanket,' while in their nests. They are nearly all thieves, and think nothing of stealing the foundation from one another's houses during the building season. When some incorrigible blackguard cannot be beaten into order, they all unite and drive him away; neck and crop do they bundle him out. Let him only show so much as his beak in the rookery again after his ejection, and the whole police force are out and at him in a moment. No peace will he ever have there any more during that season, though perhaps he may make it up again with them during the next winter in the woods. We like to hear them cawing from the windy high elm-trees, which have been a rookery for centuries, and which overhang some old hall gray with the moss and lichen of forgotten years. The sound they make seems to give a quiet dreamy air to the whole landscape, and we look upon such a spot as an ancient English home, standing in a land of peace.

Characteristics of March.

March is noted as a dry month. Its dust is looked for, and becomes a subject of congratulation, on account of the importance of dry weather at this time for sowing and planting. The idea has been embodied in proverbs, as 'A peck of March dust is worth a king's ransom,' and

‘A dry March never begs its bread.’ Blustering winds usually prevail more or less throughout a considerable part of the month, but mostly in the earlier portion. Hence, the month appears to change its character as it goes on; the remark is, ‘It comes in like a lion, and goes out like a lamb.’ The mean temperature of the month for London is stated at 43·9°; for Perth, in Scotland, at 43°; but, occasionally, winter reappears in all its fierceness. At London the sun rises on the first day at 6 h. 46 m.; on the last at 5 h. 38 m., being an extension of upwards of an hour.

Key to the Calendar.

MARCH, which with the ancients ranked the first month of the year, was named in honour of Mars, the god of war, and the supposed father of the founder of Rome. Our Anglo-Saxon ancestors called it *Lenct-monath*—that is, Lent or Spring Month.

1. **Mid Lent Sunday.**—A holiday of the Church of England. It was considered as incumbent upon all true Christians on this day to pay a visit, if possible, to their mother-church, or church of their native parish, and there make some small offering. The epistle for the day accordingly contains an appropriate allusion—*Hierosolyma mater omnium*, Jerusalem the mother of all (Gal. iv. 26). And it was customary on the same day for people to visit their parents, carrying with them some gift, and receiving the parental blessing in return, together with a mess of frumenty—that is, a porridge composed of whole grains of wheat, boiled in milk, and sweetened and

spiced. This practice was called 'going a-mothering,' and the day was sometimes called *Mothering Sunday*. The festival, with all its peculiar observances, is supposed to have taken its rise in the heathen festival of the Hilaria, celebrated by the ancient Romans in honour of the mother of the gods, on the Ides of March.

St David's Day.—The interest attached to this saint and his day is confined to the Welsh, whose patron saint St David is considered. Learning, and more particularly asceticism, the great sources of promotion in those days, raised him to high esteem and ecclesiastical rank, and gave him the reputation of a power to perform miracles. At a synod called at Brevy in Cardigan, in 519, in consequence of the Pelagian heresy, he made an eloquent and convincing display against the erroneous doctrines, which were therefore condemned. He died in 544, at an advanced age, and was buried in the church of St Andrew; but, in 962, his remains were transferred to Glastonbury Abbey.

While the Welsh venerate the memory of St David, they are unacquainted with our idea of him as their patron saint, a notion which has sprung up in consequence of the popular fiction of the Seven Champions of Christendom. They observe the 1st of March as the anniversary of his death. On this day, all true Welshmen, whether in their own country or far removed from it, made it a point of conscience to wear a leek in their hats; and this custom is alluded to in writings of considerable antiquity. It has also been made effective use of by Shakspeare in his historical drama of *King Henry V.*; and the heroic cudgelling which he there represents the choleric Welshman, Fluellen, as having administered to Ancient Pistol, when he compelled him to eat the leek which he had mocked at on 'St Tavy's Day,' has given rise to a proverbial saying; for of an individual who has been forced to do anything contrary to his own inclination, it is by no means uncommon to say that he has been made 'to eat his leek.'

8. **The Fifth Sunday in Lent.**—It was popularly distinguished as *Care* or *Carling Sunday*, terms which appear to be of very dubious import. The peasantry and yeomanry used to steep peas, and afterwards parch them, and then, frying them with butter, made a feast of them on the afternoon of this day. It is thought not unlikely that the custom bore some reference to the superstitious notions which the ancients entertained respecting beans, as containing the souls of the departed. The peas, as eaten in the north of England, were called *carlings*. We may presume that the day took its name from this word, *carling* being in time softened into *Care*. It figures in the following old rhyme, which enumerates the Sundays of Lent by popular appellations :

Tid, Mid, and Misera,
Carling, Palm, and good Pace-day.

The first three words are supposed to have been derived from the beginnings of certain psalms—thus, *Te deum*, *Mi deus*, *Miserere mei*.

15. **Palm Sunday**, called in the English Prayer-book the Sunday next before Easter; also sometimes called Passion Sunday, as being the commencement of Passion Week, or the week celebrative of the sufferings or passion of our Lord. It is a festival of great antiquity and a partly joyous character, as more particularly commemorating the brilliant though short-lived popularity of the reception which Christ met with on entering Jerusalem immediately before his passion. On this day, in Catholic countries, the priests bless branches of palm, or some other tree, which are then carried in procession, in memory of those strewed before Christ at his entrance into the holy city. The procession is as splendid as circumstances will admit of; and after it is done, the boughs used on the occasion are burnt, and their ashes preserved, that they may be laid on the heads of the people next Ash Wednesday, with the priest's blessing.

17. **St Patrick's Day**, a high festival of the Romish Church. The interest attached to this saint and his day is, however, chiefly confined to the Irish, whose patron saint he is considered; though that term, as in the case of St David, is of modern and English origin. The Irish venerate St Patrick as the person who introduced Christianity into their country. The common tradition makes him a native of Kilpatrick, near Dumbarton in Scotland, and to have first visited Ireland as a boy and a prisoner; but there are some grounds for supposing that he was born in the north of Gaul. In 431 he was commissioned by Pope Celestine to convert the Irish, a task which he immediately commenced, and carried into effect with unexampled ardour and perseverance. He travelled throughout the whole of Ireland, preaching everywhere to the barbarous people, whom he baptised in multitudes. He also ordained clergy to preside over them, gave alms to the poor, made presents to the kings, founded monasteries, and, in short, established the Christian religion and a full apparatus for its support in Ireland. Monkish annals and popular tradition attribute to him an immense number of miracles, most of which have probably no basis in fact. He died at Down in Ulster, according to the Bollandists, in 460, according to Usher, in 493.

As the Welsh are solicitous to display the leek on St David's Day, so are the Irish to show the *shamrock* on that of St Patrick. The shamrock is a bunch of trefoil. It is associated with St Patrick and his day, in consequence, as popular story goes, of the saint having made a very adroit use of the plant in his first preaching, immediately after landing. The people being staggered by the doctrine of the Trinity, and disposed to show some violence to him, he took up a trefoil growing by his side, and illustrated the point by showing its three blades growing on one stalk; whereupon they were immediately convinced, and became converts. In Dublin, St Patrick's Day is, or was lately, a scene of festivity and mirth unparalleled. 'From the highest

to the lowest,' says Mr Hone, 'all seem inspired by the saint's beneficence. At daybreak flags fly from the steeples, and the bells ring out incessant peals till midnight. The rich bestow their benevolence on the poor, and the poor bestow their blessings on the rich, on each other, and on the blessed St Patrick. The "green immortal" shamrock is in every hat. Sports of manly exercise exhibit the capabilities of the celebrated shillalah. Priestly care soothes querulousness; laughter drowns casualty; lasses dance with lads; old women run about to share cups of consolation with each other; and by the union of wit, humour, and frolic, this miraculous day is prolonged till after the dawn of next morning.'

19. **Maundy Thursday**, called also *Shere Thursday*, the day before Good Friday. Its name of *Shere Thursday* appears to have arisen from the practice which the priests had of shearing their hair on this day, to make themselves as trim as possible for Easter. The other name is more doubtful, but seems most probably to have been derived from Anglo-Saxon *mand*, later English *maund*, a basket, in consequence of the distribution of gifts on this day in baskets—the word *maundy*, used by old authors for alms or gifts, being apparently derived in its turn from the practice of this day. The religious customs of the day consisted in works of humility, and in conferring gifts on the poor. The object seems to have been to commemorate, or imitate, the humility of Christ in washing the feet of his disciples—the giving of maundies being an additional good work. The king of England was accustomed on Maundy Thursday to have brought before him as many poor men as he was years old, whose feet he washed with his own hands, after which his majesty's maunds, consisting of meat, clothes, and money, were distributed amongst them.

This strange ceremonial, in which the highest was for a moment brought beneath the lowest, was last performed in its full extent by James II. King William left the washing to

his almoner; and such was the arrangement for many years afterwards. For a considerable number of years the washing of the feet and other ceremonies have been entirely given up; and since the beginning of the reign of Queen Victoria, an additional sum of money has been given in lieu of provisions.

20. **Good Friday.**—This day, as the presumed anniversary of the Crucifixion, has for ages been solemnly observed throughout Christian Europe, the only exceptions being in Presbyterian countries, such as Scotland. In Catholic times, the observances of the day in England were of the same character with those which are still maintained in many parts of the continent. It is still a solemn festival of the Church of England, and the only one besides Christmas which is honoured by a general suspension of business. Strictly observant Church-of-England people abstain from all kinds of animal food, even from cream to tea; such, we are informed by Boswell, was the custom of Dr Johnson. The churches are in general well attended, and it is considered proper to appear there in black clothes.

Amongst the usages of this day was a strange ceremony of creeping to the cross, which even the king was not exempt from performing. The king also distributed rings at Westminster Abbey for the cure of the cramp. The ceremonious burying of a crucifix, as representing the burial of Christ, is calculated to give less surprise. It was also customary at great churches to have a small building in the form of a tomb, in which the host was this day deposited, by way of representing the burial of Christ. In England, and perhaps also in other countries, eggs and bacon were the kinds of food appropriate to Good Friday. The eggs laid on this day were thought to have the power of extinguishing any fire into which they might be thrown. In modern times, the only species of viands connected with Good Friday in Britain is the well-known hot cross bun—a small spiced cake, marked with the figure of a cross, and sold not only

in bakers' shops, but by persons traversing the streets with baskets.

In old times, Good Friday was distinguished in London by a sermon preached at *Paul's Cross* (a wooden pulpit placed on stone steps, and surmounted by a cross, which stood, till the time of the Civil War, in the open air, near the north-east corner of St Paul's Cathedral). The sermon was generally on the subject of Christ's passion. Connected with it, two or three others were preached on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, in Easter Week, at the Spital in Spitalfields, where the Lord Mayor and all the most eminent persons in London generally attended. The 'Spital sermons' are still kept up, but take place in St Bride's Church.

21. **Easter Eve.**—In Catholic times, it was customary to put out all fires on this day, and light them anew from flint. The priest blessed the new fire, and a brand from it was thought to be an effectual protection against thunder-strokes. A large wax-taper, called the Paschal Taper, was also blessed, and lighted beside the representative sepulchre above mentioned, and there a vigil was kept till morning. The taper used on one of these occasions in Westminster Abbey Church is said to have been 300 pounds in weight.

22. **Easter-day**, a solemn festival in celebration of the Resurrection. The word used by us is from *Ostara*, in Anglo-Saxon *Eastre*, the name of a goddess once extensively worshipped by the Teutonic nations, and personifying the light of the rising sun, or the dawn; it is allied to east. Easter is observed with much ceremonial, not only throughout Catholic Europe, and in the countries where the Greek Church is established, but in Turkey and the Mohammedan countries along the coast of Africa. The festival is an ingraftment upon the Jewish Passover, the name of which (*Pascha*) is still applied to it in almost every country besides England. The Catholic observances of Easter are of an elaborate character. At Rome, the pope is carried in

state to perform high-mass in St Peter's, from the balcony of which he afterwards blesses the people assembled in the Piazza below—perhaps one of the most imposing religious spectacles which the world anywhere presents. In England, before the Reformation, the Catholic observances of Easter were as fully enacted as in any other country. Early in the morning, a sort of theatrical representation of the Resurrection was performed in the churches, the priests coming to the little sepulchre where, on Good Friday, they had deposited the host, which they now brought forth with great rejoicings, as emblematical of the rising of the Saviour.

At present, Easter Sunday is distinguished by little besides the few peculiarities of the service, and the custom of going to church in attire as gay as possible.

The viands appropriate to Easter-day in the old time were, first and above all, eggs, then bacon, tansy-pudding, and bread and cheese. The origin of the connection of eggs with Easter is lost in the mists of remote antiquity. They are as rife at this day in Russia as in England. There it is customary to go about with a quantity, and to give one to each friend one meets, saying: 'Jesus Christ is risen;' to which the other replies: 'Yes, he is risen;' or, 'It is so of a truth.' The pope formerly blessed eggs, to be distributed throughout the Christian world for use on Easter-day. In Germany, instead of the egg itself, the people offer a print of it with some lines inscribed. Formerly, the king of England had hundreds prepared to give to his household: in a roll of the expenses of Edward I. the following occurs, in the accounts of Easter Sunday, in the eighteenth year of his reign—'Four hundred and a half of eggs, eighteenpence.'

At this day, the Easter eggs used in England are boiled hard in water containing a dye, so that they come out coloured. The boys take these eggs and make a kind of game, either by throwing (bowling) them to a distance on the greensward—he who throws oftenest without breaking his eggs being the victor—or hitting

them against each other in their respective hands, in which case the owner of the hardiest or last surviving egg gains the day.

It was at one time customary to have a gammon of bacon on this day, and to eat it all up, in signification of abhorrence of Judaism. The tansy seems to have been introduced into Easter-feasts as a successor to the bitter herbs used by the Jews at the Passover. It was usually presented well sugared.

It was a custom in the thirteenth century to seize all ecclesiastics found walking abroad between Easter and Pentecost, and make them purchase their liberty with money. This was an acting of the seizure of the apostles after Christ's passion.

'Lifting at Easter' is another old custom, which may be presumed to have originated in a design of dramatising the events connected with Christ's passion. It consisted in hoisting individuals up into the air, either in a chair or otherwise, until they relieved themselves by a forfeit. A curious record makes us aware that on Easter-day, in the eighteenth year of the reign of Edward I., seven ladies of the queen's household went into the king's chamber and *lifted him*, for which fourteen pounds appears to have been disbursed as a forfeit. The men lifted the women on Easter Monday, and the women claimed the privilege of lifting the men in return on the ensuing day. Three hoists were always given, attended by loud huzzas.

23. Easter Monday.—This and the ensuing day are holidays of the Church. The week commencing with Easter, and called thence Easter Week, is a season of festivity and partial suspension of business; and the earlier days of it after Easter itself, are in London devoted by the working-classes to recreation and amusement.

25. The Annunciation of Our Lady, a festival of the Church of England. It is commonly called in England *Lady-day*, as an abridgment of the Day of our Blessed Lady. This festival is in celebration of the incarnation of Christ, or the announcement by the Holy Ghost to Mary that she should bear

the Son of God. It is a gaudy day in the Romish Church. In Catholic countries the service of this day resounds with 'Hail, Mary!' uttered in a strain of the highest enthusiasm. The 25th of March is held as a quarter-day for many commercial purposes in England.

29. The first Sunday after Easter, called *Low Sunday*, because it is Easter-day repeated, with the church service somewhat abridged or *lowered* in the ceremony from the pomp of the festival the Sunday before.





JOHN LEIGHTON

APRIL

F

Next came fresh April, full of lustyhed,
And wanton as a kid whose horne new buds ;
Upon a bull he rode, the same which led
Europa floating through th' Argolick floods :
His horns were gilden all with golden studs,
And garnishèd with garlands goodly dight,
Of all the fairest flowers and freshest buds,
Which th' earth brings forth ; and wet he seemed in sight
With waves through which he waded for his love's delight.

SPENSER.



APRIL presents no prettier picture than that of green fields, with rustic stiles between the openings of the hedges, where old footpaths go in and out, winding along, until lost in the distance; with children scattered here and there, singly or in groups, just as the daisies are, all playing or gathering flowers. With what glee they rush about! chasing one another in zigzag lines like

butterflies, tumbling here, and running there; one lying on its back, laughing and shouting in the sunshine; another, prone on the grass, is pretending to cry, in order to be picked up. A third, a quiet little thing, with her silky hair hanging all about her sweet face, sits patiently sticking daisy-buds on the thorns of a leafless branch, that she may carry home a tree of flowers. Some fill their pinafores, others sit decorating their caps and bonnets; while one, whose fair brow has been garlanded, dances as she holds up the skirt of her little frock daintily with her fingers. Their graceful attitudes can only be seen for a few moments; for if they catch a strange eye directed towards them, they at once cease their play, and start off like alarmed birds. We have often wished for a photograph of such a scene as we have here described and witnessed while sheltered behind some hedge or tree.

Dear to us all are those old footpaths that, time out of mind, have gone winding through the pleasant fields, beside hedges and along watercourses, leading to peaceful villages and far-away farms, which the hum and jar of noisy cities never reach; where we seem at every stride to be drawing nearer the Creator, as we turn our backs upon the perishable labours of man.

AN OLD MAN'S SPRING THOUGHTS.

Only watch some old man, bent with the weight of years, walking out into the fields when April greens the ground—

Making it all one emerald.

With what entire enjoyment he moves along, pausing

every here and there to look at the opening flowers! Yes, they are the very same he gazed upon in boyhood, springing from the same roots, and growing in the very spots where he gathered them fifty long years ago. How many changes he has seen since those days, while they appear unaltered! He thinks how happy life then passed away, with no more care than that felt by the flowers that wave in the breeze and sunshine, which shake the rain from their heads, as he did when a boy, darting in and out bareheaded, when he ran to play amid the April showers. Tears were then dried and forgotten almost as soon as shed. He recalls the companions of his early manhood, who stood full-leaved beside him, in the pride of their summer strength and beauty, showing no sign of decay, but exulting as if their whole life would be one unchanged summerhood. Where are they now? Some fell with all their leafy honours thick upon them. A few reached the season of the 'sere and yellow leaf' before they fell, and were drifted far away from the spot where they flourished, and which now 'knoweth them no more.' A few stood up amid the silence of the winter of their age, though they saw but little of one another in those days of darkness. And now he recalls the withered and ghastly faces, which were long since laid beneath the snow. He alone is spared to look through the green gates of April down those old familiar footpaths, which they many a time traversed together.

'Cuckoo! cuckoo!' Ah, well he knows that note! It brings again the backward years—the sound he tried to imitate when a boy—home, with its little garden—the very face of the old clock, whose ticking told him it was near schooltime. And he looks for the messenger of

spring now as he did then, as it flies from tree to tree ; but all he can discover is the green foliage, for his eyes are dim and dazed, and he cannot see it now. He hears the song of some bird, which was once as familiar to him as his mother's voice, and tries to remember its name, but cannot ; and as he tries, he thinks of those who were with him when he heard it ; and so he goes on unconsciously unwinding link by link the golden chain which reaches from the grave to heaven. And when he returns home, he carries with him a quiet heart, for his thoughts scarcely seem allied to earth, and lie 'too deep for tears.' He seems to have looked behind that gray misty summit where the forgotten years have rolled down, and lie buried, and to have seen that dim mustering-ground beyond the grave, where those who have gone before are waiting to receive him.

THE WOODS IN APRIL.

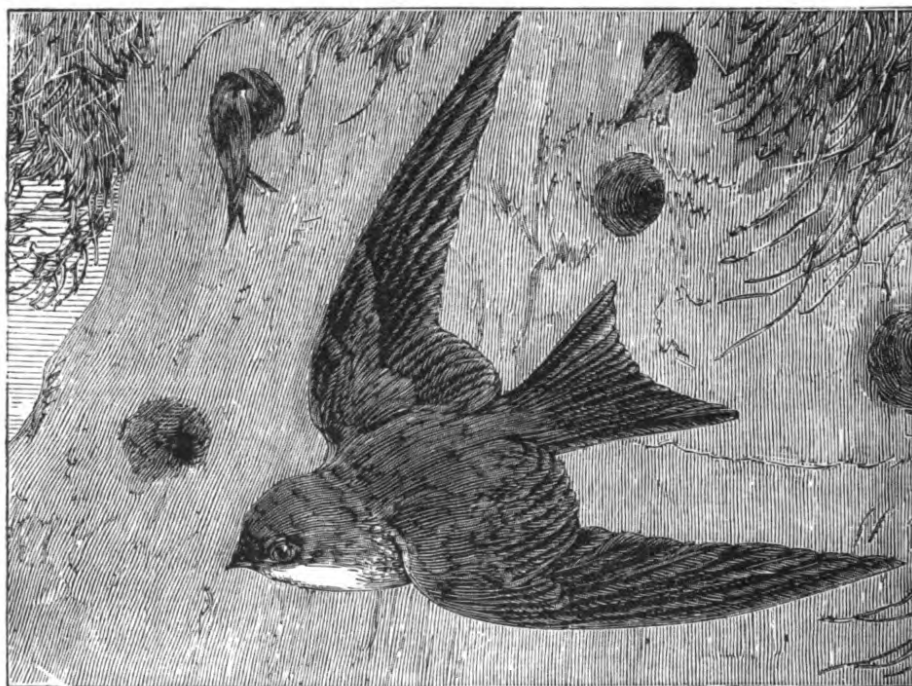
Many of the trees now begin to make 'some little show of green.' Among these is the elm, which has a beautiful look with the blue April sky seen through its half-developed foliage. The ash also begins to show its young leaves, though the last year's 'keys,' with the blackened seed, still hang among the branches, and rattle again in every wind that blows. The oak puts out its red buds and bright metallic-looking leaves slowly, as if to show that its hardy limbs require as little clothing as the ancient Britons did, when hoary oaks covered long leagues of our forest-studded island. The chestnut begins to shoot forth its long, finger-shaped foliage, which breaks through the rounded and gummy buds that have so firmly inclosed it. On the limes we see a tender and

delicate green, which the sun shines through as if they were formed of the clearest glass. The beech throws from its graceful sprays leaves which glitter like emeralds when they are steeped in sunshine; and no other tree has such a smooth and beautiful bark, as rustic lovers well know when they carve the names of their beloved ones on it.

The silver birch throws down its flowers in waves of gold, while the leaves drop over them in the most graceful forms, and the stem is dashed with a variety of colours like a bird. The laburnums stand up like ancient foresters, clothed in green and gold. But beautiful above all are the fruit-trees, now in blossom. The peaches seem to make the very walls to which they are trailed burn again with their bloom, while the cherry-tree looks as if a shower of daisies had rained on it, and adhered to the branches. The plum is one mass of unbroken blossom, without showing a single green leaf, while, in the distance, the almond-tree looks like some gigantic flower, whose head is one tuft of bloom, so thickly are the branches embowered with buds. Then come the apple-blossoms, the loveliest of all, looking like a bevy of virgins peeping out of their white drapery, covered with blushes; while all the air around is perfumed with the fragrance of the bloom, as if the winds had been out gathering flowers, and scattered the perfume everywhere as they passed. All day long the bees are busy among the bloom, making an unceasing murmur, for April is beautiful to look upon; and if she hides her sweet face for a few hours behind the rain-clouds, it is only that she may appear again peeping out through the next burst of sunshine in a veil of fresher green, through which we see the red and white of her bloom.

THE BIRDS OF APRIL.

Numbers of birds, whose names and songs are familiar to us, have, by the end of this month, returned to build and sing once more in the bowery hollows of our old woods, among the bushes that dot our heaths, moors, and commons, and in the hawthorn-hedges which stretch for weary miles over green Old England, and will soon be covered with May-buds. We find the 'time of their coming' mentioned in the pages of the Bible, showing that they migrated, as they do now, and were noticed by the patriarchs of old as they led their flocks to the fresh spring-pastures. The sand-martin—one of the earliest



Sand-martin.

swallows that arrives—sets to work like a miner, making a pickaxe of his beak, and hewing his way into the sand-bank, until he hollows out for himself a comfortable

house to dwell in, with a long passage to it, that goes sloping upward to keep out the wet, and in which he is caverned as dry and snug as ever were our painted forefathers. The window-swallow is busy building in the early morning—we see his shadow darting across the sunny window-blind while we are in bed; and if we arise, and look cautiously through one corner of the blind we see it at work, close to us, smoothing the clay with its throat and the under part of the neck, while it moves its little head to and fro, holding on to the wall or window-frame all the time by its claws, and the flattening pressure of the tail. It will soon get accustomed to our face, and go on with its work, as if totally unconscious of our presence, if we never wilfully frighten it.

Other birds, like hatters, felt their nest so closely and solidly together, that they are as hard to cut through as a well-made millboard. Some fit the materials carefully together, bending one piece and breaking another, and making them fit in everywhere like joiners and carpenters, though they have neither square, nor rule, nor tool, only their tiny beaks, with which they do all. Some weave the materials in and out, like basket-makers; and by some unknown process—defying all human ingenuity—they will work in, and bend to suit their purpose, sticks and other things so brittle and rotten that were we only to touch them ever so gently, they would drop to pieces. Nothing seems to come amiss to them in the shape of building materials, for we find their nests formed of what might have been relics of mouldering scarecrows, bits of old hats, carpets, wool-stockings, cloth, hair, moss, cotton in rags and hanks, dried grass, withered leaves, feathers, lichen, decayed wood, bark, and we know

not what beside ; all put neatly together by these skilful and cunning workmen. They are the oldest miners and masons, carpenters and builders, felters, weavers, and basket-makers ; and the Pyramids are but as the erections of yesterday compared with the time when these ancient architects first began to build. As for their nests—

What nice hand,
With every implement and means of art,
And twenty years' apprenticeship to boot,
Could make us such another ?

HURDIS.

Amongst the arrivals in April is the redstart, which is fond of building in old walls and ruins. Where the wild wallflower waves from some crumbling castle or fallen monastery, there it is pretty sure to be seen, perched perhaps on the top of a broken arch, constant at its song from early morn, and shaking its tail all the time with a tremulous motion. We also recognise the pleasant song of the titlark, or tree-pipit, as it is often called ; and peeping about, we see the bird perched on some topmost branch, from which it rises, singing, into the air a little way up, then descends again, and perches on the same branch it soared from, never seeming at rest. We also see the pretty whitethroat, as it rises up and down, alighting a score times or more on the same spray, and singing all the time, seeming as if it could neither remain still nor be silent for a single minute on any account. Sometimes it fairly startles you, as it darts past, its white breast flashing on the eye like a sudden stream of light. Country children, when they see it, call out,

Pretty Peggy Whitethroat,
Come stop, and give us a note.

The woodlark is another handsome-looking bird, that sings while on the wing as well as when perched on some budding bough, though its song is not so sweet as that of Shakspeare's lark, which

At heaven's gate sings.

Then there are the linnets, that never leave us, but only shift their quarters from one part of the country to another, loving most to congregate about the neighbourhood of gorse-bushes, where they build and sing, and live at peace among the thousands of bees that are ever coming to look for honey in the golden baskets which hang there in myriads. We hear also the pretty goldfinch, that is marked with black and white, and golden brown; and pleasant it is to watch a couple of them, tugging and tearing at the same head of groundsel. But all the land is now musical: the woods are like great cathedrals, pillared with oaks and roofed with the sky, from which the birds sing, like hidden nuns, in the green twilight of the leafy cloisters.

THE ANGLER—AT THE RIVER SIDE.

Now the angler hunts up his fishing-tackle, for the breath of April is warm and gentle; a golden light plays upon the streams and rivers, and when the rain comes down, it seems to tread with muffled feet on the young leaves, and hardly to press down the flowers. But to hear the sweet birds sing, to feel the refreshing air blowing gently on all around, and see Nature arraying herself in all her spring beauty, has ever seemed to us a much greater pleasure than that of fishing. Few care about reading

the chapters in delightful old Izaak Walton that treat upon fishes alone: it is when he quits his rod and line, and begins to gossip about the beauty of the season; when he sits upon that primrose bank, and tells us that the meadows 'are too pleasant to be looked at but only on holidays;' making, while so seated, 'a brave breakfast with a piece of powdered beef, and a radish or two he has in his bag'—that we love most to listen to him. Still, angling is of itself a pleasant out-of-door sport; for, if tired, there is the bank ready to sit down upon; the clear river to gaze over; the willows to watch as they ever wave wildly to and fro; or the circle in the water—made by some fish as it rises at a fly—to trace, as it rounds and widens, and breaks among the pebbles on the shore, or is lost amid the tangles of the overhanging and ever-moving sedge. Then comes the arrowy flight of the swallows, as they dart after each other through the arch of the bridge, or dimple the water every here and there as they sweep over it.

Ever shifting our position, we can 'dander' along, where little curves and indentations form tiny bays and secluded pools, which, excepting where they open out riverward, are shut in by their own overhanging trees and waving sedges. Or, walking along below the embankment, we come to the great sluice-gates, that are now open, and where we can see through them the stream that runs between far-away meadows where all is green, and shadows are thrown at noonday over the haunts of the water-hen and water-rat. Saving the lapping of the water, all is silent. There a contemplative man may sit and hold communion with Nature, seeing something new

every time he shifts his glance, for many a flower has now made its appearance which remained hidden while March blew his windy trumpet, and in these green, moist, shady places the bluebell of spring may now be found. It is amongst the earliest flowers—such as the cowslips and daisies—that country children love to place the bluebell, to ornament many an open cottage-window in April; it bears no resemblance to the blue harebell of summer, as the latter flowers grow singly, while those of the wild hyacinth nearly cover the stem with their closely-packed bells, sometimes to a foot in height. The bells which are folded are of a deeper blue than those that have opened; and very gracefully do those hang down that are in full bloom, showing the tops of their fairy cups turning backward. The dark upright leaves are of a beautiful green, and attract the eye pleasantly long before the flowers appear.

APRIL FLOWERS AND LEAVES.

Beside them, the delicate lily-of-the-valley may also now be found, one of the most graceful of all our wild-flowers. How elegantly its white-ivory-looking bells rise, tier above tier, to the very summit of the flower-stalk, while the two broad leaves which protect it seem placed there for its support, as if a thing of such frail beauty required something to lean upon! Those who have inhaled the perfume from a whole bed of these lilies in some open forest-glade, can fancy what odours were wafted through Eden in the golden mornings of the early world. At the end of the month, cowslips are sprinkled plentifully over the old deep-turfed pastures in which they delight to grow, for long grass is unfavourable to

their flowering, and in it they run all to stalk. What a close observer of flowers Shakspeare must have been, to note even the 'crimson drops i' th' bottom' of the cowslip, which he also calls 'cinque-spotted!' The separate flowers or petals are called 'peeps' in the country, and these are picked out to make cowslip wine. We have counted as many as twenty-seven flowers on one stalk, which formed a truss of bloom larger than that of a verbena. A pile of cowslip 'peeps,' in a clean basket, with a pretty country child, who has gathered them and brought them for sale, is no uncommon sight at this season in the market-place of some old-fashioned country town. The gaudy dandelion and great marsh-marigold are now in flower, one lighting up our wayside wastes almost everywhere, and the other looking like a burning lamp as its reflection seems blazing in the water.

It is pleasant to see a great bed of tall dandelions on a windy April day shaking all their golden heads together; and common as it may appear, it is a beautiful compound flower. And who has not, in the days of childhood, blown off the downy seed, to tell the hours of the day by the number of puffs it took to disperse the feathered messengers? How beautifully, too, the leaves are cut! and when bleached, who does not know that it is the most wholesome herb that ever gave flavour to a salad? Shakspeare's

Lady-smock, all silver white,

is also now abundant in moist places, still retaining its old name of 'cuckoo-flower,' though we know that several similar flowers are so called in the country through coming into bloom while the cuckoo sings. The curious

arum or cuckoo-pint, which children call 'lords and ladies' in the midland counties, is now found under the hedges. Strip off the spathe or hood, and inside you will find the 'parson-in-his-pulpit,' for that is another of its strange country names. Few know that this changing plant, with its spotted leaves, forms those bright coral-berries which give such a rich colouring to the scenery of autumn. It must have furnished matter of mirth to our easily pleased forefathers, judging from the many merry names they gave to it, and which are still to be found in our old herbals.

Leaves, also, are beautiful to look upon without regarding the exquisite forms and colours of the flowers; and strange are the names our botanists have been compelled to adopt to describe their different shapes. Awl, arrow, finger, hand, heart, and kidney-shaped are a few of the names in common use for this purpose. Then the margin or edges of leaves are saw-toothed, crimped, smooth, slashed, notched, torn out, and look even as if some of them had been bitten by every variety of mouth; as if hundreds of insects had been at work, and each had eaten out its own fanciful pattern. Others, again are armed, and have a 'touch-me-not' look about them, like those of the holly and thistles; while some are covered underneath with star-shaped prickles, hair-like particles, or soft down, making them, to the touch, rough, smooth, sticky, or soft as the down of velvet. To really see the form of a leaf, it must be examined when all the green is gone and only the skeleton left, which shows all the ribs and veins that were before covered. A glass is required to see this exquisite workmanship. The most beautiful lace is poor in comparison with the patterns

which Nature weaves in her mysterious loom ; and skilful lace-makers say, that no machine could be made to equal the beautiful patterns of the skeleton leaves, or form shapes so diversified. Spring prepares the drapery which she hangs up in her green halls for the birds to shelter and build and sing among ; and soon the hawthorn will light up these hanging curtains with its silver lamps, and perfume the leafy bowers with May.

AN OLD-FASHIONED DESCRIPTION OF APRIL.

In a work entitled *The Twelve Moneths*, published in 1661, April is described with a glow of language that recalls the Shaksperian era :

‘The youth of the country make ready for the morris-dance, and the merry milkmaid supplies them with ribbons her true love had given her. The little fishes lie nibbling at the bait, and the porpoise plays in the pride of the tide. The shepherds entertain the princes of Arcadia with pleasant roundelays. The aged feel a kind of youth, and youth hath a spirit full of life and activity ; the aged hairs refreshen, and the youthful cheeks are as red as a cherry. The lark and the lamb look up at the sun, and the labourer is abroad by the dawning of the day. The sheep’s eye in the lamb’s head tells kind-hearted maids strange tales, and faith and troth make the true lover’s knot. It were a world to set down the worth of this month ; for it is Heaven’s blessing and the earth’s comfort. It is the messenger of many pleasures, the courtier’s progress, and the farmer’s profit ; the labourer’s harvest, and the beggar’s pilgrimage. In sum, there is much to be spoken of it ; but, to avoid tedious-

ness, I hold it, in all that I can see in it, the jewel of time and the joy of nature.

Hail April, true Medea of the year,
That makest all things young and fresh appear,
What praise, what thanks, what commendations due,
For all thy pearly drops of morning dew ?
When we despair, thy seasonable showers
Comfort the corn, and cheer the drooping flowers ;
As if thy charity could not but impart
A shower of tears to see us out of heart.
Sweet, I have penned thy praise, and here I bring it,
In confidence the birds themselves will sing it.'

Characteristics of April.

It is eminently a spring month, and in England some of the finest weather of the year occasionally takes place in April. Generally, however, it is a month composed of



shower and sunshine rapidly chasing each other ; and often a chill is communicated by the east winds. The

sun enters Taurus on the 20th of the month, and thus commences the second month past the equinox. At the beginning of April, in London, the sun rises at 5 h. 36 m. A.M., and sets at 6 h. 31 m. P.M.; at the end, the times of rising and setting are 4 h. 35 m. and 7 h. 19 m. The mean temperature of the air is 49° 9'.

Proverbial wisdom takes, on the whole, a kindly view of this flower-producing month. It even asserts that—

A cold April
The barn will fill.

The rain is welcomed :

An April flood
Carries away the frog and his brood.

And

April showers
Make May flowers.

Nor is there any harm in wind :

When April blows his horn,
It's good for both hay and corn.

AN APRIL DAY.

This day dame Nature seemed in love ;
The lusty sap began to move ;
Fresh juice did stir th' embracing vines.
And birds had drawn their valentines.
The jealous trout that low did lie,
Rose at a well-dissembled fly ;
Already were the eaves possessed
With the swift pilgrim's daubèd nest :
The groves already did rejoice,
In Philomel's triumphant voice :

The showers were short, the weather mild,
 The morning fresh, the evening smiled.
 Joan takes her neat-rubbed pail, and now
 She trips to milk the sand-red cow.
 The fields and gardens were beset
 With tulips, crocus, violet ;
 And now, though late, the modest rose
 Did more than half a blush disclose.
 Thus all looks gay and full of cheer,
 To welcome the new-liveried year.

SIR H. WOTTON.

Key to the Calendar.

THE Romans gave this month the name of *Aprilis*, from *aperio*, because it was the season when things *opened*. By the Saxons it was called *Eastre-monath*. The Dutch term it Grass month.

1. **All Fools' Day.**—From a very early age, this day has been considered as one set apart for the exercise of all kinds of mirthful folly and practical joking; the term given to it we may hold as a travesty of the festival of All-saints' Day. The custom of playing off little tricks on this day, whereby ridicule may be fixed upon unguarded individuals, appears to be universal throughout Europe. In France, one thus imposed upon is called *un poisson d'Avril* (an April fish). In England, such a person is called an April fool; in Scotland, a gowk. Gowk is the Scotch for the cuckoo, and also signifies a foolish person, being, in fact, from the same root as the English word 'gawky.' The favourite jest in Britain is to send one upon an errand for something grossly nonsensical—as for pigeon's milk, or the History of Adam's Grandfather; or to make appointments which are not to be kept; or to call to a passer-by that his latchet is unloosed, or that there is a spot of mud upon his face. When he falls into the snare,

the term April fool or gowk is applied with a shout of laughter. It is very remarkable that the Hindus practise precisely similar tricks on the 31st of March, when they have what is called the Huli Festival.

7. The fifteenth day after Easter is marked by an old English festival, to which the inexplicable term *Hock-day* is applied. The custom peculiar to the day consisted in the men and women of rural districts going out to the roads with ropes, and intercepting passengers jocularly, and raising money from them, to be bestowed, it may well be presumed, in pious uses.

23. **St George's Day** in the Romish calendar. St George is held as the tutelar or patron saint of England. He is said to have been a native of Cappadocia; and it is tolerably certain that he was held in great veneration by the Greeks in the fourth century. He is invariably represented as on horseback, spearing a dragon. With a regard apparently to his military character, our Edward III. adopted his name as his war-cry, and his figure as a badge in connection with the Order of the Garter; thus originated the association of St George with England, since in many respects so conspicuous. It is remarkable that in Russia St George is as much a favourite saint as he is in England. The sovereigns of that country have borne his emblem from a time previous to Edward III. The derivation of Russian Christianity from the Greek Church suggests a ready explanation of this fact.

25. **St Mark the Evangelist's Day**, a holiday of the Church of England. It was once customary to bless the fruits of the earth on this day; hence, perhaps, a notion amongst the peasantry, that to plough or do any other work on St Mark's Day would be apt to bring down divine wrath. The eve of St Mark was distinguished by some superstitious ceremonies. Maidens met to make the *dumb cake*. This was done by a number not exceeding three, and it was to be done in silence. At twelve o'clock, the cake being prepared, each broke off a piece

and ate it; then walked backward to her sleeping-room. It was thought that those who were to be married would hear a noise as of a man approaching. Those who heard nothing were to remain unmarried. Watching the church porch was another practice of this eve. A man went fasting and took his station there before midnight. It was thought that during the hour between twelve and one he would see the spirits of all who were to die in the parish during the ensuing year walk into church, in the order in which they were to die, those who were to perish by violence making gesticulations appropriate to the peculiar modes of their death. There were similar superstitions regarding the Eve of St John (June 24).

26. **Rogation Sunday.**—The Sunday before Ascension is always so called. The three days immediately following are also called Rogation Days. The Archbishop of Vienne, in Dauphiné, about the year 469, caused the litanies or supplications to be said on those days for deliverance from earthquakes, by which his city had been much injured. The days were thence called Rogation—that is supplication—days.

30. **Ascension-day, or Holy Thursday,** a holiday of the Church of England, observed by the shutting of most of the public offices. This festival, which invariably occurs on the fortieth day after Easter, is designed to celebrate the ascension of Christ into heaven. It was once distinguished by great festivities.







II

JOHN LEIGHTON

MAY

Then came fair MAY, the fayrest mayd on ground,
Deckt all with dainties of her season's pryde,
And throwing flowres out of her lap around :
Upon two brethren's shoulders she did ride,
The twinnes of Leda ; which on either side
Supported her, like to their souveraine queene.
Lord ! how all creatures laught, when her they spide,
And leapt and daunc't as they had ravisht beene !
And Cupid selfe about her fluttered all in greene.

SPENSER.



MAY brings with her the beauty and fragrance of hawthorn blossoms and the song of the nightingale. Our old poets delighted in describing her as a beautiful maiden clothed in sunshine, and scattering flowers on the earth, while she danced to the music of birds and brooks. She has given a rich greenness to the young corn, and the grass is now tall enough for the flowers to play at hide-

and-peek among, as they are chased by the wind. The grass also gives a softness to the dazzling white of the daisies and the glittering gold of the buttercups, which, but for this soft bordering of green, would almost be too lustrous to look upon.

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF MAY.

We hear the song of the milkmaid in the early morning, and catch glimpses of the white milk-pail she balances on her head between the openings in the hedgerows, or watch her as she paces through the fields, with her gown drawn through the pocket-hole of her quilted petticoat, to prevent it dragging in the dew. We see the dim figure of the angler, clad in gray, moving through the white mist that still lingers beside the river. The early school-boy, who has a long way to go, loiters, and lays down his books to peep under almost every hedge and bush he passes, in quest of birds' nests. The village girl, sent on some morning errand, with the curtain of her cotton-covered bonnet hanging down her neck, 'buttons up' her little eyes to look at us, as she faces the sun, or shades her forehead with her hand, as she watches the skylark soaring and singing on its way to the great silver pavilion of clouds that stands amid the blue plains of heaven.

We see the progress spring has made in the cottage gardens which we pass, for the broad-leaved rhubarb has now grown tall; the radishes are rough-leaved; the young onions show like strong grass; the rows of spinach are ready to cut, peas and young potatoes are hoed up, and the gooseberries and currants show like green beads on the bushes; while the cabbages, to the great joy of the

cottagers, are beginning to 'heart.' The fields and woods now ring with incessant sounds all day long; from out the sky comes the loud cawing of the rook as it passes overhead, sometimes startling us by its sudden cry, when flying so low we can trace its moving shadow over the grass.

We hear the cooing of ringdoves, and when they cease for a few moments, the pause is filled up by the singing of so many birds, that only a practised ear is enabled to distinguish one from the other: then comes the clear, bell-like note of the cuckoo, high above all, followed by the shriek of the beautifully marked jay, until it is drowned in the louder cry of the woodpecker, which some naturalists have compared to a laugh, as if the bird were a cynic, making a mockery of the whole of this grand, wild concert. In the rich green pastures there are sounds of pleasant life; the bleating of sheep, and the musical jingling of their bells, as they move along to some fresh patch of tempting herbage; the lowing of full-uddered cows, that morning and night brim the milk-pails, and make much extra labour in the dairy, where the rosy-cheeked maidens sing merrily over their pleasant work.

THE FARM—THE BEES—MAY BLOSSOMS.

We see the great farm-house in the centre of the rich milk-yielding meadows, and think of cooling curds and whey, luscious cheesecakes and custards, cream that you might cut, and strawberries growing in rows before the beehives in the garden; and we go along licking our lips at the fancied taste, and thinking how these pleasant dainties lose all their fine country flavour

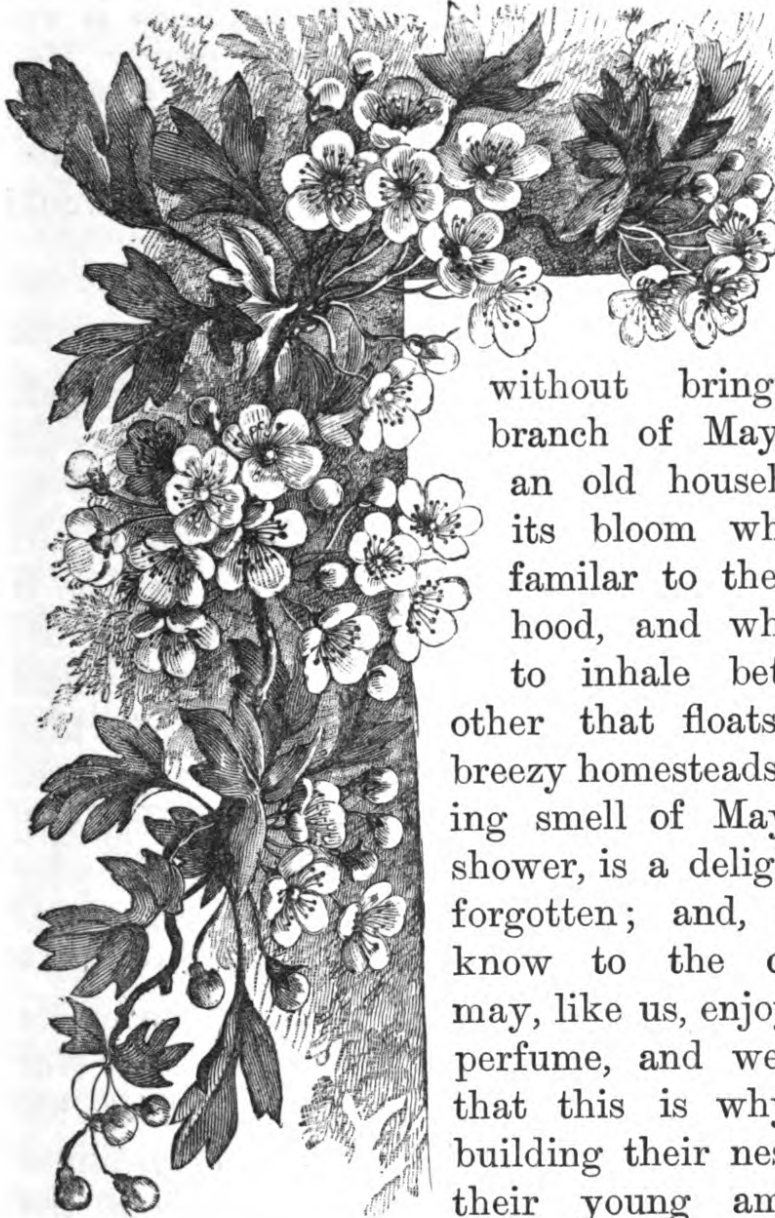
when brought into our smoky cities, while here they seem as if

Cooled a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green.

Every way bees are now flying across our path, after making 'war among the velvet buds,' out of which they come covered with pollen, as if they had been plundering some golden treasury, and were returning home with their spoils. They, with their luminous eyes—which can see in the dark—are familiar with all the little inhabitants of the flowers they plunder, and which are only visible to us through glasses that magnify largely. What a commotion a bee must make among those tiny dwellers in the golden courts of stamens and pistils, as its great eyes come peeping down into the very bottom of the calyx—the foundation of their flowery tower! Then, as we walk along, we remember that in those undated histories called the Welsh triads—which were oral traditions ages before the Romans landed on our shores—England was called the Island of Honey by its first discoverers, and that there was a pleasant murmur of bees in our primeval forests long before a human sound had disturbed their silence.

But, beyond all other objects that please the eye with their beauty, and delight the sense with their fragrance, stand the May-buds, only seen in perfection at the end of this pleasant month, or a few brief days beyond. All our old poets have done reverence to the milk-white scented blossoms of the hawthorn—the May of poetry—which throws an undying fragrance over their pages; nor does any country in the world present so beautiful a sight as

our long leagues of English hedgerows sheeted with May blossoms. We see it in the cottage windows, the fire-



less grates of clean country parlours are ornamented with it; and rarely does any one re-

turn home without bringing back a branch of May, for there is an old household aroma in its bloom which has been familiar to them from childhood, and which they love to inhale better than any other that floats around their breezy homesteads. The refreshing smell of May-buds after a shower, is a delight never to be forgotten; and, for aught we know to the contrary, birds may, like us, enjoy this delicious perfume, and we have fancied that this is why they prefer building their nests and rearing their young among the May blossoms.

The red May, which is a common ornament of pleasure-grounds, is not, we fancy, so fragrant as the white hawthorn, nor so beautiful as the pale pink May, which is

coloured like the maiden blush rose. It is in the dew they shake from the pink May that our simple country maidens love to bathe their faces, believing that it will give them the complexion of the warm pearly May blossoms, which they call the Lady May. What a refreshing shower-bath, when well shaken, a large hawthorn, heavy with dew, and covered with bloom, would make!

THE NIGHTINGALE.



Nightingale.

The nightingale comes with its sweet music to usher in this month of flowers, and it is now generally believed that the male is the first that makes its appearance in England, and that his song increases in sweetness as the expected arrival of the female draws nearer. Nor will he shift his place, but continues to sing about the spot where he is first heard, and where she is sure

to find him when she comes. We have no doubt these

birds understand one another, and that the female finds her mate by his song, which was familiar to her before her arrival, and that she can distinguish his voice from all others. Could the nightingales which are said to be seen together in the countries to which they migrate be caught and marked before they return to England, this might be proved.

One bird will answer another, taking up the song where the first ceases when they are far beyond our power of hearing, as has been proved by persons placed midway, and close to the rival songsters, who have timed the intervals between, and found that, to a second, one bird began the instant the other was silent; though the distance between was too far apart for human ears to catch a note of the bird farthest from the listener, the hands which marked the seconds on the watches showed that one bird had never begun to sing until the other had ended. You may throw a stone among the foliage where the nightingale is singing, and it will only cease for a few moments, and move away a few feet, then resume its song.

At the end of this month, or early in June, its nest, which is generally formed of old oak leaves, may be found, lined only with grass—a poor home for so sweet a singer, and not unlike that in which many of our sweetest poets were first cradled. As soon as the young are hatched, the male ceases to sing, losing his voice, and making only a disagreeable croaking noise when danger is near, instead of giving utterance to the same sweet song

That found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn.

KEATS.

How enraptured must good old Izaak Walton have been with the song of the nightingale, when he exclaimed, 'Lord, what music hast Thou provided for the saints in heaven, when Thou affordest bad men such music on earth!'

Butterflies are now darting about in every direction, here seeming to play with one another—a dozen together in places—there resting with folded wings on some flower, then setting off in that zigzag flight which enables them to escape their pursuers, as few birds can turn sudden enough, when on the wing, to capture them. What is that liquid nourishment, we often wonder, which they suck up through their tiny probosces; is it dew, or the honey of flowers? Examine the exquisite scales of their wings through a glass, and then you will say that, poetical as many of the names are by which they are known, they are not equal to the beauty they attempt to designate. Rose-shaded, damask-dyed, garden-carpet, violet-spotted, green-veined, and many another name beside, conveys no notion of the jewels of gold and silver, and richly-coloured precious stones, set in the forms of the most beautiful flowers, which adorn their wings, heads, and the under part of their bodies, some portions of which appear like plumes of the gaudiest feathers. Our old poet Spenser calls the butterfly 'Lord of all the works of nature,' who reigns over the air and earth, and feeds on flowers, taking

Whatever thing doth please the eye.

What a poor name is Red Admiral for that beautiful and well-known butterfly which may be driven out of almost any bed of nettles, and is richly banded with black,

scarlet, and blue! Very few of these short-lived beauties survive the winter; such as do, come out with a sad tattered appearance on the following spring, and with all their rich colours faded.

THE TREES—TRUE ENJOYMENT OF NATURE.

By the end of this month most of the trees will have donned their new attire, nor will they ever appear more beautiful than now, for the foliage of summer is darker; the delicate spring-green is gone by the end of June, and the leaves then no longer look fresh and new. Nor is the foliage as yet dense enough to hide the traces of the branches, which, like graceful maidens, still show their shapes through their slender attire—a beauty that will be lost when they attain the full-bourgeoned matronliness of summer.

But trees are rarely to be seen to perfection in woods or forests, unless it be here and there one or two standing in some open space, for in these places they are generally too crowded together. When near, if not over close, they show best in some noble avenue, especially if each tree has plenty of room to stretch out its arms, without too closely elbowing its neighbour; then a good many together can be taken in by the eye at once, from the root to the highest spray, and grand do they look as the aisle of some noble cathedral. In clumps they are 'beautiful exceedingly,' scattered as it were at random, when no separate branch is seen, but all the foliage is massed together like one immense tree, resting on its background of sky. Even on level ground a clump of trees has a pleasing appearance, for the lower branches blend harmoniously with the grass, while the blue air

seems to float about the upper portions like a transparent veil.

Here, too, we see such colours as only a few of our first-rate artists succeed in imitating; the sunshine that falls golden here, and deepens into amber there, touched with bronze, then the dark green, almost black in the shade, with dashes of purple and emerald—green as the first sward of showery April. We have often fancied, when standing on some eminence that overlooked a wide stretch of woodland, we have seen such terraces along the sweeps of foliage as were too beautiful for anything excepting angels to walk upon.

While thus walking and musing through the fields and woods at this pleasant season of the year, a contented and imaginative man can readily fancy that all these quiet paths and delightful prospects were made for him, or that he is a principal shareholder in nature's great freehold. He stops in winter to see the hedger and ditcher at work, or to look at the men repairing the road, and it gives him as much pleasure to see the unsightly gap filled up with young 'quicksets,' the ditch embankment repaired, and the hole in the high-road made sound, as it does the wealthy owner of the estate, who has to pay the men thus employed for their labour. And when he passes that way again, he stops to see how much the quicksets have grown, or whether the patch on the embankment is covered with grass and wild-flowers, or if the repaired hollow in the road is sound, and has stood the drying winds of March, the heavy rains of April, and is glad to find it standing level and hard in the sunshine of May.

If it is a large inclosed park, and the proprietor has put up warnings that within there are steel traps, spring

guns, and 'most biting laws' for trespassers, still the contented wanderer is sure to find some gentle eminence that overlooks at least a portion of it. From this he will catch glimpses of glen and glade, and see the deer trooping through the long avenues, standing under some broad-branched oak, or, with their high antlers only visible, couching among the cool fan-leaved fern. They cannot prosecute him for looking through the great iron gates, which are aptly mounted with grim stone griffins, who ever stand rampant on the tall pillars, and seem to threaten with their dead eyes every intruder; nor prevent him from admiring the long high avenue of ancient elms, through which the sunshine streams and quivers on the broad carriageway as if it were canopied with a waving network of gold. He sees the great lake glimmering far down, and making a light behind the perspective of dark branches, and knows that those moving specks of silver which are ever crossing his vision are the stately swans sailing to and fro; the cawing of rooks falls with a pleasant sound upon his ear, as they hover around the old ancestral trees, which have been a rookery for centuries.

Once there were pleasant footpaths between those aged oaks, and beside those old hawthorns—still covered with May-buds—that led to neighbouring villages, which can only now be reached by circuitous roads, that lie without the park: alas that no 'village Hampden' rose up to do battle for the preservation of the old rights of way! Here and there an old stile, which forms a picturesque object between the heavy trunks to which it was clamped, is allowed to remain, and that is almost all there is left to point out the pleasant places through which those obliterated footpaths went winding along.

FLOWERS OF MAY.



We have now a great increase of flowers, and amongst them the graceful wood-sorrel—the true Irish shamrock—the trefoil leaves of which are heart-shaped, of a bright green, and a true weather-glass, as they always shut up at the approach of rain.

The petals, which are beautifully streaked with lilac, soon fade when the flower is gathered, while the leaves yield the purest oxalic acid, and are much sourer than the common sorrel.

Buttercups are now abundant, and make the fields one blaze of gold, for they grow higher than the generality of our grasses, and so over-top the green that surrounds them. Children may now be seen in country lanes and suburban roads carrying them home by armfuls, heads and tails mixed together, and trailing on the ground. This common flower belongs to that large family of plants which come under the *ranunculus* genus, and not a better flower can be found to illustrate botany, as it is easily taken to pieces, and readily explained; the number five being that of the sepals of calyx, petals, and nectar-cup, which a child can remember.

Sweet woodruff now displays its small white flowers, and those who delight in perfuming their wardrobes will not fail to gather it, for it has the smell of new hay, and

retains its scent a length of time, and is by many greatly preferred before lavender. This delightful fragrance is hardly perceptible when the plant is first gathered, unless the leaves are bruised or rubbed between the fingers; then the powerful odour is inhaled. The sweet woodruff is rather a scarce plant, and must be sought for in woods, about the trunks of oaks—oak-leaf mould being the soil it most delights in; though small, the white flowers are as beautiful as those of the star-shaped jessamine.

Plentiful as red and white champions are, it is very rare to find them both together, though there is hardly a hedge in a sunny spot under which they are not now in bloom. Like the ragged robin, they are in many places still called cuckoo-flowers, and what the 'cuckoo buds of yellow hue' are, mentioned by Shakspeare, has never been satisfactorily explained. We have little doubt, when the names of flowers two or three centuries ago were known to but few, that many which bloomed about the time the cuckoo appeared were called cuckoo-flowers; we can find at least a score bearing that name in our old herbals.

Few, when looking at the greater stitchwort, now in flower, would fancy that that large-shaped bloom was one of the family of chickweeds; as for the lesser stitchwort, it is rarely found excepting in wild wastes, where gorse and heather abound; and we almost wonder why so white and delicate a flower should choose the wilderness to flourish in, and never be found in perfection but in lonely places. Several of the beautiful wild geraniums commonly called crane's-bill, dove's-bill, and other names, are now in flower, and some of them bear foliage as soft and downy as those that are cultivated. Some have rich

rose-coloured flowers, others are dashed with deep purple, like the heart's-ease, while the one known as herb Robert is as beautiful as any of our garden flowers. But it would make a long catalogue only to give the names of all these beautiful wild geraniums which are found in flower in May.

But the most curious of all plants now in bloom are the orchises, some of which look like bees, flies, spiders, and butterflies; for when in bloom you might, at a distance, fancy that each plant was covered with the insects after which it is named. An orchis has only once to be seen, and the eye is for ever familiar with the whole variety, for it resembles no other flower, displaying nothing that would seem capable of forming a seed-vessel, as both stamen and style are concealed. Like the violet, it has a spur, and the bloom rises from a twisted stalk. The commonest, which is hawked about the streets of London in April, is the Early Purple, remarkable for the dark purple spots on the leaves, but it seldom lives long. Kent is the county for orchises, where several varieties may now be found in flower.

Characteristics of May.

While there is a natural eagerness to hail May as a summer month—and from its position in the year it ought to be one—it is after all very much a spring month. The mean temperature of the month in the British Islands is about 54°. The cold winds of spring still more or less prevail; the east wind has generally a great hold; and sometimes there are even falls of snow within the first ten or fifteen days. On this account proverbial wisdom

warns us against being too eager to regard it as a time for light clothing :

Change not a clout
Till May be out.

At London, the sun rises on the 1st of the month at 4 h. 33 m. ; on the 31st at 3 h. 51 m. ; the middle day of the month being 15 h. 43 m. long. The sun usually enters Gemini early in the morning of the 21st.

Here are some proverbs regarding May :

Be it weal or be it woe,
Beans blow before May doth go.

Come it early or come it late,
In May comes the cow-quake.

A swarm of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay.

The haddocks are good,
When dipped in May flood.

Mist in May, and heat in June,
Make the harvest right soon.

In Scotland, in parts peculiarly exposed, the east wind of May is generally felt as a very severe affliction. On this subject, however, a gentleman was once rebuked in somewhat striking terms by one *abnormis sapiens*. It was the late accomplished Lord Rutherford of the Edinburgh bench, who, rambling one day on the Pentland Hills, with his friend Lord Cockburn, encountered a shepherd who was remarkable in his district for a habit of sententious talking, in which he put everything in a triple form. Lord Rutherford, conversing with the man, expressed himself in strong terms regarding the east wind, which was then blowing very keenly.

‘And what ails ye at the east wind?’ said the shepherd.

‘It is so bitterly disagreeable,’ replied the judge.

‘I wonder at you finding so much fault with it.’

‘And pray, did you ever find any good in it?’

‘Oh, yes.’

‘And what can you say of good for it?’ inquired Lord Rutherford.

‘Weel,’ replied the triadist, ‘it dries the yird (soil), it slockens (refreshes) the ewes, and it’s God’s wull.’ The learned judges were silent.

Key to the Calendar.

AMONG the Romans, this was the *mensis maiorum*, or month dedicated to the elder persons of their community, while the next was the *mensis juniorum*, or month of the younger people. Thus, it was supposed, arose the names of May and June. Others thought that May would derive its name from Maia, the mother of Mercury, who was worshipped on the first day; but it is more probable that Maia and her day were after-thoughts, when the real origin of the name of May was out of mind. That origin is to be sought in the Sansc. root *mah*, ‘to grow,’ so that May is just the season of growth. The same root, no doubt, appears in the Anglo-Saxon *magu*, ‘a son,’ and *maegth*, a maid or daughter; also in the Latin *mag-nus* and *maj-or*. The Anglo-Saxons gave this month the name of Trimilchi, because they then began to milk their cows three times a day. The Romans believed it to be unlucky to marry in May, probably because the following month was sacred to Juno, the foundress of marriage.

1. St Philip and St James the Less, a holiday of the Church of England.

As a popular festival under the name of *May-day*, this day has been celebrated from time immemorial. The celebration must doubtless have been prompted by Nature herself: the time of the young flower and leaf, and of all the promise which August fulfils, could not but impress the minds of the simplest people, and dispose them to joyful demonstrations in word and act. The sun, as the immediate author of the glories of the season, was now worshipped by the Celtic nations under the name of Baal; hence the festival of *Beltane*, still faintly observed in Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland. Even in Ayrshire, they kindled Baal's fire in the evening of May-day till about the year 1790. The Romans held games called *Floralia*, at which there was great display of flowers, and where women danced, if we are to believe Juvenal, only too enthusiastically. The May-day jollities of modern Europe seem to be directly descended from the *Floralia*.

In England, we have to go back a couple of hundred years for the complete May-day; since then, it has gradually declined, and now it is almost extinct. When it was fully observed, the business of the day began with the day itself—that is to say, at midnight. We have the authority of Shakspeare, that with the populace of England it was impossible to sleep on May morning. Immediately after twelve had struck, they were all astir, wishing each other a merry May, as they still, at the same hour on the 1st of January, wish each other a happy new year. They then went forth with music and the blowing of horns, to some neighbouring wood, where they employed themselves in breaking down and gathering branches. These they brought back at an early hour, and planted over their doors, so that by daylight the whole village looked quite a bower. In some places, the Mayers brought home a garland suspended from a pole, round which they danced. In others, and this was a more general custom, there was an established May-pole for the village, which it was their business to dress up with flowers and flags, and dance around throughout all the latter part of the day. A May-pole was as tall

as the mast of a sloop of fifty tons, painted with spiral stripes of black and white, and properly fixed in a frame to keep it erect. Here lads and lasses danced in a joyful ring for hours to the sounds of the viol, and maskers personating Robin Hood, Little John, Maid Marian, and others of the celebrated Sherwood company of outlaws, as well as morris-dancers, performed their still more merry pranks. May-poles, as tending to encourage levity of deportment, were condemned by the Puritans in Elizabeth's time; James I. supported them in his *Book of Sports*; they were altogether suppressed during the time of the Commonwealth, but got up again at the Restoration. Now change of manners has done that which ordinances of parliament could not do; this object, so interwoven with our national poetical literature, is all but rooted out of the land.

A certain superstitious feeling attached to May-day. The dew of that morning was considered as a cosmetic of the highest efficacy; and women, especially young women, who are never unwilling to improve in this respect, used to go abroad before sunrise to gather it. To this day there is a resort of the fair sex every May morning to Arthur's Seat near Edinburgh, for the purpose of washing their faces with the dew. Mr Pepys, in his *Diary*, gravely tells us of his wife going to Woolwich for a little air, and to gather May-dew, 'which Mrs Turner hath taught her is the only thing in the world to wash her face with.'

In London, May-day was once as much observed as it was in any rural district. There were several May-poles throughout the city, particularly one near the bottom of Catherine Street in the Strand, which, rather oddly, became, in its later days, a support for a large telescope at Wanstead in Essex, the property of the Royal Society. The milkmaids were amongst the last conspicuous celebrators of the day. They used to dress themselves in holiday guise on this morning, and come in bands with fiddles, whereto they danced, attended by a strange-looking pyramidal pile, covered with pewter-plates, ribbons, and streamers, either borne by a man

upon his head, or by two men upon a hand-barrow; this was called their *garland*.



Maypole in the Strand in the olden time.

The Robin Hood games and morris-dances, by which this day was distinguished till the Reformation, appear, from many scattered notices of them, to have been entertainments full of interest to the common people. Robin has been alternately styled in at least one document as the King of May, while Maid Marian seems to have been held as the Queen.

10. Whit-Sunday, a festival of the Church of England, designed to commemorate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost. In Catholic countries, on this day, while the people are assembled in church, pigeons are suspended above, and wafers, cakes, oak-leaves, and other things are made to

shower down upon the altar—all this as a dramatic representation of the miracle.

11. **Whit-Monday.**—A festival of the Church of England, as is also

12. **Whit-Tuesday.**—These three days together are called Whitsuntide. It forms a term, for which the 15th of May is fixed. The Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday of this week are Ember Days, and the week is consequently an Ember Week. (*See 8th February.*) This also was a period of festivity among our ancestors. They now had what they called the *Whitsun Ale*, which consisted in a meeting of householders with their families at the church, after service, to partake of a feast provided by the churchwardens, at which the young danced and played at games, while the seniors looked on. In the days before the poor were supported by rates, a collection was made on this occasion, usually found sufficient to provide for them. Whitsunday and Martinmas terms (May 15 and November 11) are those alone regarded for the leasing of all kinds of property, paying of rents, and engaging of servants, in Scotland.

17. **Trinity Sunday**, a festival of the Church of England, which always takes place eight weeks after Easter.

21. **Corpus Christi**, a festival of the Roman Church, always held on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. It celebrates the doctrine of transubstantiation. In all Roman Catholic countries it is observed with music, lights, flowers strewed in the street, rich tapestries hung upon the walls, and processions and plays representing Scripture subjects.





JOHN LEIGHTON

JUNE

— After her came jolly JUNE, arrayed
All in green leaves, as he a player were ;
 Yet in his time he wrought as well as played,
That by his plough-irons mote right well appear.
 Upon a crab he rode, that did him bear,
With crooked crawling steps, an uncouth pace,
 And backward rode, as bargemen wont to fare,
Bending their force contrary to their face ;
Like that ungracious crew which feigns demurest grace.

SPENSER.



JUNE has now come, bending beneath her weight of roses, to ornament the halls and bowers which summer has hung with green. For this is the Month of Roses, and their beauty and fragrance conjure up again many in poetical creation which Memory had buried. We think of Herrick's Sappho, and how the roses were always white until they tried to rival her fair complexion,

and, blushing for shame because they were vanquished, have ever since remained red; of Shakspeare's Juliet, musing as she leant over the balcony in the moonlight, and thinking that the rose 'by any other name would smell as sweet.' They carry us back to Chaucer's Emilie, whom we again see pacing the garden in the early morning, her hair blown backward, while, as she gathers roses carefully, she 'thrusts among the thorns her little hand.' We again see Milton's Eve in Eden, standing half-veiled in a cloud of fragrance—'so thick the blushing roses round about her blow.'

IN THE WOODS.

This is the season to wander into the fields and woods, with a volume of sterling poetry for companionship, and compare the descriptive passages with the objects that lie around. We never enjoy reading portions of Spenser's *Faery Queen* so much as when among the great green trees in summer. We then feel his meaning, where he describes arbours that are not the work of art, 'but by the trees' own inclination made.' We look up at the great network of branches, and think how silently they have been fashioned. Through many a quiet night, and many a golden dawn, and all day long, even when the twilight threw her gray veil over them, the work advanced; from when the warp was formed of tender sprays and tiny buds, until the woof of leaves was woven with a shuttle of sunshine and showers, which the unseen wind sent in and out through the branches. No human eye could see how the work was done, for the pattern of leaves was woven motionless—here a brown bud came, and there a dot of green was thrown in; yet no hand was visible

during the workmanship, though we know the great Power that stirred in that mysterious loom, and wove the green drapery of summer.

Now in the woods, like a fair lady of the olden time peeping through her embowered lattice, the tall woodbine leans out from among the leaves, as if to look at the procession that is ever passing, of golden-belted bees, and gauze-winged dragon-flies, birds that dart by as if sent with hasty messages, and butterflies, the gaudy outriders, that make for themselves a pathway between the overhanging blossoms. All these she sees from the green turret in which she is imprisoned, while the bees go sounding their humming horns through every flowery town in the forest. The wild roses, compelled to obey the commands of summer, blush as they expose their beauty by the wayside, and hurry to hide themselves



Foxglove.

again amid the green when the day is done, seeming as if they tried 'to shut and become buds again.' Like pillars of fire, the foxgloves blaze through the shadowy green of

the underwood, as if to throw a light on the lesser flowers that grow around their feet.

A PLEASANT LANDSCAPE.

Pleasant is it now after a long walk to sit down on the slope of some hill, and gaze over the outstretched landscape, from the valley at our feet to where the river loses itself in the distant sunshine. In all those widely-spread farmhouses and cottages—some so far away that they appear but little larger than mole-hills—the busy stir of every-day life is going on, though neither sound nor motion is audible or visible from this green slope. From those quiet homes move christening, marrying, and burying processions. Thousands who have tilled the earth within the space our eye commands, ‘now sleep beneath it.’ There is no one living who ever saw yonder aged oak look younger than it does now. The head lies easy which erected that gray old stile, that has stood bleaching so many years in sun and wind, it looks like dried bones; the very step is worn hollow by the feet of those who have passed away for ever. How quiet yonder fields appear through which the brown footpath stretches; there those who have gone, walked and talked, and played, and made love, and through them led their children by the hand, to gather the wild roses of June, that still flower as they did in those very spots where their grandfathers gathered them, when, a century back, they were children.

And yet it may be that these fields, which look so beautiful in our eyes, and awaken such pleasant memories of departed summers, bring back no such remembrances to the unlettered hind; that he thinks only of the years he

has toiled in them, of the hard struggle he has had to get bread for his family, and the aching bones he has gone home with at night. Perhaps, when he walks out with his children, he thinks how badly he was paid for plashing that hedge, or repairing that flowery embankment; how long it took him to plough or harrow that field; how cold the days were then, and, when his wants were greatest, what little wages he received. The flaunting woodbine may have no charms for his eye, nor the bee



humming round the globe of crimson clover; perhaps he pauses not to listen to the singing of the birds, but, with eyes bent on the ground, he 'homeward plods his weary way.' Cottages buried in woodbine or covered with roses

are not the haunts of peace and homes of love which poets so often picture, nor are they the gloomy abodes which some cynical politicians magnify into dens of misery.

How peaceably yonder village at the foot of this hill seems to sleep in the June sunshine, beneath the overshadowing trees, above which the blue smoke ascends, nothing else seeming to stir! What rich colours some of those thatched roofs present—moss and lichen, and stone-crop which is now one blaze of gold. That white-washed wall, glimmering through the foliage, just lights up the picture where it wanted opening; even the sunlight, flashed back from the windows, lets in golden gleams through the green. That bit of brown road by the red wall, on one side of which runs the brook, spanned by a rustic bridge, is of itself a picture—with the white cow standing by the gate, where the great elder-tree is now covered with bunches of creamy-coloured bloom.

CATTLE STANDING IN WATER—THE MOWER.

Water is always beautiful in a landscape; it is the glass in which the face of heaven is mirrored, in which the trees and flowers can see themselves, for aught we know, so hidden from us in the secret of their existence and the life they live. Now, one of those out-of-door pictures may be seen which almost every landscape painter has tried to fix on canvas—that of cattle standing in water at noon-day. We always fancy they look best in a large pond overhung with trees, that is placed in a retiring corner of rich pasture lands, with their broad sweeps of grass and wild-flowers. In a river or a long stream the water stretches too far away, and mars the

snugness of the picture, which ought to be bordered with green, while the herd is of various colours. In a pond



surrounded with trees we see the sunlight chequering the still water as it streams through the branches, while a mass of shadow lies under the lower boughs—part of it falling on a portion of the cattle, while the rest stand in a

warm, green light; and should one happen to be red, and dashed with the sunlight that comes in through the leaves, it shows such flecks of ruddy gold as no artist ever yet painted. We see the shadows of the inverted trees thrown deep down, and below a blue, unfathomable depth of sky, which conjures back those ocean chasms that have never yet been sounded.

We now hear that sharp rasping sound in the fields, which the mower makes every time he whets his scythe, telling us that he has already cut down myriads of those beautiful wild-flowers and feathered grasses which the morning sun shone upon. We enter the field and pick a few fading flowers out of the great swathes; and, while watching him at his work, see how at one sweep he makes a desert, where a moment before all was brightness and beauty. How one might moralise over this globe of white clover, which a bee was rifling of its sweets just before the scythe swept it down, and dwell upon the homes of ground-building birds and earth-burrowing animals and insects, which the destroyer lays bare. But these thoughts have no place in his mind. He may, while whetting his scythe, wonder how many more times he will have to sharpen it before he cuts his way up to the hedge, where his provision basket, beer bottle, and the clothes he has thrown off, lie in the shade, guarded by his dog—and when there slake his thirst.

GRASSES.

Many of those grasses which he cuts down so thoughtlessly, are as beautiful as the rarest flowers that ever bloomed, though they must be examined minutely for their elegant forms and splendid colours. No plumage

that ever nodded over the brow of Beauty, not even that of the rare bird of paradise, can excel the graceful silky sweep of the feather-grass, which ladies used to wear in their head-dresses. The silky bent grass, which the least stir of air sets in motion, is as glossy and beautiful as the richest satin that ever enfolded the elegant form of maidenhood. The quaking or tottering grass is hung with hundreds of beautiful spikelets, which are all shaken by the least movement of an insect's wing; and when in motion, the shifting light that plays upon its many-coloured flowers makes them glitter like jewels. But let the gentlest breeze that ever blew breathe through a bed of this beautiful grass, and you might fancy that thousands of fairy bells were swinging, and that the hair-like stems were the ropes pulled by the greenwood elves, which are thinner than the finest silk. It has many pretty names, such as pearl-grass and silk-grass; while the country children call it Ringing-all-the-bells-in-London, on account of its purple spikelets being ever in motion.

Nothing was ever yet woven in loom to which art could give such graceful colouring as is shown in the luminous pink and dazzling sea-green of the soft meadow-grass; the flowers spread over a panicle of velvet bloom, which is so soft and yielding, that the lightest-footed insect sinks into its downy carpeting when passing. Many grasses which the mower is now sweeping down would, to the eye of a common observer, appear all alike; though upon close examination they will be found to differ as much as one flower does from another. Amongst these are the fox-tail and other grasses, which have all round heads, and seem at the first glance only to vary in length and thickness; they are also so common, that

there is hardly a field without them. We take up a handful of grass from the swathe just cut down, and find dozens of these round-headed flowers in it. One is of a rich golden green, with a covering of bright silvery hairs, so thinly interspersed, that they hide not the golden ground beneath; another is a rich purple tint, that rivals the glowing bloom of the dark-shaded pansy; while, besides colours, the stems will be found to vary, some being pointed and pinched until they resemble the limbs of a daddy-long-legs. This is the scented vernal grass, that gives out the rich aroma we now inhale from the new-mown field. It seldom grows more than a foot high, and has, as you see, a close-set panicle, just like wheat; and in these yellow dots, on the green valves that hold the flowers, the fragrance is supposed to lie which scents the June air for miles round when the grass is cut and dried.

The rough, the smooth, and the annual meadow-grasses are those which everybody knows. But for the rough meadow-grass, we should not obtain so many glimpses of green as are seen in our squares and streets—for it will grow in the smokiest of cities; while to the smooth meadow-grass we are indebted for that first green flush of spring—that spring green which no dyer can imitate, and which first shows through the hoary mantle of winter. The annual meadow-grass grows wherever a pinch of earth can be found for it to root in. It is the children's garden in the damp, sunless back-yards of our cities; it springs up between the stones of the pavement, and grows in the crevices of decaying walls. Neither summer suns which scorch, nor biting frosts which blacken, can destroy it; for it seeds eight or nine months of the

year, and, do what you will, is sure to come up again. Pull it up you cannot, excepting in wet weather, when all the earth its countless fibres adhere to comes with it; for it finds nourishment in everything it lays hold of, nor has it, like some of the other grasses, to go far into the earth for support.

HAYMAKERS—THE MILKMAID.



In the next field we see the haymakers hard at work, turning the grass over, and shaking it up with their forks, or letting it float loose on the wind, to be blown as far as it can go; while the air that passes through it carries the pleasant smell of new-mown hay to the far-away fields and villages it

sweeps by. How happy haymakers always appear, as if work to them were pleasure; even the little children, while they laugh as they throw hay over one another, are unconsciously assisting the labourers, for it cannot be dispersed too much. What a blessing it would be if all labour could be made so pleasant! Some are gathering the hay into windrows, great long unbroken ridges, that extend from one end of the field to the other, and look like motionless waves in the distance, while between them all the space is raked up tidily.

Then comes the last process, to roll those long windrows into haycocks, turning the hay on their forks over

and over, and clearing the ground at every turn, as boys do the huge snowball, which it takes four or five of them to move—until the haycock is as high as a man's head, and not a vestige of a windrow is left when the work is finished by the rakers. Rolling those huge haycocks together is hard work; and when you see it done, you marvel not at the quantity of beer the men drink, labouring as they do in the hot open sunshine of June. We then see the loaded hay wagons leaving the fields, rocking as they cross the furrows, over which wheels but rarely roll, moving along green lanes and between high hedges, which take toll from the wains as they pass, until new hay hangs down from every branch. What labour it would save the birds in building, if hay was led two or three months earlier, for nothing could be more soft and downy for the lining of their nests than many of the feathered heads of those dried grasses. Onward moves the rocking wagon towards the rick-yard, where the gate stands open, and we can see the men on the half-formed stack waiting for the coming load.

When the stack is nearly finished, only a strong man can pitch up a fork full of hay; and it needs some practice to use the long forks which are required when the rick has nearly reached to its fullest height. What a delicious smell of new-mown hay there will be in every room of that old farmhouse for days after the stacks are finished; we almost long to take up our lodging there for a week or two for the sake of the fragrance. And there, in the 'home close,' as it is called, sits the milkmaid on her three-legged stool, which she hides somewhere under the hedge, that she may not have to carry it to and fro every time she goes to milk, talking to her cow while she

is milking, as if it understood her: for the flies make it restless, and she is fearful that it may kick over the contents of her pail. Now she breaks forth into song—unconscious that she is overheard—the burthen of which is that her lover may be true, ending with a wish that she were a linnet, ‘to sing her love to rest,’ which he, wearied with his day’s labour, will not require, but will begin to snore a minute after his tired head presses the pillow.



IMPORTANCE OF THE GRASSES.

But we cannot leave the milkmaid, surrounded with the smell of new-mown hay, without taking a final glance at the grasses; and when we state that there are already several thousand varieties known and named, and that the discoveries of every year continue to add to the number, it will be seen that the space of a large volume would be required only to enumerate the different classes into which they are divided. The oat-like, the wheat-like, and the water-grasses, of which latter the tall common seed is the chief, are very numerous. It is from grasses that we have obtained the bread we eat, and we have now many varieties in England, growing wild, that yield small grains of excellent corn, and that could, by cultivation, be rendered as valuable as our choicest cereals.

It is through being surrounded by the sea, and having so few mountain ranges to shut out the breezes, the sun-

shine, and the showers, that England is covered with the most beautiful grasses that are to be found in the world. The open sea woos every wind that blows, and draws all the showers towards our old homesteads, and clothes our island with that delicious green which is the wonder and admiration of foreigners. It also feeds those flocks and herds which are our pride; for nowhere else can be seen such as those pastured on English ground. Our Saxon forefathers had no other name for grass than that we still retain, though they made many pleasant allusions to it in describing the labours of the months—such as grass-month, milk-month, mow-month, hay-month, and after-month, or the month after their hay was harvested. After-month is a word still in use, though now applied to the second crop of grass, which springs up after the hay-field has been cleared.

None are fonder than Englishmen of seeing a 'bit of grass' before their doors. Look at the retired old citizen, who spent the best years of his life poring over ledgers in some half-lighted office in the neighbourhood of the Bank, how delighted he is with the little grass-plot which the window of his suburban retreat opens into. What hours he spends over it, patting it down with his spade, smoothing it with his garden-roller; stooping down until his aged back aches, while clipping it with his shears; then standing at a distance to admire it; then calling his dear old wife out to see how green and pretty it looks. It keeps him in health, for in attending to it he finds both amusement and exercise; and perhaps the happiest moments of his life are those passed in watching his grandchildren roll over it, while his married sons and daughters sit smiling by his side. Hundreds of such men,

and many such spots, lie scattered beside the roads that run every way through the great metropolitan suburbs; and it is pleasant, when returning from a walk through the dusty roads of June, to peep over the low walls, or through the palisades, and see the happy groups sitting in the cool of evening by the bit of grass before their doors, and which they call 'going out on the lawn.'

Characteristics of June.

Though the summer solstice takes place on the 21st day, June is only the third month of the year in respect of temperature, being preceded in this respect by July and August. The mornings, in the early part of the month especially, are liable to be even frosty, to the extensive damage of the buds of the fruit-trees. Nevertheless, June is the month of greatest summer beauty—the month during which the trees are in their best and freshest garniture. 'The leafy month of June,' Coleridge well calls it, the month when the flowers are at the richest in hue and profusion. In English landscape, the conical clusters of the chestnut buds, and the tassels of the laburnum and lilac, vie above with the variegated show of wild-flowers below. Nature is now a pretty maiden of seventeen; she may show maturer charms afterwards, but she can never be again so gaily, so freshly beautiful. Dr Aikin says justly that June is in reality, in this climate, what the poets only dream May to be. The mean temperature of the air was given by an observer in Scotland as 59° Fahrenheit, against 60° for August and 61° for July.

The sun, formally speaking, reaches the most northerly

point in the zodiac, and enters the constellation of Cancer on the 21st of June; but for several days about that time there is no observable difference in his position, or his hours of rising and setting. The length of the day is about 16 hours 15 minutes. At Edinburgh, the longest day is about 17½ hours. At that season, in Scotland, there is a glow equal to dawn, in the north, through the whole of the brief night. The present writer was able at Edinburgh to read the title-page of a book by the light of the northern sky, at midnight of the 14th of June 1849. In Shetland, the light at midnight is like a good twilight, and the text of any ordinary book may then be easily read.

Key to the Calendar.

THE origin of the name June, or what is usually considered the origin, has been explained at the same time with that of May. The month was sacred to Juno, the foundress of marriage.

11. **St Barnabas the Apostle**, a holiday of the Church of England. In the old style, the 11th of June was the longest day; hence an ancient rhyme:

Barnaby Bright,
The longest day and the shortest night.

15. **St Vitus's Day**.—St Vitus was a Sicilian martyr. From him, though for what reason is doubtful, is named a well-known nervous affection of the limbs, proceeding from a disordered state of the visceral system. It was a popular belief that rain on this day indicated rain for thirty days thereafter.

24. **St John's Day**, the Nativity of St John the Baptist, a holiday of the Church of England. The *Eve of St John*, variously called *Midsummer Eve*, was formerly a time of high observance amongst the English, as it still is in Catholic countries. Bonfires were everywhere lighted, round which the people danced with joyful demonstrations, occasionally leaping through the flame. A certain number of citizens formed a watch, which perambulated the streets all night. It was also believed that on this eve, by fasting, waking, pulling certain herbs, and going through certain ceremonies, it was possible to obtain an insight into futurity on some important points. *Fasting St John's Fast* was a great feat of young women a century or two ago. There was also a custom of holding vigil in the church porch, precisely the same as described under St Mark's Day (April 25).

29. **St Peter's Day**, a high festival of the Romish Church, and a holiday of the Church of England. It is celebrated at Rome with illuminations and magnificent ceremonials.







J

Then came hot July, boiling like to fire,
That all his garments he had cast away ;
Upon a lion raging yet with ire
He boldly rode, and made him to obey :
(It was the beast that whilom did foray
The Nemæan forest, till the Amphitrionide
Him slew, and with his hide did him array :)
Behind his back a scythe, and by his side
Under his belt he bore a sickle circling wide.

SPENSER.



JULY is now what our old poets loved to call
'sweet summer-time, when the leaves
are green and long,' for in such brief
word-painting did they picture this pleasant
season of the year; and, during this hot month,
we sigh while perusing the ancient ballad-lore,
and wish we could recall the past, were it only to
enjoy a week with Robin Hood and his merry men in
the free old forests 'all under the greenwood tree.'

We feel the harness chafe in which we have hitherto so willingly worked, amid the 'fever and the fret' of the busy city, and pine to get away to some place where we can hear the murmur of the sea, or what is nearest the sound—the rustle of the summer leaves. We long to lie down beneath the low-bending and high-overhanging branches beside the stream, that runs dark and bright through shade and sunshine, and watch the blue dragon-flies sport above the bluer forget-me-nots, that nod their tufted heads to every breeze which ripples the water. There fancy floats away, and where the drooping willow gives a white shiver as the under part of the leaves is turned to the light, and the brook rolls along 'singing a quiet tune, we conjure up the image of sweet Ophelia, 'her clothes spread wide' upon the glassy stream, and seem again to hear her warbling 'snatches of old tunes' till, mermaid-like, she sinks beneath the 'weeping brook.'

Then we hear the bleating of sheep that come down from some hidden bending of the water-course, and journeying along we see an old-world picture, such as the gray patriarchs had often looked on, and which is familiar to us, through the Bible pages, unaltered through thousands of years; for there we find them washing sheep, just as they did when David and Solomon paused to look at the sheep-washers, beside the brooks that flow through the valleys around Jerusalem.

SHEEP WASHING AND SHEARING.

The mind wanders away into the twilight of those remote ages, and we wonder who she was whose teeth Solomon in his Song compared to a flock of sheep 'which

come up from the washing.' In our wanderings through the nooks and corners of England, we have seen sheep-washing in such pleasant places, that had they been selected purposely to harmonise with this picturesque occupation, it would scarcely have been possible to have added a new beauty to the scene, though trees are always beautiful when reflected in water, especially when they also overhang a ground of green. The wattled hurdles, running in lines beneath the wide-spreading branches, which inclose the white sheep, making gray patches of light under the boughs, and upon the greensward; the sheep-washer standing in the pool, and the idlers in every variety of coloured costume assembled on the banks, and all mirrored in the water, make as pretty a rural picture as



Sheep-washing.

the eye can delight to dwell upon, and which seems ever changing its hue under the shifting lights of heaven.

Then those brown sinewy labourers clutch at the fleecy

sheep as they are driven down the bank—keeping their heads clear of the water, while they roll them to and fro, making incessant circles of ripples, for as one releases a sheep, another seizes upon it, until the immersion is completed, when it swims to the opposite bank, and there stands bleating, while the water drops from its heavy-hanging wool. Now and then you hear a loud laugh from the spectators, for the chubby farmer's-boy, who has to drive the sheep into the water for the men to wash, finds one that is obstinate, at which he pushes with all his might, when the animal gives a sudden spring, and the boy falls headlong into the pool.

About a week or so after the washing, sheep-shearing commences; the reason why 'clipping' is delayed for this length of time is, that the fleece may regain its oily nature, which it can only do through the wool becoming thoroughly dry, when the shears cut through it easily. This also is a busy time, and we have seen half a score sheep-shearers at work at once, the large barn-door having been lifted off its hinges and raised about a foot above the ground, to place the sheep upon, while they were shorn. By night the barn looks like a large wool warehouse, so high rise the piles of rolled-up fleeces, and some of our English sheep yield as much as fifteen pounds of wool each. It is amusing to watch the lambs after the dams are clipped, the way they go smelling about them, and the pitiful bleating they make, until the mother answers, when they at once recognise her voice, and all doubt in a moment ceases.

Sheep-shearing feasts, like harvest-homes, are of ancient date; for we read in the Bible of Nabal, who had three thousand sheep in Carmel, holding a sheep-shearing feast

in his house 'like the feast of a king,' and the custom still remains amongst many of our English sheep-breeders in the present day. It is pleasant to know that such old-world customs are still kept up; that when the owner has gathered the wool that clothes him, and the corn that feeds him, he should make glad the hearts of those who 'have borne the burden and heat of the day.' While this busy work is going on, the bean-fields are in bloom, and fill the air around with such a perfume as makes the wayfarer feel languid, longing to lie down in the midst of it, and with half-shut eyes dream dreams.

WAYSIDE FLOWERS.

At every passing gust which ripples the fields, the corn now makes a husky whisper, and there are white spots on the long ears, which tell that it is fast ripening, and that bending reapers will soon be busy with their crooked sickles in the harvest-field. We now see amid the grass that is powdered with summer-dust, the most beautiful of all our wayside flowers, the pretty pimpernel, which, though but little larger than the bloom of the common chickweed, fairly dazzles the eye like a gem with its rich crimson petals. By the very rim of the cart-rut, and close by the dent of the horse's hoof on the brown highway, it blows, a thing of beauty, that has no peer in garden or greenhouse, whether blood-red, crimson, or scarlet, for nothing but the flashing blaze of the red poppy of the cornfield can be compared with it a moment for richness of colour. Country-people call this wayside beauty the poor man's weather-glass and the shepherd's clock; and it never errs in announcing the approach of rain, for long before we can discover any sign of the coming shower, we

find its deep-dyed petals folded up in its green cup. As a time-keeper, it may be relied upon, always closing at noon, no matter how fine the day may be, and never opening again before seven on the following morning. Its leaves are also very beautiful, of a fine clean oval shape, and on the under part spotted.

TEA-MAKING HERBS.

Often near to it on the sunny side of the hedge, may now be found the dull golden-coloured agrimony, with its long spiked head up-coned with little flowers, the favourite 'tea' of the poor cottagers. Scarcely a leaf can be found on tree, shrub, or plant, to equal in beauty of form that of the agrimony, so deeply and elegantly are the edges cut, and so richly veined, that they carry the eye from the up-piled head of five-petaled golden flowers, which so gracefully overtop the foliage. The fragrance, too, is quite refreshing; only bruise this elegant leaf between the fingers, and it throws out an aroma that can no more be forgotten than the smell of roses.

The next favourite as a tea-making herb among our old country-women, is the wood betony, now in bloom, and which forms a winding terrace of flowers, as the whorls rise step above step, a pile of rose-coloured flowers, beautiful to look upon in the sunshine. Nor does the charm of each little bloom diminish, when examined closely, as it is found to belong to the lipped family of flowers, the most exquisite of all the many orders; and quaint old Culpepper, writing about it at his house in Spitalfields above two centuries ago, says, 'the leaves and flowers, by their sweet spicy taste, are comfortable both in meat and medicine;' he also calls it 'a very precious

herb ;' and in his curious book, he tells us where he found choice wild-flowers growing in the summer sun about London, in the very places where long miles of streets now spread, and not even a blade of grass can be seen.

UNTRODDEN FLOWERS.

Through long leagues of untrodden flowers the golden-belted bees now go with a pleasant murmuring, over sunny openings, in the bowery underwood, which shrub and bramble guard, and beneath overhanging branches by the water-courses, where the foot of man cannot tread. Up lanes that lead nowhere saving to green fields, and over which a wheel seldom passes saving at hay-time, or during the garnering of harvest, they grow and run. Up the hillsides they climb, over the fences, and into the old woods, where they play at hide-and-seek behind every bank and shaded hollow. Great trees throw their green arms over them, and make a shelter for their beauty under their shadows. From the faces of steep crags, inaccessible to man, they droop and wave in all their beauty; and in their bells the insects find a home, and at the golden entrances they play in the sunshine.

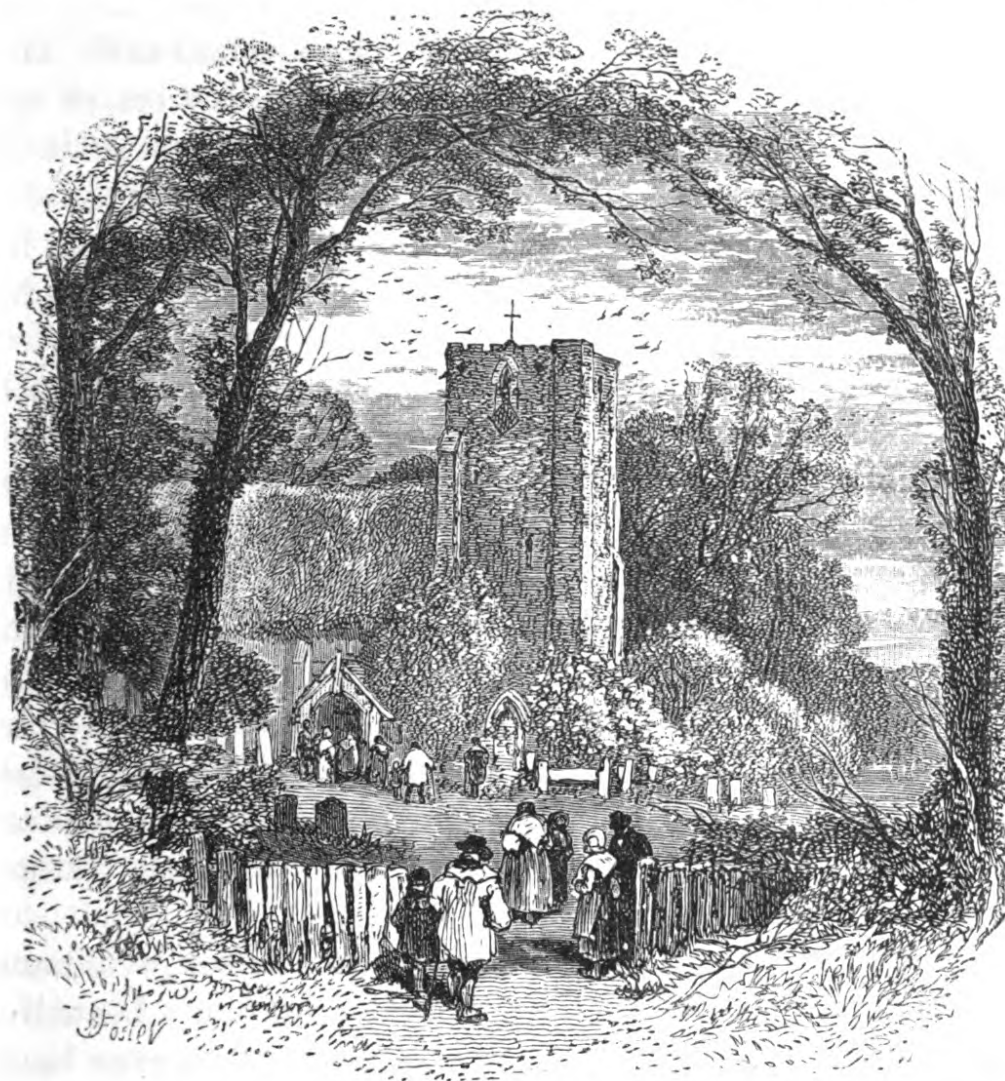
They lean over and listen to the singing of the river all day long, and when they are folded, still hear its soothing lullaby go rippling over the reflected stars. The gentle dews alight upon them with silver feet in the moonlight, and hang golden drops about their petals to sparkle in the sun, in hidden nooks which the eye of man never penetrates; for Nature leaves no crypt in her great temple undecorated. Place any flower under a microscope, and it becomes a world of wonder: the petals are vast plains, the stamens stately trees, many of them formed of gold; and deep

down, on a pavement richer than any that was ever inlaid by the hand of man, move the inhabitants of this beautiful world, winged, and dazzling to look upon—fitting forms to sip nectar, and find a dwelling-place in the fragrant flowers. And what know we of their delights? The marigold may be to them a land of the sun, and its golden petals the beams that ever shine upon them without setting.

A COUNTRY SABBATH.

What tranquillity reigns around a green secluded village on the Sabbath! There seems a Sunday breath in the very air, so calm and quiet sleeps everything we look upon, compared with the unceasing hum of far-away cities, whose streets are never silent. The very fields are still, and we have often fancied that the flocks and herds take more rest on this old Holy day than at any other time. Not a sound of labour is heard. The creaking wagon, with its shafts turned up, stands under the thatched shed; and the busy wheel of the old water-mill rests, gray, and dry, and motionless, in the summer sun. No far-sounding ring comes from the blacksmith's forge, at the door of which a few peasants linger in their clean smock-frocks, waiting until the village-bells sound from the hoary tower to summon them to church. Even the bells, as they come and go in the shifting breeze, seem like sounding messengers, sent out every way—up the valley, and over the hill—now heard, then lost—as if they left no nook unvisited, but carried their Sabbath tidings everywhere. The childish voices that come floating on the air from the low, white-washed, village Sunday-school, where they are singing some simple hymn,

bring before us His image, who said : ' Suffer little children to come unto me,' and who walked out in the fields with His disciples, to enjoy the calm of the holy Sabbath.



The very murmur that Nature makes, in the low rustling of the leaves, and the subdued ripple of the stream, seems—because they are audible—to leave the stillness more profound, as her voice would not be heard if the grit of the wain, the tramp of the hoof on the dry

rutted road, and the ring of the anvil, broke the repose which rests here—almost noiseless as the dew falling on the fleece of a sleeping lamb—throughout the Sabbath-day. The very gardens appear asleep, the spade is stuck motionless in the ground, hoe and rake are laid aside, and, saving the murmuring of a bee among the flowers, or the twittering of a bird from the orchard-trees, all around lie images of rest—a land of peace from which brown Labour seems to have retired in silence, and left no sound of his whereabouts, but sunk in slumber somewhere, folds his sinewy arms.

How tempting those great ripe round-bellied gooseberries look on a hot July day ; we wonder there is one left on the bushes, when we see so many children about ! The red currants, too, hang down like drops of rich carnelian ; while the black currants look like great ebony beads, half-hidden by their fragrant leaves—for all the early garden-fruits are now ripe to perfection. Down the long rows the pretty strawberries peep out, showing like red-breasted robins at hide-and-seek under the foliage ; while overhead the melting cherries hang down, leading even the very birds to commit trespass, for they cannot resist such a tempting banquet.

Sweet Summer has now attained her perfect loveliness ; the roses on her cheeks will never look more beautiful than they do now, nor will her sky-blue eyes ever beam with sweeter lustre. She has wreathed her sunny hair with the sweetest and fairest of flowers ; and when they have faded, there will be no more found to make a frame of blossoms round her matchless countenance until the leaves of Autumn have fallen, white Winter awakened from his cold sleep, and young Spring gone dancing away,

holding up her green kirtle as she trips over the daisies. As yet, there is no sign of decay around her, only a few birds are silent, but they have not yet departed; there are myriads of flowers in bloom, and great armies of insects hurrying along every way, as they go sounding through the warm and fragrant air. Few writers had a deeper appreciation of the beauties of Nature than honest Izaak Walton; we can almost hear the rain-drops fall while reading that beautiful passage where he describes himself sitting under the hedge of honeysuckles, sheltering from the shower, 'which fell so gently on the teeming earth, and gave yet a sweeter smell to the lovely flowers that adorned those verdant meadows;' and listening 'to the birds in the adjoining grove that seemed to have a friendly contention with an echo, whose dead voice seemed to live in a hollow tree, near the brow of that primrose-hill.'

DAY-DREAMS.

What dreams have we dreamed, and what visions have we seen, lying idly with half-shut eyes in some 'greenwood shaw,' sheltering from July's noonday sun, while we seemed to hear 'airy tongues that syllable men's names,' in the husky whispering of the leaves! Golden forms have seemed to spring up in the sun-lighted stems of the trees, whose high heads were buried among the lofty foliage, through which were seen openings to the sky. The deep-dyed pheasant, shooting over the under-wood with streaming plumage, became a fair maiden in our eyes; and the skulking fox, noiselessly threading the brake, the grim enchanter from whom she was escaping. The twining ivy, with discoloured leaves, coiled round the

stem in the far distance, became the fanged serpent, which we feared would untwine and crush her in its scaly folds. Scouts were sent out after her in the form of bees and butterflies, and seemed not to leave a flowery nook unvisited in which there was room enough for her to hide.

Bird called to bird in sweet confusion, from leafy hollows, open glades, and wooded knolls, as if to tell that she had passed this way and that, until their songs became so mingled, we could not tell from which quarter the voices came. Then, as the sun burst out in all its brightness, the grim enchanter seemed to throw a golden net over the whole wood, the meshes of which were formed of the checkered lights that fell through leaf and branch, and, as we closed our eyes, we felt that she could not escape, so lay silent until the shadows around us deepened, and gray twilight stole noiselessly over the scene :

A pleasing land of drowsyhead it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye ;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer sky.

THOMSON.

What imaginative mind has not enjoyed these summer dreams, these poetical flashes of purple, gold, and azure, that play on the 'inward eye' like colours on a cathedral pavement, streaming through some triple-arched window, richly stained with 'twilight saints, and dim emblazonings !'



BIRDS OF JULY.

Towards the close of July, most of our birds are silent—even the robin and the wren are but rarely heard again till the end of August. Large flocks of young birds may now be seen flying together, and many think that they have been driven away by the old ones, so congregate for company; their assembling has nothing to do with migration, as it is the case with those that never leave us, as well as with others that will soon migrate. It is just possible that they may have become so numerous in the places where they were hatched as to find food scarce, so set out together in flocks, to seek their living where fare is more plentiful. The chiff-chaff is one of the few birds that neither the heat of summer nor the advance of the season can silence, for it sings better in July than in any of the earlier months; leaving off the two shrill monotonous notes, which in sound resemble its name, and giving a peculiar whistle, unlike that of any other bird. One of the earliest singers in the morning is the chaffinch, which may often be heard before three o'clock during the long days of summer. The clean white on his wings gives him a splendid appearance. These birds build their nests with such an eye to the harmony of colour, that they are difficult to distinguish from the branches and leaves amid which they are placed, as they will match the green moss on the bough, and the yellow lichen on the bark, so closely, that only the little bright eyes of the bird betray its whereabouts by their glittering. In the midland counties they are called 'pinks,' from their constant repetition of the note conveying that sound.

Though most birds display great courage in defending their young, yet hundreds of little nestlings perish during the absence of their parents in search of food. Then their stealthy enemies, who are ever on the watch, pounce upon the little half-naked things, tear them out of their nests, and devour them. It is pitiable to hear the cry of the female on her return, when she finds her nest empty, and parts of the remains of her little ones hanging to the thorns they have been dragged through. We have sometimes fancied those wailing notes convey the feeling of Shakspeare's Macduff, when he exclaimed :

All my pretty ones. All at one fell swoop !

Characteristics of July.

July is allowed all over the northern hemisphere to be the warmest month of the year, notwithstanding that the sun has then commenced his course of recession from the tropic of Cancer. This is owing to the accumulating effect of the heat while the sun is still so long above the horizon. In a table formed from the careful observations of the Rev. Dr Robert Gordon, at Kinfauns, Perthshire, the mean temperature of the air during the month, in that part of Great Britain, appears to be 61°. The same average has been stated for England ; but in London 62° is more correct.

At London, the sun rises on 1st July at 3 h. 49 m. morning, and sets at 8 h. 18 m. evening; on the 31st, the respective times are 4 h. 25 m. morning and 7 h. 48 m. evening. At Edinburgh, it rises on the 1st at 3 h. 20 m. and sets at 8 h. 46 m. ; on the 31st, the respective times are 4 h. 4 m. and 8 h. 8 m. The sun is in Cancer for the greater part of the month, and enters Leo about the 22d.

Key to the Calendar.

THIS, being at first the fifth month of the Roman year, was called Quintilis. It became the seventh in consequence of the reform of the calendar by Julius Cæsar, in whose honour, as he was born in it, Mark Antony gave it the present name.

3. The day fixed in the calendars as the first of the *Dog-days*, the last being the 11th of August. The dog-days precede and follow the heliacal rising of the star Sirius (in the constellation of the Greater Dog) in the morning, which in Pliny's time was on the 18th of July. The extreme heat of this season of the year, although to us palpably the effect of the continued high position of the sun, was connected by the ancients with the appearance of this star in the morning. They considered the Dog-star as raging, and gave the time the appellation of the Dog-days. The liability of dogs to rabies in consequence of the heat of the season was connected with the same star, though there was nothing but accident in the collusion; and they butchered these animals without mercy. By the procession of the equinoxes, the heliacal rising of Sirius in the morning has been changed to the latter end of August, and in a few thousand years more it will take place in the depth of winter.

4. The Translation of St Martin Bullion, noticed as a festival in the Church of England calendar, though not observed. There is an old saying, not heretofore in print, 'If the deer rise up dry and lie down dry on St Bullion's Day, it is a sign there will be a good gose har'st;' meaning, apparently, that dry weather at this season is favourable to the crops.

St Ulric's Day.—On this day, in ancient Catholic times, the people brought fish to the altar to obtain the favour of St Ulric, and one sat there selling the same back to the public for the benefit of the Church.

15. **St Swithin's Day**—remarkable on account of a well-known popular notion, that if it rain on this day, there will be more or less rain for forty days to come. St Swithin lived a thousand years ago. He was an eminently pious and learned bishop of Winchester, and priest to King Egbert. He was the devisor and originator of tithes in England. The story runs that, being buried by his own request in the churchyard of the cathedral, the priests a hundred years after felt desirous of giving him greater honour, and commenced the work of translating his remains into the interior. This was on the 15th of July. They were stopped in their work by a heavy fall of rain; neither could they resume their duty next day, for the heavy rain still continued. In short, this rain lasted forty days, by which time the priests became convinced that it was designed to stop them in a work which, though well meant on their part, was ill taken on that of the saint; and they gave up the point. Ever since then, it has been held as a maxim that if there be rain on St Swithin's Day (the 15th of July), there will be rain for the forty ensuing days.

20. **St Margaret's Day**.—This day figures in the Church of England calendar. St Margaret was a holy Italian virgin, martyred in 278. She seems to have been the Christian Lucina; formerly, at Paris, there was a flocking to church on this day of all women who were pregnant, or thought they might be so in the course of the year.

25. **St James the Apostle**, a holiday of the Church of England. In Catholic times, it was customary for the priests on this day to bless the apples.





JOHN LEIGHTON

AUGUST

The eighth was August, being rich arrayed
In garment all of gold, down to the ground :
Yet rode he not, but led a lovely maid
Forth by the lily hand, the which was crowned
With ears of corn, and full her hand was found.
That was the righteous Virgin, which of old
Lived here on earth, and plenty made abound ;
But after wrong was loved, and justice sold,
She left th' unrighteous world, and was to heaven extolled.

SPENSER.



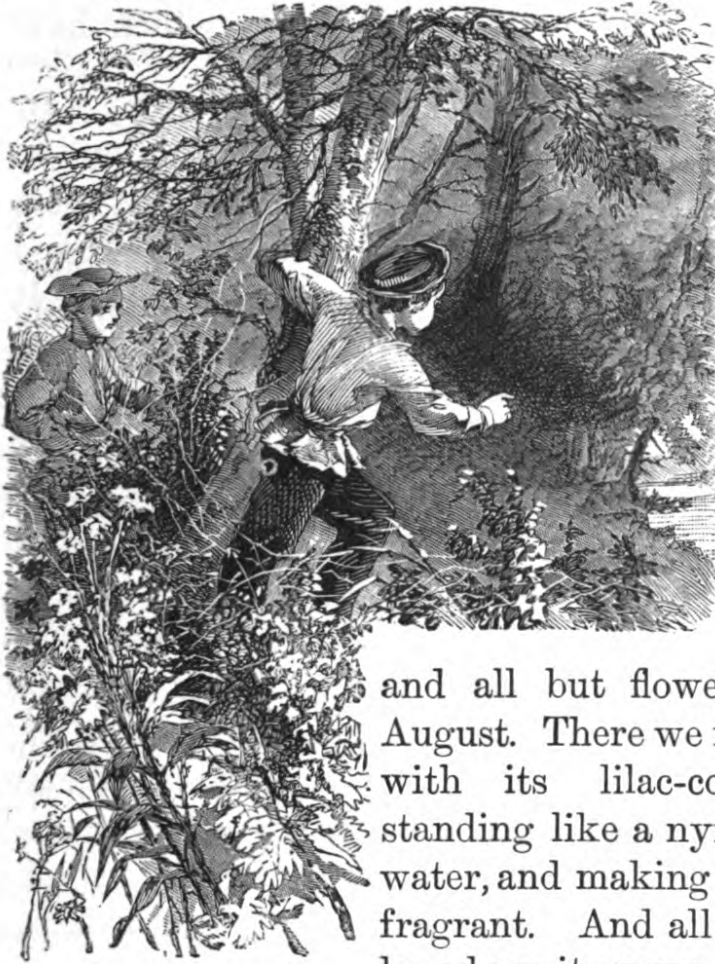
AUGUST comes, and though the harvest-fields are nearly ripe and ready for the sickle, cheering the heart of man with the prospect of plenty that surrounds him, yet there are signs on every hand that summer is on the wane, and that the time is fast approaching when she will take her departure. We catch faint glances of autumn peeping stealthily through openings where

the leaves have already fallen, and among berries where summer hung out her blossoms; and sometimes hear his rustling footstep among the dry seed-vessels, which have usurped the place of her flowers.

AUGUST FLOWERS.

Though the convolvulus still throws its straggling bells about the hedges, the sweet May-buds are dead and gone, and in their place the green haws hang crudely upon the branches. The winds come not a-Maying amongst them now. Nearly all the field-flowers are gone; the beautiful feathered grasses that waved like gorgeous plumes in the breeze and sunshine are cut down and carried away, and in their place there is only a green flowerless aftermath. Many of the birds that sung in the green chambers which summer hung for them with her richest arras, have left her and gone over the sea. What few singers remain are silent, and preparing for their departure; and when she hears the robin, his song comforts her not, for she knows that he will chant a sweeter lay to autumn, when she lies buried beneath the fallen leaves. Musing at times over her approaching end, upon the hillsides, they are touched by her beauty, and crimson up with the flowers of the heather, and long leagues of wild moorland catch the reflected blush, which goes reddening up like sunshine along the mountain slopes. The blue harebell peeps out in wonder to see such a land of beauty, and seems to shake its fragile bells with delight. In waste places, the tall golden-rod, the scarlet poppy, and the large ox-eyed daisy muster as if for a procession, and there wave their mingled banners of gold, crimson, and silver, as summer passes by, while the little eyebright, nestling among the

grass, looks up and shows its white petals, streaked with green and gold.



But, far as summer has advanced, several of her beautiful flowers and curious plants may still be found in perfection in the water-courses, and beside the streams — pleasanter places to ramble along than the dusty

and all but flowerless waysides in August. There we find the wild-mint, with its lilac-coloured blossoms, standing like a nymph knee-deep in water, and making all the air around fragrant. And all along the margin by where it grows, there is a flush of green, fresh as April; and perhaps we find a few of the grand water-flags still in flower, for they often bloom late, and seem like gold and purple banners hanging out over some ancient keep, whose colours are mirrored in the moat below. There also the beautiful arrow-head, with its snow-white flowers and arrow-pointed leaves, may be found, looking like ivy, growing about the water. Many a rare plant, too little known, flourishes beside and in our sedge-fringed meres and

bright meadow streams, where the overhanging tree throw cooling shadows over their grassy margins, and the burning noon of summer never penetrates.

Such pleasant places are always cool, for there the grass never withers, nor are the paths ever wholly dry; and when we come upon them unaware, after having quitted the heat and glare of the brown dusty highway, it seems like travelling into another country whose season is spring. And there the water-plantain spreads its branches, and throws out its pretty broad leaves and rose-tinted flowers, which spread up to the very border of the brook, and run in among the pink-flowers of the knot-grass, which every ripple sets in motion. Farther on, the purple loosestrife shows its gorgeous spikes of flowers, seeming like a border woven by the moist fingers of the Naiads, to curtain their crystal baths; while the water-violets appear as if growing to the roofs of their caves, the foliage clinging to the vaulted silver, and only the dark-blue flowers showing their heads above the water. There, too, is the bog-pimpernel, almost as pretty as its scarlet sister, which may still be found in bloom by the wayside, though its flowers are not so large. Beautiful it looks, a very flower in arms, nursed by the yielding moss, on which it leans, as if its slender stem and prettily-formed leaves were too delicate to rest on common earth, so had a soft pillow provided for its exquisite flowers to repose upon. Nor does it change, when properly dried, if transferred to the herbarium, but there looks as fresh and beautiful as it did while growing—the very fairy of flowers. Nor will the splendid silver-weed be overlooked, with its prettily-notched leaves, which underneath have a rich silvery appearance; while the golden-coloured

flowers, which spread out every way, are soft as velvet to the feel. Then the water has its grass like the field, and is sometimes covered with great meadows of green, among which are seen flowers as beautiful as grow on the inland pastures.

AQUATIC PLANTS.

The common duckweed covers miles of water with its little oval-shaped leaves, and will from one tiny root soon send out buds enough to cover a large pool, for every shoot it sends forth becomes flower and seed while forming part of the original stem, and these are reproduced by myriads, and would soon cover even the broad Atlantic, were the water favourable to its growth, for only the land could prevent it from multiplying farther. Row a boat through this green land-like meadow, and almost by the time you have reached the opposite shore—though you have sundered millions of leaves, and made a glassy course wide enough for a carriage to pass through the water, not a trace will be left, where all was bright and clear as a broad silver mirror, but all again will be covered with green, as with a smooth carpet. Beside its velvet-meadows, the water has its tall forests and spreading underwood, and stateliest amongst its trees are the flower-bearing rushes, one of which is the very Lady of the Lake, crowned with a red tiara of blossoms. The sword-leaved burweed, and many another aquatic plant, are like bramble, fern, and shrub, the underwood of the tall sedge, which the nodding bulrushes overtop. Nor is forest or field frequented with more beautiful birds or insects than those found among our water-plants.

Then we have the beautiful white water-lily, which

seems to bring an old world before us, for it belongs to the same species which the Egyptians held sacred, and the Indians worshipped. To them it must have seemed



Water-lily.

strange, in the dim twilight of early years, when nature was so little understood, to see a flower disappear at night, leaving on the surface no trace of where it bloomed—to reappear again in all its beauty, as it still does, on the following morning. And lovely it looks, floating double lily and shadow, with its rounded leaves looking like green resting-places for this Queen of the Waters to sit upon, while dipping at pleasure her ivory sandals in the yielding silver; or, when rocked by a gentle breeze, we have fancied they looked like a moving fairy-fleet on the water, with low green hulls and white sails, slowly making for the shore.

The curious little bladder-wort is another plant that

immerses itself until the time for flowering arrives, when it empties all its water-cells, fills them with air, and rises to the surface. It may now be seen almost everywhere among water-plants. In a few more weeks it will disappear, eject the air, fill its little bladders once more with water, and, sinking down, ripen its seed in its watery bed, where it will lie until another summer warns and wakens it to life, when it will once more empty its water-barrels, fill them with air, and rising to the light and sunshine, again beautify the surface with its flowers. Sometimes water-insects open the valves of these tiny bladders, and get inside ; but they cannot get out again until the cells are once more unlocked to receive air. Many another rare and curious plant may be found by the water-side in August, where sometimes the meadow-sweet still throws out a few late heads of creamy-coloured bloom, that scent the air with a fragrance delicious as May throws out, when all her hawthorns are in blossom, for though June is a season

Half-pranked with spring, with summer half-embrowned,

August is a month richly flushed with the last touches of summer, toned down here and there with the faint grays of autumn, before the latter has taken up his palette of kindled colours.

SHORTENING DAYS—AUTUMN AT HAND—HARVEST MICE.

Still, we cannot look around, and miss so many favourite flowers, which met our eye on every side a few weeks ago, without noticing many other changes. The sun sinks earlier in the evening ; mists rise here and there

and dim the clear blue of twilight; we see wider rents through the foliage of the trees and hedges, and, above all, we miss the voices of those sweet singers, whose pretty throats seemed never at rest, but from morning to night shook their speckled feathers with swellings of music. Yet how almost imperceptibly the days draw in, like the hands of a large clock, that appear motionless, yet move on with true measured footsteps to the march beaten by Time. So do the days come out and go in, and move through the land of light and darkness, to the shelving steep, down which undated centuries have shot and been forgotten.

Soon those pleasant meadows that are still so green, and where the bleating of white flocks and the lowing of brindled herds are yet heard, will be silent, the hedges naked, and not even the hum of an insect sound in the air. Where the nearly ripe harvest, when the breeze blows, now murmurs like the sea in its sleep, and where the merry voices of sun-tanned reapers will soon be heard, the trampled stubble only will be seen, and brown bare patches of miry earth, where the straw has blackened and rotted, show like the coverings of newly-made graves. Even now unseen hands are tearing down the tapestry of flowers which summer had hung up to shelter her orchestra of birds in the hedges. What few flowers the woodbine again throws out—children of its old age—have none of the bloom and beauty about them like those born in the lusty sunshine of early summer. For even she is getting gray, and the white down of thistles, dandelion, groundsel, and many other hoary seeds, streak her sun-browned hair. There are blotches of russet upon the ferns that before only unfolded great fans of green,

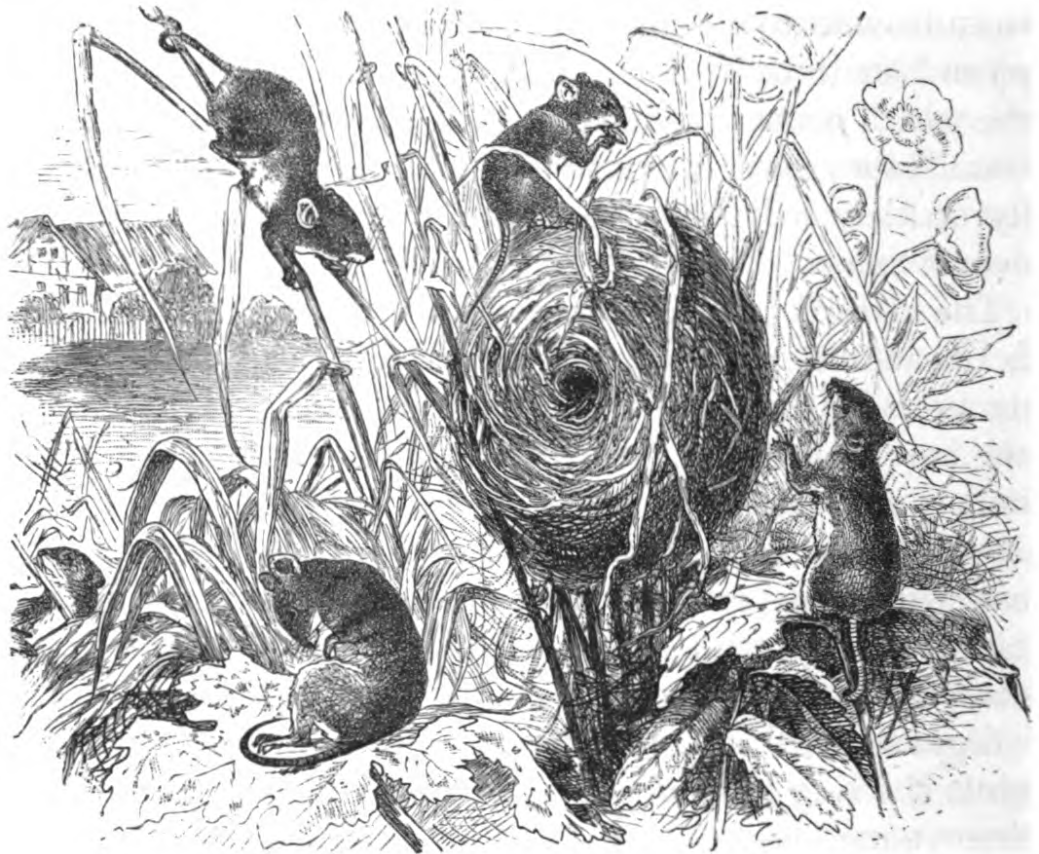
and in the sunset the fields of lavender seem all on fire, as if the purple heads of the flowers had been kindled by the golden blaze which fires the western sky.

Fainter, and farther between each note, the shrill chithering of the grasshopper may still be heard ; and as we endeavour to obtain a sight of him, the voice fades away beyond the beautiful cluster of red-coloured pheasant's-eye, which country maidens still call rose-a-ruby, believing that if they have not a sweetheart before it goes out of flower, they will have to wait for another year until it blooms again.

The dwarf convolvulus twines around the corn, and the bear-bine coils about the hedges, the former winding round in the direction of the sun, and the latter twining in a contrary direction. Sometimes, where the little pink convolvulus has bound several stems of corn together, and formed such a tasteful wreath as a young lady would be proud to wear on her bonnet, the nest of the pretty harvest-mouse may be found. This small quadruped—the very humming-bird of mammalia—when full-grown will scarcely weigh down a worn farthing, while the tiny nest, often containing as many as eight or nine young ones, may be shut up easily within the palm of the hand, though so compactly made, that if rolled along the floor like a ball, not a single fibre of which it is formed will be displaced. How the little mother manages to suckle so large a family within a much less compass than a common cricket-ball, is still a puzzle to our greatest naturalists.

It is well worth hiding yourself for half an hour among the standing-corn, just for the pleasure of seeing it run up stalks of wheat to its nest, which it does much easier

than we could climb a wide and easy staircase, for its weight does not even shake a grain out of the ripened ears that surmount its pretty chamber. It may be kept in a little cage, like a white mouse, and fed upon corn;



Harvest Mice and Nest.

water it laps like a dog; and it will turn a wheel as well as any squirrel. Often it amuses itself by coiling its tail around anything it can get at, and hanging with its mite of a body downward, will swing to and fro for many minutes together. One, while thus swinging, would time its motions to the ticking of the clock that stood in the apartment, and fall asleep while suspended.

LADYBIRDS—AN EXTENSIVE VIEW.

There are now thousands of ladybirds about, affording endless amusement to children. Many years ago, they invaded our southern coast in such clouds, that the piers had to be swept, and millions of them perished in the sea; many vessels crossing over from France had their decks covered with them. That pretty blue butterfly, which looks like a winged harebell, is now seen everywhere; and as it balances itself beside some late cluster of purple sweet-peas, it is difficult to tell which is the insect and which the flower, until it springs up and darts off with a jerk along its zigzag way. On some of the trees we now see a new crop of leaves quite as fresh and beautiful as ever made green the boughs in vernal May, and a pleasant appearance they have beside the early-changing foliage that soonest falls, looking in some places as if spring, summer, and autumn had combined their varied foliage together.

And never does the country look more beautiful than now, if the eye can at once take in a wide range of scenery from some steep hillside. Patches of green, where the cattle are feeding on the second crop of grass, are all one emerald—looking in the distance as if April had come again, and tinted them with the softest flush of spring; and if you are near enough, you may still hear the milkmaid's carol morning and night, for that green eddish causes the cows to yield as much milk as they did when feeding knee-deep amid the flowers of May. Then great fields of ripe corn rush in like floods of sunshine between these green spaces, widening and yellowing out on every

hand, showing here and there a thin dark band, which would hardly arrest the eye, were it not beaded with trees that shoot up from amid these low hedgerows. And in the remote distance, where the same dark lines run between the cornfields, they look like streaks of grass on a yellow clay-land in spring—a fallow, sunlighted land, where beside these thin lines no green thing grows. The roofs of the little cottages are all that is seen to float amid this golden ocean of corn, which appears to have washed over wall, window, and door, and left but the sloping thatch on the face of that great yellow sea of waving and rolling ears.

THE ROADSIDE INN.

That old roadside alehouse, which we thought so picturesque while eating our bread and cheese in the sunny porch an hour ago, is, excepting the roof and the tall signpost, lost in the long perspective of sweeping acres of cornfields; and the winding road we passed, which leads to it, seems to have been filled up by the long eary ranks that, from here, appear to have closed since we came by. We no longer hear the creaking of the old sign, though the gust that just now swept by and sent a white wave over the corn, must have made the old Red Lion sigh again as it swung before the door. Soon that great bay-window, which looks so pleasantly over the long range of corn-lands, will be filled with thirsty reapers in the evening, and well-to-do farmers in the daytime, as they ride down to see how the work of harvest progresses, while great bottles and wooden flagons will be passing all day long, out full, and in empty, at that old porch, until all the corn is

garnered. Children, who come with their parents, because they have no other home, until harvest is over,



will be hanging about that great long trough before the door, filling bottles with water for the reapers, and throwing it over one another, and wetting the hay that stands ever ready in those movable racks for any

mounted horseman who chooses to give his nag a bite as well as a sup, when he pulls up at that well-known halting-place.

Right proud is mine host of his great kitchen, with its clean sanded floor, and white long settles, that will seat a score or more of customers. You may see your face in the brass copper and block-tin cooking utensils that hang around, for often during the hay and corn harvest, the great farmers call and dine or lunch there, whose homes lie a long way from those open miles of cornfields. It would make a hungry man's mouth water to see what juicy hams and fine streaky fitches ever hang up on the oaken beams which span the ceiling of that vast kitchen. As to poultry—finer chickens were never eaten than those we saw picking about the horse-trough, nor do plumper ducks swim than those we sent quacking into the green pond—covered with duckweed—when our ragged terrier barked at them as we left the porch.

AN ENGLISH ORCHARD.

In some places, if it has been what the country-people call a forward summer, harvest has already commenced, though it is more general about the beginning of next month, which heralds in autumn. And now the fruit is ripe on the great orchard-trees, the plums are ready to drop through very mellowness, and there is a rich redness on the sunny-side of the pears, and on many of the apples. What strangely-shaped trees are still standing in many of our old English orchards, some of them so aged, that all record of when they were first planted was lost a century or two ago! Apple-trees so old that their arms have to be supported on crutches, as the

decayed trunk would not bear the branches when they are weighed down with fruit, for some of these codlins are as big as a baby's head. Many of these hoary trees are covered with mistletoe, or wrapped about with great flakes of silver moss, causing them in the distance to look like bearded Druids; while some of the trunks are bent and humped with knots, and stoop until they are almost double under the weight of fruit and years.

And when does pear ever taste so sweet, or plum so rich and mellow, as those which have fallen through very ripeness, and are picked up from the clean green aftermath under the orchard-trees, as soon as they have fallen?—few that are gathered can ever be compared with these. A hot day in August, a parching thirst, and a dozen golden-drop plums, picked up fresh from the cool grass, are things to be remembered, and talked about after, like Justice Shallow's pippins, in Shakspeare. They must not be shaken down by the wind, but slip off the boughs through sheer ripeness, and leave the stalks behind, so rich are they then that they would even melt in the crevice of an iceberg. But we have now reached the borders of a fruitful land, where the corn is ready for the sickle, and the wild fruits hang free for all; for though the time of summer's departure has arrived, she has left plenty behind for all, forgetting neither beast nor bird in her bounty. And now the voices of the labourers who are coming up to the great gathering, may be heard through the length and breadth of the land, for the harvest-cry has sounded.

Characteristics of August.

In height of mean temperature, August comes only second, and scarcely second, to July; it has been stated, for London, as $61^{\circ} 6'$. The sun, which enters the constellation Virgo on the 23d, is, on the 1st of the month, above the horizon at London for 15 hours 22 minutes; on the last, for 13 hours 34 minutes: at Edinburgh, for 16 hours 40 minutes, and 14 hours 20 minutes, on these days respectively.

Key to the Calendar.

IN early Roman times, this month was called *Sextilis*, as being the sixth of the year. The Julian arrangement made it the eighth. It acquired the name *Augustus* in honour of the second of the Cæsars, to whom it had been a fortunate period, he having in it assumed his first consulship, celebrated three triumphs, subdued Egypt, received the oath of allegiance of the legions that occupied the Janiculum, and terminated the civil wars of Rome. As already mentioned, being dissatisfied with its being a month of thirty days, Augustus took a day from February, to make it one of the longer class, like that (July) of his uncle Julius. At the same time, September and November were each deprived of a day, which was added in the one case to October, and in the other to December.

1. **Lammas-day**, called also the *Gule of August*. It is now only remarkable as a day of term for some purposes. It was probably one of the great festival-days of our heathen ancestors; and it is worthy of observation that it occurs exactly three months after another of these—Beltane. Cormac, bishop

of Cashel in the tenth century, records that in his time four great fires were lighted up on the four great festivals of the Druids—namely, in February, May, August, and November: probably Beltane and Lammas were two of these. Lammas was held as a day of thanksgiving for the new fruits of the earth. It was observed with bread of new wheat. The word is a softened form of the Anglo-Saxon *Hlaf-maesse* (loaf-mass, or the loaf-festival). Till the middle of the last century, the shepherds in various parts of Scotland were accustomed to hold festive meetings on Lammas-day on the tops of conspicuous hills. The Gule of August is probably from the Celtic *Cul* or *Gul* (a festive anniversary). The early Christian priesthood, finding this word in vogue, Latinised it into *Gula*, which means throat. This, taken in connection with its being the day of the festival of St Peter ad Vincula (instituted in honour of a relic of St Peter's chains), seems to have suggested to them to make up a story of a daughter of the tribune Quirinus having been cured of a disorder in the throat by kissing the said relic on the day of its festival. And the Celtic *gul* (an anniversary) has thus been the remote cause of a Christian festival being instituted to *Gula* (the throat), and held on the day of St Peter's Chains.

15. **The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin**, a grand festival of the Romish Church. It was instituted in 813, to celebrate the ascension of the Virgin into heaven. In Catholic countries, this day is marked by splendid ceremonies and processions.

24. **St Bartholomew's Day**, a holiday of the Church of England. Bartholomew was an apostle, but there is no scriptural account of his labours or death. The legend of the Roman Church represents him as preaching in the Indies, and concluding his life by being flayed alive by order of a brother of the king of Armenia. The day has a horrible celebrity in connection with the massacre of the Protestants at Paris in 1572.





JOHN LEIGHTON

SEPTEMBER

Next him September marched eke on foot,
Yet was he hoary, laden with the spoil
Of harvest riches, which he made his boot,
And him enriched with bounty of the soil ;
In his one hand, as fit for harvest's toil,
He held a knife-hook ; and in th' other hand
A pair of weights, with which he did assoil
Both more and less, where it in doubt did stand,
And equal gave to each as justice duly scanned.

SPENSER.



SEPTEMBER Far inland, within sight of our wave-washed shores, along the margins of our pleasant rivers, in level meadows and sinking valleys, on gentle uplands and sloping hillsides, there is now a busy movement, for men and maidens are out in the fields, helping to gather in the golden harvest. The village streets are now comparatively silent.

THE HARVEST-FIELD.

Scores of cottages are shut up—one old woman perhaps only left to look after the whole row—for even the children have gone to glean, and many of the village artisans find it pleasant to quit their usual employment for a few days, and go out to reap the corn. There will be no getting a coat mended or a shoe cobbled for days to come. If there is a stir of life in the village street, those who move along are either coming from or going to the reapers, bringing back empty bottles and baskets, or carrying them filled with ale and provisions. A delicate Cockney, who can only eat the lean of his overdone mutton-chop with the aid of pickles, would stand aghast at the great cold dinner spread out for the farmer and his house-servants—men, each with the appetite of three, and maidens who can eat meat that is all fat. Pounds of fat beef, bacon, and ham, great wedges of cheese, cold apple-pies, with crusts two inches thick, huge brown loaves, lumps of butter, and a continually gurgling ale, are the viands which a well-to-do farmer places before his servants, and shares with them, for he argues, he cannot expect to get the proper quantity of work out of them unless they live well. To get his harvest in quick, while the weather is fine, is the study of the great corn-grower; and such a far-seeing man scarcely gives the cost a consideration, for he knows that those who delay will, if the weather changes, be ready to pay almost any price for reapers; so he gets in his corn ‘while the sun shines.’

If well got in, what a price it will fetch in the market,

compared with that which was left out in the rain until it became discoloured and sprouted! And as he points to his ricks with pride, he asks what's the value of the extra bullock, the pig or two, and the few barrels of ale the reapers consumed, compared to such a crop as that; and he is right. It is an anxious time for the farmer. He is continually looking at his weather-glass, and watching those out-of-door signs which denote a change in the weather, and which none are better acquainted with than those who pass so much of their life in the fields. Unlike the manufacturer, who carries on his business indoors whatever the changes of the season may be, the farmer is dependent on the weather for the safety of his crop, and can never say what that will be, no matter how beautiful it may look while standing, until it is safely garnered. Somehow he seems to live nearer to God than the busy indwellers of cities, for he puts his trust in Him who has promised that He will always send 'seed-time and harvest.'

How gracefully a good reaper handles his sickle, and clutches the corn—one sweep, and the whole armful is down, and laid so neat and level, that when the band is put round the sheaf, the bottom of almost every straw touches the ground when it is reared up, and the ears look as level as they did while growing! It is a nice art to make those corn-bands well, which bind the sheaves—to twist the ears of corn so that they shall all cluster together without shaking out the grain, and then to tie up the sheaves, so round and plump, that they may be rolled over, when stacking or loading, without hardly a head becoming loose. There are rich morsels of colour about the cornfield where the reapers are at work. The

handkerchiefs which they bind around their foreheads, to keep off the sun—the white of their shirt-sleeves,



making spots of light amid the yellow corn—the gleaners in costumes of every hue, blue, red, and gray, stooping or standing here and there, near the overhanging trees in the hedgerows—make such a diversity of colour as pleases the eye, while the great blue heaven spans over all, and a few loose silver clouds float gently over the scene.

In such a light, the white horses seem cut out of silver, the chestnuts of ruddy gold, while the black horses stand out against the sky, as if cut in black marble. What great gaps half-a-dozen reapers soon make in the standing corn! Half-an-hour ago, where the eye dwelt on a broad furrow of upstanding ears, there is now a low road of stubble, where trails of the ground-convolvulus may be seen, and the cyanus of every hue, which the country children call corn-flowers. Pretty is it, too, to see the little children gleaning, each with a rough bag or pocket before it, and a pair of old scissors dangling by its side, to cut off the straw, for only the ears are to be placed in the gleaner's little bag. Then there is the large poke, under the hedge, into which their mother empties the tiny glean-bags, and that by night will be filled, and a heavy load it is for the poor woman to carry home on her head, for a mile or two, while the little ones trot along by her side, the largest perhaps carrying a small sheaf, which she has gleaned, and from which the straw has not been cut, while the ears hang down and mingle with her flowing hair. A good, kind-hearted farmer will, like Boaz of old, when he spoke kindly to pretty Ruth, let his poor neighbours glean 'even amongst the sheaves.' The dry hard stubble, amid which they glean, cuts the bare legs and naked arms of the poor children like wires, making them as rough at times as fresh-plucked geese. Rare gleaning there is where the 'stooks' have stood, when the wagons come to 'lead' the corn out of the field. The men stick the sheaves on their forks as fast as you can count them, throw them into the wagon, then move on to the next 'stook'—each of which consists of eight or ten sheaves—then there is a rush and scramble to the

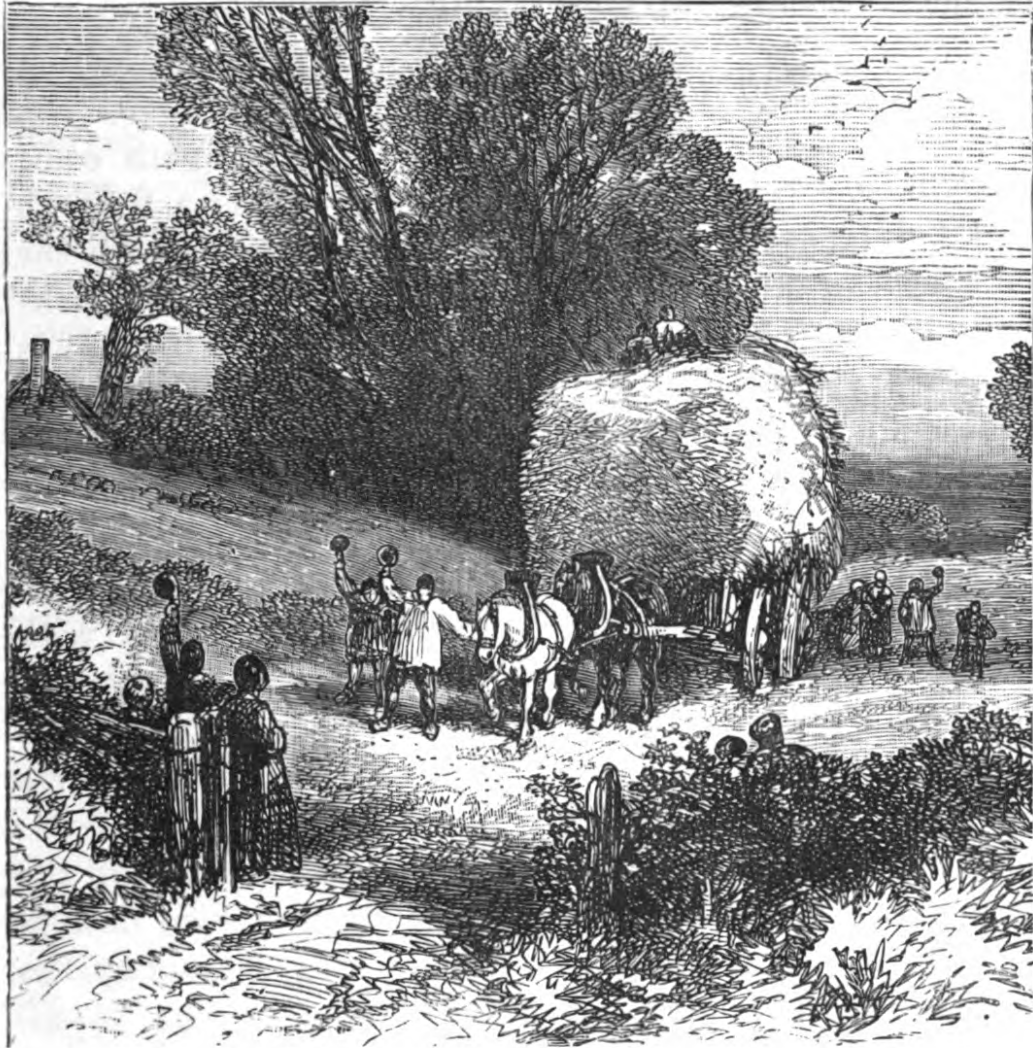
spot that is just cleared, for there the great ears of loose and fallen corn lie thick and close together, and that is the richest gleaning harvest yields.

LEADING-HOME—HARVEST MEDITATIONS.

Who has not paused to see the high-piled wagons come rocking over the furrowed fields, and sweeping through the green lanes, at the leading-home of harvest? All the village turns out to see the last load carried into the rick-yard; the toothless old grandmother, in spectacles, stands at her cottage-door; the poor old labourer, who has been long ailing, and who will never more help to reap the harvest, leans on his stick in the sunshine; while the feeble huzzas of the children mingle with the deep-chested cheers of the men, and the silvery ring of maiden-voices—all welcoming home the last load with cheery voices, especially where the farmer is respected, and has allowed his poor neighbours to glean. Some are mounted on the sheaves, and one sheaf, the last that was in the field, is often decorated with flowers and ribbons; and sometimes a pretty girl sits sideways on one of the great fat horses, her straw-hat ornamented with flowers and ears of corn. Right proud she is when hailed by the rustics as the Harvest Queen!

Then there are the farmer, his wife, and daughters, all standing and smiling at the open gate of the stackyard; and proud is the driver as he cocks his hat aside, and giving the horses a slight touch, sends the last load into the yard, with a sweep that almost makes you feel afraid it will topple over, so much does it rock coming in at this grand finish. Rare gleaning is there, too, for the birds and many a little animal, in the long lanes through which

the wagons have passed during the harvest, for almost every overhanging branch has taken toll from the loads,



Harvest Home.

while the hawthorn-hedges have swept over them like rakes. The long-tailed field-mouse will carry off many an ear to add to his winter-store, and stow away in his snug nest under the embankment. What grand subjects, mellowed by the setting suns of departed centuries, do these harvest-fields bring before a picture-loving eye!

Abraham among his reapers—Isaac musing in the fields at even-tide—Jacob labouring to win Rachel—Joseph and the great granaries of Egypt—Ruth

Standing in tears among the alien corn—

and the harvests of Palestine, amid which our Saviour walked by the side of His disciples. All these scenes pass before a meditative mind while gazing over the harvest-field, filled with busy reapers and gleaners, and we think how, thousands of years ago, the same picture was seen by the patriarchs, and that Ruth herself may have led David by the hand, while yet a child, through the very fields in which she herself had gleaned. But the frames in which these old pictures were placed were not carved into such beautiful park-like scenery and green pastoral spots as we see in England, for there the harvest-fields were hemmed in by rocky hills, and engirded with deserts, where few trees waved, and the villages lay far and wide apart. And, instead of the sound of the thrasher's flail, oxen went treading their weary round to trample out the corn, which in spring shot up in green circles where they had trodden.

WILD FRUITS—SUNSET.

Winged seeds now ride upon the air, like insects, many of them balanced like balloons, the broad top uppermost, and armed with hooked grapnels, which take fast hold of whatever they alight upon. Suspended from leaf to branch, we see the network of the spider, which in the early morning is hung with rounded crystals, for such seem the glittering dewdrops as they catch the light of the rising sun. The hawthorn-berries begin to show red

in the hedges, and we see scarlet hips where, a few weeks ago, the clustering wild-roses bloomed. Here and there, in sunny places, the bramble-berries have begun to blacken, though many yet wear a crude red, while some are green; nor is it unusual, in a mild September, to see a few of the satin-like bramble blossoms, putting out here and there, amid a profusion of berries. The bee seems to move wearily from flower to flower, for they lie wider asunder now than they did a month ago, and the little hillocks covered with wild-thyme, which he scarcely deigned to notice then, he now gladly alights upon, and revels amid the tiny sprigs of lavender-coloured bloom. The spotted wood-leopard moth may still be seen, and the goat-moth, whose larva is called the oak-piercer; and sometimes the splendid tiger-moth comes sailing by on Tyrian wings, that fairly dazzle the eye with their beauty.

But at no season of the year are the sunsets so beautiful as now; and many who have travelled far say, that nowhere in the world do the clouds hang in such gaudy colours of ruby and gold, about the western sky, as they do in England during autumn, and that these rich effects are produced through our being surrounded by the sea. Nor is sunrise less beautiful seen from the summit of some hill, while the valleys are still covered with a white mist. The tops of the trees seem at first to rise above a country that is flooded, while the church-spire appears like some sea-mark, heaving out of the mist. Then comes a great wedge-like beam of gold, cutting deep down into the hollows, showing the stems of the trees and the roofs of cottages, gilding barn and outhouse, making a golden road through a land of white mist, which seems

to rise on either hand, like the sea which Moses divided for the people of Israel to pass through dryshod. The dewdrops on the sunlighted summit the feet rest upon are coloured like precious stones of every dye, and every blade of grass is beaded with these gorgeous gems. Sometimes the autumnal mists do not rise more than four or five feet above the earth, revealing only the heads of horse and rider, who seem to move up as if breasting a river, while the shepherd and milkmaid show like floating busts.

The following word-painting was made in the early sunrise, while we were wanderers, many long years ago :

On the far sky leans the old ruined mill ;
 Through its rent sails the broken sunbeams glow ;
 Gilding the trees that belt the lower hill,
 And the old oaks which on its summit grow ;
 Only the reedy marsh that sleeps below,
 With its dwarf bushes is concealed from view ;
 And now a straggling thorn its head doth show,
 Another half shakes off the misty blue
 Just where the smoky gold streams through the heavy dew.

And there the hidden river lingering dreams,
 You scarce can see the banks that round it lie ;
 That withered trunk, a tree, or shepherd seems,
 Just as the light or fancy strikes the eye.
 Even the very sheep which graze hard by,
 So blend their fleeces with the misty haze,
 They look like clouds shook from the cold gray sky
 Ere morning o'er the unsunned hill did blaze—
 The vision fades as they move farther off to graze.

THE DEER—AGED HAWTHORNS.

We have often fancied that deer never look so beautiful as when in autumn they move about, or couch amid

the rich russet-coloured fern—when there is a blue atmosphere in the distance, and the trees scattered



around are of many changing hues. There is a majesty in the movements of these graceful animals, both in the

manner of their walk, and the way they carry their heads, crowned with picturesque antlers. Then they are so particular in their choice of pasture, refusing to eat where the verdure is rank or trampled down, also feeding very slowly, and when satisfied, lying down to chew the cud at their ease. Their eyes are also very beautiful, having a sparkling softness about them like the eyes of a woman, while the senses of sight, smelling, and hearing are more perfect than those of the generality of quadrupeds. Watch their attitude while listening! that raised head, and those erect ears, catch sounds so distant that they would not be within our own hearing, were we half a mile nearer the sound than the spot where the herd is feeding.

Beautiful are the fern and heath covered wastes in September—with their bushes bearing wild-fruits, sloe, and bullace, and crab; and where one may lie hidden for hours, watching how beast, bird, and insect pass their time away, and what they do in these solitudes. In such spots, we have seen great gorse-bushes in bloom, high as the head of a mounted horseman; impenetrable places where the bramble and the sloe had become entangled with the furze and the branches of stunted hawthorns, that had never been able to grow clear of the wild waste of underwood—spots where the boldest hunter is compelled to draw in his rein, and leave the hounds to work their way through the tangled maze. Many of these hawthorns were old and gray, and looked as if some giant hand had twisted a dozen iron stems into one, and left them to grow and harden together in ridges, and knots, and coils, that looked like the relics of some older world—peopled with other creations than those the eye

now dwells upon. Some few such spots we yet know in England, of which no record can be found that they were ever cultivated. And over these bowery hollows, and this dense underwood, giant oaks threw their arms so far out, that we marvelled how the hoary trunks, which were often hollow, could bear such weights without other support than the bole from which they sprang—showing a strength which the builder man, with all his devices, is unable to imitate.

Others there were—gnarled, hoary trunks—which, undated centuries ago, the bolt had blackened and the lightning burned, so monstrous that they took several men, joined hand-to-hand, to girth them, yet still they sent out a few green leaves from their branchless tops, like aged ruins whose summits the ivy often covers. And in these haunts the red fox sheltered, and the gray badger had its home, and there the wild-cat might sometimes be seen glaring like a tiger, through the branches, on the invader of its solitude. It seemed like a spot in which vegetation had struggled for the mastery for ages, and where the tall trees, having overtopped the assailing underwood, were hemmed in every way, and besieged until they perished from the rank growth below. But every here and there were sunny spots and open glades, where the turf rose elastic from the tread, and great green walls of hazel shot up more like trees than shrubs.

NUTTING.

There were no such nuts to be found anywhere as on these aged hazels, which, when ripe, we could shake out of their husks, or cups—nothing to be found in our planted nutteries so firm and sweet as those grown in

this wildwood, and Nutting-Day is still kept up as a rural holiday in September in many parts of England, in the neighbourhood of merry greenwoods. Towards the end of the month, old and young, maidens and their sweethearts, generally accompanied by a troop of happy boys and girls, sally out with bags and crooks, bottles and baskets, containing drink and food, pipes and tobacco for the old people, and all that is required for a rough rustic repast 'all under the greenwood tree.' One great feature of this old rural merry-making is their going out in their very homeliest attire, and many there were who had worn the same nutting-dress for years. Old Royster's leather-shorts had been the heirloom of two generations, and when last we heard of them, were still able to bid defiance to brake or brier.

A fashionable picnic is shorn of all that heart-happiness which is enjoyed by homely country-people, for, in the former, people are afraid of appearing natural. Pretty country girls were not called 'young ladies' at these rural holidays, but by their sweet-sounding Christian names; and oh what music there is in 'Mary' compared with 'Miss!' What merry laughter have we heard ringing through those old woods, as some pretty maiden was uplifted by her sweetheart to reach the ripe cluster of nuts which hung on the topmost bough, where they had been browned by the sun, when, overbalancing himself, they came down among the soft wood-grass, to the great merriment of every beholder! Some were sure to get lost, and there was such shouting and hallooing as awakened every echo, and sent the white owls sailing half asleep in search of some quieter nook, where they could finish their nap in peace.

Then what a beautiful banquet-hall they find in some open sunny spot, surrounded with hazels, and overtopped by tall trees, where the golden rays, shining through the leaves, throw a warm mellow light on all around! Nothing throws out smoother or more beautifully coloured branches than the hazel, the bark of which shines as if it had been polished. And who has not admired its graceful catkins in spring, that droop and wave like elegant laburnums, and are seen long before its leaves appear? Nor does autumn, amid all its rich-coloured foliage, show a more beautiful object than a golden-hued hazel copse, which remains in leaf later than many of the trees. When this clear yellow tint of the leaves is seen, the nuts are ripe, and never before—one shake at a branch, and down they come rattling out of their cups by scores—real ‘brown sheelers,’ as they are called by country-people. Wood-nuts gathered at the end of September or the beginning of October, have the true ‘nutty’ flavour, which is never tasted if they are gathered before.

Key to the Calendar.

THIS was the seventh (*septem*) month in the Roman year before the Julian reform of the calendar. The first two syllables of the name are thus readily accounted for; the last, which also figures at the end of the names of the three following months, is an ancient particle of doubtful signification.

1. **St Giles’s Day.**—This saint’s day figures in the Church of England calendar. A native of Greece, he travelled into France in 715, and became Abbot of Nîmes. He literally obeyed the Scriptural injunction by selling his patrimony for the

benefit of the poor, and on one occasion gave his coat to a sick mendicant, who was cured miraculously by putting it on. St Giles has thus become the patron saint of beggars and cripples. St Giles's Church, Cripplegate, London, and the High Church in Edinburgh, are dedicated to him; and he is the patron saint of the Scottish capital, as far as it can be said to have one.

8. **The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin**, a grand festival of the Romish Church, and still retained in the Church of England calendar. This festival has been held in honour of the Virgin, with matins, masses, homilies, collects, processions, and other ceremonies, for upwards of a thousand years.

14. **Holy-rood Day**, or the day of the exaltation of the Holy Cross, a festival of the Roman Church, still retained in the Church of England calendar. It celebrates the miraculous appearance of a cross in the heavens to the Emperor Constantine. The Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after Holy-rood Day, are Ember Days, and the week in which they occur is consequently termed Ember Week.

21. **St Matthew the Apostle**, a festival of the Church of England.

29. **The Festival of St Michael and all the Holy Angels**, shortly, *Michaelmas-day*, a grand festival of the Roman and English Churches. St Michael is singled out for particular mention as being the chief of angels, or archangel.

Michaelmas, besides being one of the quarter-days in England for the payment of rents and wages, has been distinguished from an early period in that and other countries as the time for the annual election of corporation officers, magistrates, and other civil guardians of the peace.

It is an ancient and extensively prevalent custom to have a goose for dinner on Michaelmas-day. Queen Elizabeth is said to have been eating her Michaelmas goose when she received intelligence of the defeat of the Spanish Armada.



JOHN. LEIGHTON

OCTOBER

Then came October full of merry glee ;
For yet his noule was totty of the must,
Which he was treading in the wine-fat's see,
And of the joyous oyle, whose gentle gust
Made him so frolic and so full of lust :
Upon a dreadful Scorpion he did ride,
The same which by Dianæ's doom unjust
Slew great Orion ; and eeke by his side
He had his ploughing-share and coulter ready tyde.

SPENSER.



OCTOBER IT is now yellow autumn, no longer divided from summer by the plummy sheaf and lingering flowers, but with features of its own, marked with slow decay. There is a rich hectic red on its cheek, too beautiful to last long, and every wind that blows pales the crimson hue, or scatters its beauty on the empty air, for everywhere around us the

leaves are falling. But through the openings autumn makes in the foliage, many new beauties are revealed—bits of landscape, which the long close-woven leaves had shut out, of far-away spots, that look like a new country, so strange do they appear when seen for the first time through the faded and torn curtains which have shaded summer. Hill and valley, spire and thatched grange, winding highways and brown bends over the meadows—with stiles and hedges—show fresh footpaths which we have never walked along, and make us long to look at the unvisited places to which they lead. We see low clumps of evergreens, which the tall trees had hidden; nests in hedges, where we were before unable to find one; and in the orchards a few hardy apples still hang, which only the frost can ripen.

The fields seem to look larger, where we saw the grass mown and the corn reaped, for we can now see the bottoms of the hedges. The cherry-trees look as beautiful to the eye as they did when in blossom, such a rich scarlet dyes the leaves, mingled every here and there with golden touches. The elders are still covered with dark purple berries, especially the branches which overhang the water-courses, and are beyond the reach of the villagers. We see flags and rushes and water-plants rocking in the breeze, and reflected in the ripples which were hidden by the entangling grass that now lies matted together, and is beginning to decay. As evening approaches, the landscape seems to assume a sober hue, the colours of the foliage become subdued, and the low sighing of the wind, the call of the partridge, and the few notes uttered by the remaining birds, fall upon the ear with a sad sound at times, and produce a low feeling,

which we are seldom sensible of at the change of any other season of the year.

HOP-PICKING.

There is still one out-of-door scene beautiful to look at and pleasant to walk through, and that is hop-picking—the last ingathering of autumn that finds employment for the poor; nor are there many prettier English pictures to be seen than a well-managed hop-plantation. The smell of the hop is very delightful, so different from that of new hay and hawthorn-buds, yet quite as refreshing. What a beautiful motion there is in the light and shadow when the breeze stirs the vine-shaped leaves, the golden-coloured hops swaying the bine to and fro, and sharp quiverings in the open network where they cross each other, and all pervaded with a soothing aroma, that makes the blood stir like the smell of the rising sap in a forest at spring-time!

Merry people, too, are the hop-pickers, whether at their work, or when going or returning from the hop-plantations. The little huts they run up to sleep in, their places of cooking, washing, and other domestic contrivances, tell that they belong to the race who have heralded the way into many a wilderness, lived there, and founded colonies, that are now springing up into great nations. We see them travelling to the hop-grounds with baby on back, and leading children by the hand, carrying cradle and bed, saucepan and kettle, and no doubt nearly everything their humble home contained. We look on and wonder how those tiny bare feet will ever tramp so far, yet while turning the head and watching them, we see them go pit-pat over the ground, three or four steps to

the one or two longer strides of their parents, caring no more for the gravel than if they were shod with iron, and we are astonished to see what a way they have gone while we have been watching. Sometimes, in the hop-grounds, we have seen a cradle with a baby asleep in it, swinging between the tall hop-bines, and thought what a pretty picture it would make, if well painted!

Often, in the neighbourhood of Farnham, the hop attains the height of from fourteen to sixteen feet, and excepting between a clear hazel copse, when the leaves are yellowed by autumn, we know nothing more beautiful to walk among than these tall swaying bines. It flowers in June, and in favourable seasons is ripe in September, though many hops remain to be picked in the early part of the present month. There are several varieties of hops grown, known as the red-bind, green-bind, and white-bind; the first of which, though producing small cones, is a hardy plant, and resists the attacks of insects; while the second is very productive in a good season, and will flourish better in a poor soil than the white-bind, which is the most difficult of all to grow, and realises the highest price of all the hops. Good practised growers fix upon the time for hop-picking when the cones throw out a strong peculiar scent, which they know the moment the air is filled with it, and they pay more regard to this powerful aroma than they do to the looks of the hops.

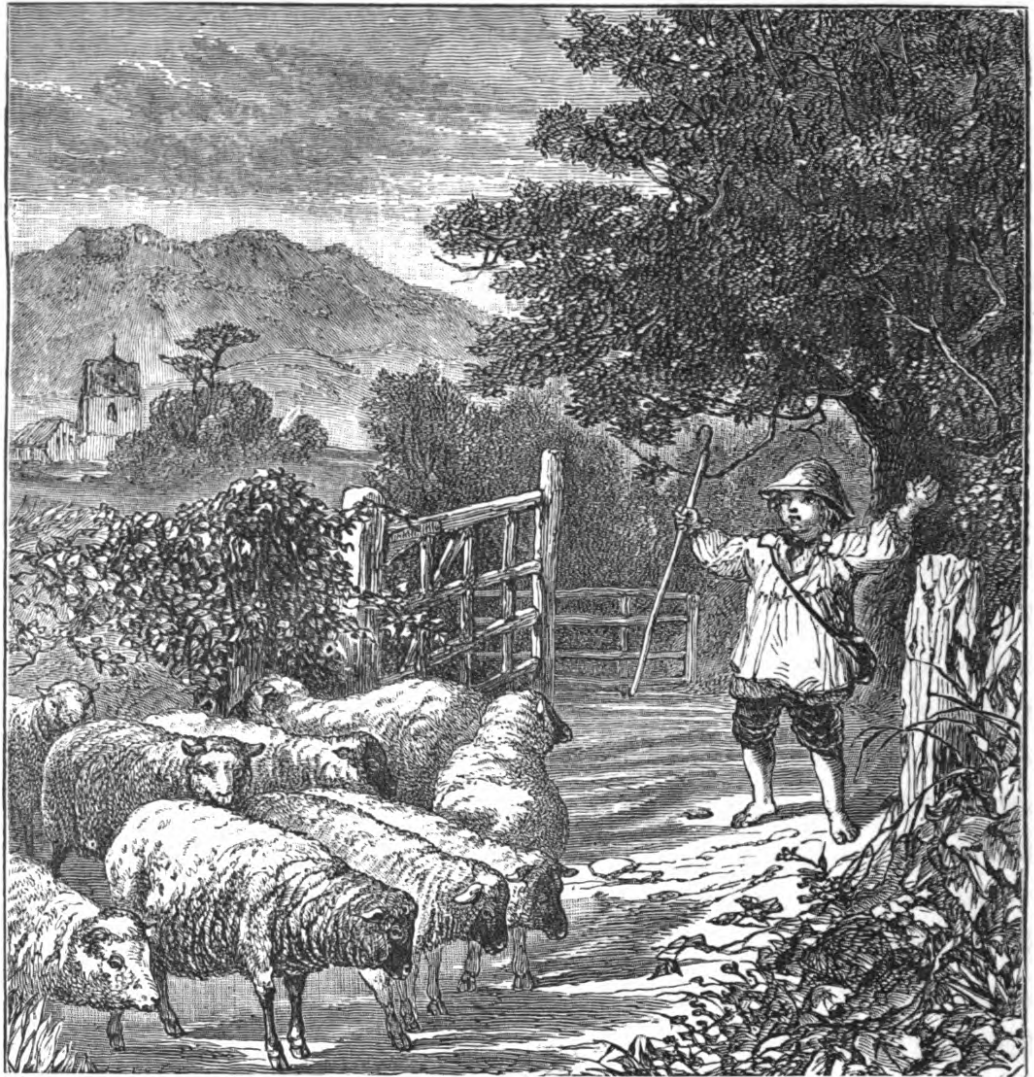
Nor is it at hop-picking time only that this beautiful plant gives employment to the poor, though that is the chief season, for in spring the ground has to be well stirred and drawn up about the young shoots; then the poles must be placed in the ground about the end of April, when the shoots are generally five or six inches

high. And after all this is done, the shoots must be tied to the poles as they grow higher, and this must be done very lightly and carefully, for if fastened too tight, the shoot would decay, come off, and send out fresh ones from below, which would attain no height, be dwindled, and not bear a bunch of cones worth the gathering. The wild-hop, which may be seen romping about our hedges, is indigenous, and pretty it looks amid the other climbing-plants, many of which bear beautiful berries, nor is there any record of its having been cultivated before the reign of Henry VIII. It was, however, imported from the Low Countries, and used for brewing in England as early as 1428.

AUTUMN THOUGHTS.

To an observant eye, many little changes are presented, which show how rapidly autumn is advancing. The flocks are now driven to the fold of an evening, for the nights are becoming too cold and damp for them to remain in the fields, and they will soon be inclosed in ground set apart for their winter-feeding. It is a pleasant sight to see them rush out of the fold of a morning after their confinement, then hurry on and break their closed ranks to feed here and there on the unpalatable and scanty pasturage. Turn wherever we may, we see the face of Nature changing; nowhere does it now wear its old summer look, the very sound of the falling leaves causes us to feel thoughtful, and many a solemn passage of the Holy Bible passes through the mind, telling us that the time will come when we also 'shall fade as a leaf the wind has taken away. And all thou hast shall fall down as the leaf falleth from the vine.' That we shall soon be

'as oaks when they cast their leaves,' and at no other season of the year do these solemn truths strike us so forcibly as in autumn.



As the fallen leaves career before us—crumbling ruins of summer's beautiful halls—we cannot help thinking of those who have perished—who have gone before us, blown forward to the grave by the icy blasts of Death. The scenery of spring awakens no such emotions; there

is no sign of decay there, for all seems as if fresh springing into life, after the long sleep of winter. But now, even the sun seems to be growing older, he rises later and sets earlier, as if requiring more rest, instead of increasing in heat and brightness, as he did when the buttercups looked up at him and 'flashed back gold for gold.' Yet we know this natural decay is necessary to produce the life and beauty of a coming spring, and it is some solace to know, that for every flower autumn rains and blows upon and buries, a hundred will rise up and occupy their places by the time summer returns again, for it is her work to beautify decay.

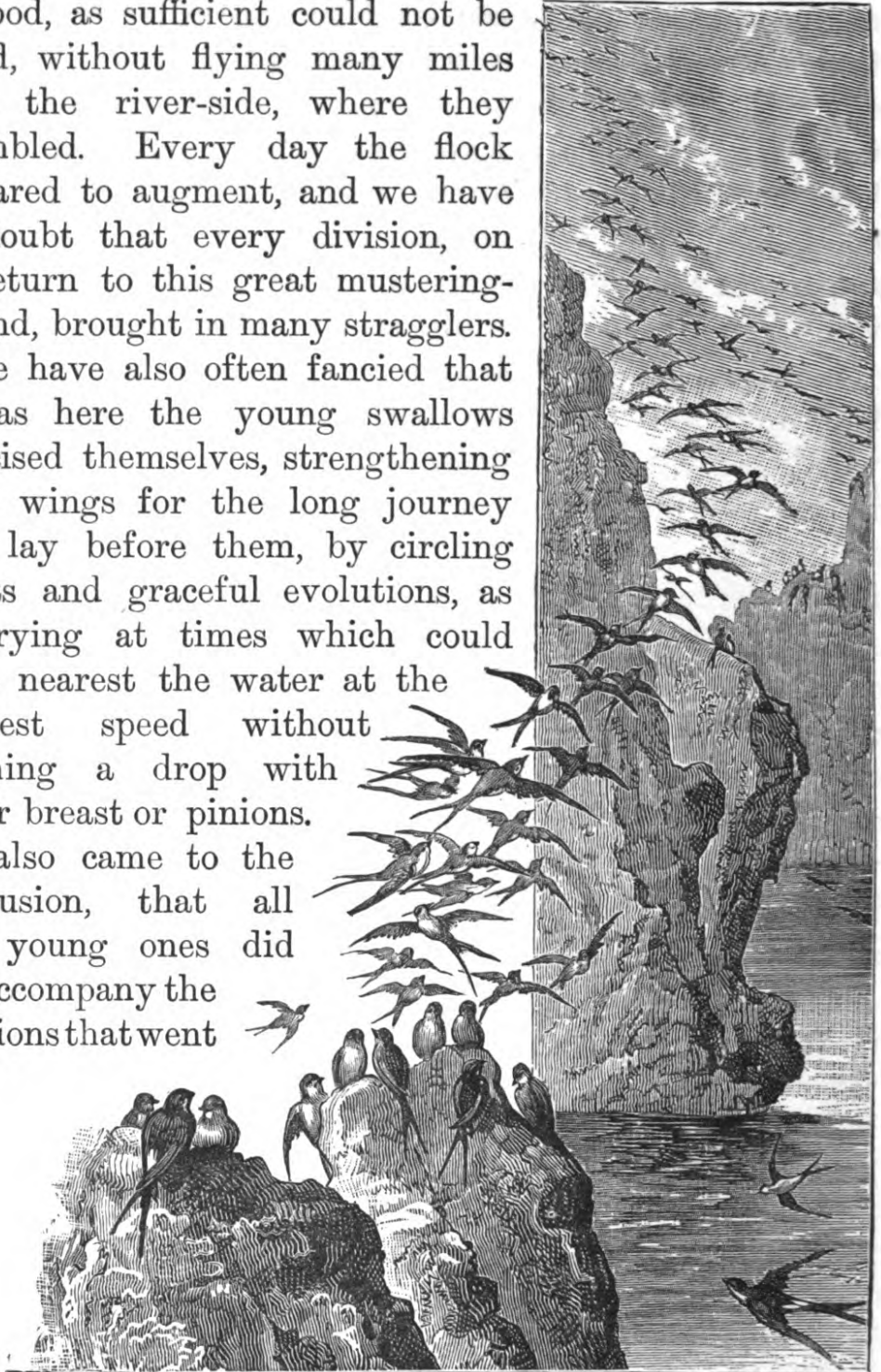
THE SWALLOWS—BIRD MIGRATION.

Nearly all our singing-birds have departed for sunnier lands far over the sea, and the swallows are now preparing to follow them, while, strange interchange, other birds visit us which have been away all spring and summer. Some days before the swallows leave us, they assemble together, at certain places—generally beside a river—where they wait fresh arrivals, until a flock of thousands is mustered; and were not the same gathering going on at other places beside, we might fancy that all the swallows that visit us were assembled in one spot. One place they frequented, which abounded in osier holts, in our younger days, and when up early angling, we have seen them rise in myriads from the willows about six in the morning, and dividing themselves into five or six companies, disperse in contrary directions, when they remained away all day, beginning to return about five, and continuing to come in until it was nearly dark. No doubt this separation took place on account of the scarcity

of food, as sufficient could not be found, without flying many miles from the river-side, where they assembled. Every day the flock appeared to augment, and we have no doubt that every division, on its return to this great mustering-ground, brought in many stragglers.

We have also often fancied that it was here the young swallows exercised themselves, strengthening their wings for the long journey that lay before them, by circling flights and graceful evolutions, as if trying at times which could come nearest the water at the greatest speed without touching a drop with either breast or pinions.

We also came to the conclusion, that all the young ones did not accompany the divisions that went



away every day in search of food, but only a portion—as thousands remained—and that those which went out one day rested the next, and had their turn on the second morning, or each alternate day. They seldom remained later than the middle of October, and when they left for good, went away all together, in the direction of the south. A few generally remained for a day or two, then went off in the same direction. Dead swallows were generally picked up among the willows after the flock had migrated. Earliest amongst the fresh arrivals is the woodcock, who generally reaches the end of his journey in the night, and very weary and jaded he appears. Seldom is he ever seen to land, though he has been found hiding himself near the coast, in so exhausted a state as to be run down, and taken by hand. But he does not remain by the seaside a day longer than he is compelled, where, having recruited himself a little, he sets off to visit his former haunts. The snipe also arrives about the same time, and is found in the haunts of the woodcock, on the moors, while the season is mild, and in low, warm, sheltered localities when the weather is severe.

In October the redwing reaches us, and if the autumn is fine and warm, its song may often be heard. Its favourite haunts are parks, and secure places, abounding in clumps of trees, where it feeds on worms, and such like soft food so long as it can be found; never feeding on berries unless it is forced by the frost. The early arrival of the fieldfare is considered by country-people a sure sign of a hard winter, especially if there is a large crop of hips and haws, which they say, reverentially, Providence has stored up for them beforehand.

We think it is a surer sign that, in the country they have quitted, severe weather has set in earlier than usual. Some naturalists say that, although this bird obtains its food in the hedges, it roosts on the ground; the reason assigned for arriving at this conclusion is, that those who go out at night with nets to capture larks in the field, often find fieldfares amongst the birds thus taken. May not this have been in some neighbourhood where the rarity of hedges caused them so to roost, like the rooks on Salisbury Plain, where there is plenty of food, but very few trees, compelling them either to fly miles away at night, or take up their lodgings 'on the cold ground?' Gilbert White is the great authority for this account of the fieldfares.

THE OCTOBER WOODS.

The woods never look more beautiful than from the close of last month to the middle of October, for by that time it seems as if Nature had exhausted all her choicest colours on the foliage. We see the rich, burnished bronze of the oak; red of many hues, up to the gaudiest scarlet; every shade of yellow, from the wan gold of the primrose to the deep orange of the tiger-lily; purple, rising from the light lilac to the darkest velvet of the pansy streaked with jet; and all so blended and softened together in parts, that like the colours on a dove's neck, we cannot tell where one begins and the other ends. And amid this change, the graceful fir-trees seem now to step boldly out, and we are amazed at the quiet beauty we have so long overlooked as we gaze upon these stately and swarthy daughters of autumn, who have been hidden by their fairer sisters of summer. We

often wish that a few more of our great landscape-painters had devoted their canvas to the endless tints of 'the fading and many-coloured woods,' as they are seen at no other time excepting this season of the year.

Nothing can be grander than the autumnal foliage of the oak, with its variety of tints, which are more numerous than can be found on any other tree, where there are greens of every hue, and browns running into shades that are almost numberless. The beech again is covered with the richest of all autumn colours—excepting only one or two of our shrubs—an orange that seems almost to blaze again as you look at it in the sunset, recalling the burning bush before which Moses bowed. Nearly one of the first trees to shed its foliage is the walnut; next the ash, if covered with those keys that make such a rattling in the November wind—if these are wanting, the tree remains much longer in leaf. The ash is one of the most graceful of our forest-trees, with its leaves set in pairs as if made to match one another, while its smooth, tough branches have a gray hue, that seems to make a light through every portion of the tree. The horse-chestnut now wears its changing livery of shining gold, but can hardly be classed amongst our English forest-trees, as it was a stranger to our parks, ornamental grounds, and copses less than two centuries ago. The lime or linden, though it soon loses its leaves, shows well in an autumn landscape; so does the tall poplar, seeming as if trying to touch the sky with its high up-coned head.

How beautiful the elm now looks, especially if its changing foliage is seen from some summit that overlooks a wood, for it is the tallest of our forest-trees, and its topmost boughs may then be seen high above all

others! And who can walk through our woods and forests without feeling as if in the presence of Shakspeare, moving side by side with him, and Orlando, and Rosalind, and that contented duke who found the woods

More free from peril than the envious court ;

while the Forest of Arden seems to rise before us with its herd of dappled deer, and in the mind's eye we picture the melancholy Jacques reclining beneath some broad-branched oak, 'whose antique roots peep out upon the brook,' on which the falling leaves go gliding until lost by the overhanging boughs that shut out the receding stream.

What a pattering there is now when the wind blows, as the pale golden acorns come rattling out of their beautifully-carved cups—the drinking-vessels of our old fairy-tales, and often forming the tea-service of our country children in the present day, when they play at giving a tea-party on the floor of some thatched cottage! And how grand is the piping of the great autumn winds, sounding like an organ through the forest, and causing us to feel that we are walking through a temple built by an Almighty hand, for there is no sign of the builder man around us! That trellised roof, where, through the openings made by the fallen leaves, we see only the sky, points to a greater Builder than imitative man.

AUTUMN LEAVES.

Beautiful as many of our poetical images are, drawn from the fallen leaves, and sad as the sight is to see them lying around our walks, still the fall of the leaf is not its death, no more than that of one flower fading in a cluster

is the death of the flower, as it only falls to make room for another blossom. A swelling bud will always be found in autumn above the leaf that is about to fall; and as this bud increases, it pushes down its predecessor, and causes it to break off, or to hang by so light a hold that the wind soon carries away the loosened leaf. This bud, which forces off the old leaf, forms the future stem or branches, which, during the following summer, will bear many leaves in place of the one it has displaced; and though it will cease to increase during the dead winter-months, will be among the foremost to show itself in the spring. Evergreens retain their leaves throughout the winter, through the new buds not forcing off the old foliage until spring, instead of putting out above the old foliage in autumn as other trees do. This can be proved by transplanting almost any tree; if it lives, the new buds will come out and push off the old leaves, which soon begin to wither after its removal. But if the tree does not retain life, the leaves will still wither, and instead of falling off, remain on the branches, from whence they are not easily removed though dead. The dead leaf remains on the tree; the live leaf falls before it is dead, pressed down by the swelling bud above it, but still retaining a great portion of its leafy moisture. As for the colouring of autumn leaves, it is supposed that the trees absorb oxygen during the night, which, owing to the coldness of the weather, they have not strength enough to throw out again in the daytime, and that this gives an acidity to the juices of the tree, which changes the colour of the leaf, or that, otherwise, they would be pushed down by the new buds, in all their green summer array. Some admit that this may be the case with leaves that are red, but not with others

that are brown and yellow. So the question remains open to many doubts, and as we look at the changing foliage in reverence, we feel satisfied in our own minds, that those beautiful touches have been put in by the wonder-working hand of the Creator.

Characteristics of October.

On the 23d of the month, the sun enters the sign of *Scorpio*, an astronomical emblem said to typify, in the form of a destructive insect, the increasing power of cold over nature, in the same manner as the equal influence of cold and heat are represented by *Libra*, or the balance, the sign of the preceding month of September. The average temperature for the middle of the month, throughout the British Islands, is about 50°. On the 1st, the sun rises in the latitude of London at 6 h. 2 m., and sets at 5 h. 37 m.

Though a melancholy feeling is associated with October, from the general decay of nature by which it is characterised, there nevertheless not infrequently occurs in it, some of the finest and most exhilarating weather of the year. Frosts in the mornings and evenings are common, whilst the middle of the day is often enlivened by all the sunshine of July without its oppressiveness, and the clearness of a frosty day in December or January without its piercing cold.



Key to the Calendar.

OCTOBER has its name from having been the eighth month of the Roman year before the Julian reform of the calendar. In the time of the Emperor Domitian it was called Domitianus, in his honour; but after his death that name was abandoned by general consent, from a wish to sink the memory of so execrable a tyrant. The Saxons called October *Winmonath* (wine-month), from its being the vintage time on the continent.

2. The festival of the **Holy Angel Guardians** in the Roman Church.

9. The day of **St Denis**, the patron saint of France. St Denis was put to death, with some companions, in the year 272, upon an eminence near Paris, since called, from that circumstance, Montmartre (*Mons Martyrum*). According to the legend, his head had no sooner been cut off, than the body rose, and taking up the head, walked with it two miles. Portraits of the martyred saint, carrying his head in his hand, abound in old prayer-books.

18. The day of **St Luke the Evangelist**, a festival of the Church of England. This day was appointed to be St Luke's festival in the twelfth century.

St Luke was usually represented in the act of writing, with an ox by his side, having wings and large horns. The natural habit of this animal in ruminating upon its food, caused it to be selected as an emblem of meditation appropriate to this evangelist. At Charlton, a village near Blackheath, about eight miles from London, a fair is held on St Luke's day.

25. **The Festival of St Crispin and St Crispinian.**—The name of St Crispin is in the Church of England calendar. Crispin and Crispinian are said to have been two Roman youths of good birth, brothers, who, in the third century, went as

Christian missionaries to France, and preached for some time at Soissons. In imitation of St Paul, they supported themselves by working at the trade of shoemaking during the night, while they preached during the day. They were successful in converting the people to Christianity, until arrested in their course by Rictius Varus, governor under the Emperor Maximian Herculus. Butler, in his *Lives of the Saints*, says: 'They were victorious over this most inhuman judge by the patience and constancy with which they bore the most cruel torments, and finished their course by the sword about the year 287.' The two young martyrs were of course canonised, and a splendid church was built to their honour at Soissons, in the sixth century. The shoemaker craft throughout the whole Christian world have from an early period regarded Crispin and Crispinian as their patron saints, but particularly the first. They often celebrate the day set apart for these saints in the calendar with processions, in which Crispin, Crispinian, an Indian prince, and some other personages whom tradition has associated with their history, are represented in splendid antique dresses. Sometimes a coronation of Crispin is part of this ceremony, for there is a notion that he was a royal personage; and hence we find the shoemakers, in Scotland at least, assuming for their arms a leather-knife surmounted by a crown, and styling themselves 'the royal craft.' Whether they celebrate the day by processions or not, they are sure to distinguish it by giving themselves up for the time to jollity. It is to be hoped, however, for the honour of 'the royal craft,' that there is no foundation for the scandalous censure conveyed against them in the following doggrel couplet:

On the twenty-fifth of October,
There was never a souter sober!

28. The day of **St Simon and St Jude**, a festival of the English Church. Simon, usually surnamed the Canaanite, remained with the other apostles till after Pentecost; it has been

surmised that he visited Britain, and there suffered martyrdom. Jude, otherwise called Thaddeus, and thought to have been a son of Joseph by a former wife, is said to have suffered martyrdom in Persia.

On this day, formerly, it was considered proper to indue winter vestments. It was always expected to be rainy. A character in an old play called the *Roaring Girl*, says: 'As well as I know 'twill rain upon Simon and Jude's day.' In another production of the Elizabethan stage, some one exclaims: 'Now a continual Simon and Jude's rain beat all your feathers as flat down as pancakes.'







JOHN. LIGHTON.

NOVEMBER

Next was November ; he full grosse and fat
As fed with lard, and that right well might seeme ;
For he had been a fattening hogs of late,
That yet his browes with sweat did reek and steem,
And yet the season was full sharp and breem ;
In planting eeke he took no small delight :
Whereon he rode, not easie was to deeme ;
For it a dreadful Centaure was in sight,
The seed of Saturne and fair Nais, Chiron hight.

SPENSER.



NOVEMBER WHAT an uproar there is in the old forests and woods when the November winds lift up their mighty voices, and the huge trees clash together, like the fabled giants battling with knotted clubs against the invisible assailant, whose blows they feel but cannot see struck, so wage war on one another! On every hand we hear the crash and fall of mighty branches, and

sometime a large tree torn up by the roots comes down, quick as an avalanche, levelling all it falls upon, where it lies with its blackening leaves above the crushed under-wood like some huge mammoth that has perished.

A PICTURE OF DESOLATION.

The sky is low and gloomy and leaden-coloured, and a disheartening shadow seems to fall on everything around. We see swine rooting in the desolate cornfields, among the black and rotten stubble, while the geese come draggled and dirty from the muddy pond, which is half-choked up with fallen leaves. On the cold naked hedge a few ears, which the birds have long since emptied, hang like funeral-wreaths over the departed harvest. The rain raineth every day on the hips and haws and autumn berries, and beats the brown seed-vessels of the dead flowers into the earth, while the decayed leaves come rolling up to make a covering for their graves. In some low-lying dank corner a few blackened bean-sheaves, that never ripened, are left to rot; and if you walk near them, you see the white mould creeping along the gaping pods. There is a deathly smell from slimy water-flags and rotting sedge beside the stagnant meres, and at every step your footprint is filled up with the black oozing of the saturated soil the moment it is made. You see deserted sheds in the fields where the cattle sheltered, rent and blown in; and if you enter one to avoid the down-pouring torrent, the dull gray November sky is seen through the gaping thatch, even in the puddle on the floor where the water has lodged. The morsel of hay in the corner you would fain sit down upon is mouldy, and as you look at the beam which spans across, you fancy

some one must have hanged himself on it, and you hurry out again into the pouring rain.

WINTER AT HAND.

November is the pioneer of Winter, who comes, with his sharp winds and keen frosts, to cut down every bladed and leafy bit of green that is standing up, so as to make more room for the coming snow-flakes to fall on the level waste, and form a great bed for Winter to sleep upon. He blows all the decaying leaves into dreary hollows, to fill them up, so that when Winter is out on the long dark nights, or half-blinded with the great feathery flakes, he may not fall into them. If a living flower still stands above its dead companions, it bends its head like a mourner over a grave, and seems calling on our mother-earth to be let in. The swollen streams roar and hurry along, as if they were eager to bury themselves in the great rivers, for they have no flowers to mirror, no singing of birds to tempt them to linger among the pebbles and listen, no green bending sprays to toss to and fro, and play with on their way, and they seem to make a deep complaining as they rush along between the high brimming banks.

The few cattle that are out, stand head to head, as if each tried to warm the other with its breath, or turned round to shut out the gloomy prospect that surrounds them, laying down their ears at every whistle of the wind through the naked hedges. Even the clouds, when they break up, have a ragged and vagrant look, and appear to wander homeless about the sky, for there is no golden fire in the far west now for them to gather about, and sun themselves in its warmth: they seem to

move along in doubt and fear, as if trying to find the blue sky they have lost. The woodman returns home at night with his head bent down, feeling there is nothing cheerful to look round upon, while his dog keeps close behind, seeming to avail himself of the little shelter his master affords from the wind, while they move on together. The pleasantest thing we see is the bundle of fagots he carries on his shoulders, as it reminds us of home—the crackling fire, the clean-swept hearth, and the cozy-looking kettle, that sits ‘singing a quiet tune,’ on the hob. We pity the poor fellow with the bundle under his arm, who stands looking up at the guide-post where three roads meet, and hope he has not far to go on such a stormy and moonless night.

NOVEMBER BERRIES.

But amid all these images of desolation, which strike the eye more vividly through missing the richly-coloured foliage that threw such beauty over the two preceding months, November has still its berries which the early frosts have ripened to perfection. Turn the eye wheresoever we may, during our walks, hips and haws abound on the hawthorn-hedges, and where the wild-roses of summer hang swaying in the wind. The bramble-berries, which cottage-children love to gather, besmearing their pretty faces with the fruit, have now their choicest flavour, and melt in the mouth when eaten, looking like beautiful ornaments carved in jet as they rock in the autumn winds. Many a poor village-housewife brings a smile to the children’s faces as she places her blackberry pie or pudding on the table, for it is a fruit that requires but little sugar, and is a cheap luxury added to the usual

scanty meal. Then there are the sloes and bullaces, almost always to be found in old hedges, which at this season have a misty blue bloom on them, equal to any that we see on the grape. These the country-people gather and keep sound through all the long winter, and they are equal in flavour to the finest damsons our orchards can produce. Though many varieties of plum-trees have been brought to England at different times, yet it is to the sloe and bullace we are indebted for our serviceable plums, as these shrubs are indigenous, and have been brought to perfection by cultivation through many centuries.

The dewberry bears so close a resemblance to the blackberry when ripe, that it is not easy to distinguish the difference. When in flower, it is as beautiful as the blossoms of the wild-rose; the fruit has also a blue bloom on it like the plum, which is never found on the blackberry; the divisions of the berry are also larger, and not so numerous. Often the pretty cloud-berry is seen growing among the ling, only just overtopping the heather, for it is seldom more than a foot high, and its fruit is of a splendid orange colour when ripe, though rather too acid to please every taste. But of all the little berry-bearing beauties, none beat the bilberry when in bloom, for it is then covered with rosy-coloured wax-like flowers, which few of our choice greenhouse plants excel, and for which we marvel it has not been more cultivated. Birds are partial to this berry, which bears a grape-like bloom, and game fed upon it is said to be as superior in flavour as mutton fed on pastures abounding in wild-thyme is to that fattened only on grass. But the fairy of our shrubs—which may rank with the harvest-mouse among animals, and the humming-birds among the feathered race—is the

tiny cranberry, which you must bend the back to find, as it grows only three or four inches high. Whether our grandmother had some secret art of preserving these delicious berries, which is now lost—or the fruit has deteriorated in flavour—we cannot tell, but somehow we fancy that cranberries have not the delicious taste now which they had in our boyish days.

The most wonderful plant that bears berries is the butcher's broom, which may be seen with fruit as large as cherries, in the very depth of winter. Both flower and berry grow out of the very middle of the leaf, and it would make a pleasant change in our Christmas decoration, as it is an evergreen, and quite as beautiful as the holly. The black berries of the privet remain on the branches all winter long, and are found there when the sprays are covered with the fresh green leaves of spring. These berries are much harder than our hips and haws, and retain their fullness when all the other hedge-fruits are withered and tasteless, though the birds generally seem to leave them till the last, as if they only ate them when nothing else could be got. They make a grand show with their large clusters amid the nakedness of winter, though almost failing to attract the eye now if seen beside the wild-cornel or dogwood-berries. Autumn has nothing more beautiful than the wild-cornel, with its deep-purple berries hanging on rich red-coloured branches, and surrounded with golden, green, and crimson foliage, as if all the richest hues of autumn were massed together to beautify it, and wreath the black purple of the berries.

Another tree, which scarcely arrests the eye in summer, now makes a splendid show, for the seed-vessels appear

like roses, the capsules separating like the petals of the Queen of Flowers, for such is the appearance of the spindle-tree. The woody nightshade, whose purple petals and deep golden anthers enriched the hedgerow a few weeks ago, is now covered with clusters of scarlet berries, not unlike our red garden currants; while both the foliage and berries of the guelder-rose seem kindled into a red blaze. But the bird-cherry is the chameleon of shrubs in autumn, its bunches of rich-looking fruit changing from a beautiful green to a rich red, and then to the colour of the darkest of black-heart cherries, and looking equally as luscious to the eye, though it would be dangerous to eat so many as we might of the real cherries without harm. Beside all these, and many other beautiful berries, we have now the ferns all ablaze with beauty—vegetable relics of an old world—and many of them as pleasing to the eye as our choicest flowers. Where is there a grander sight than a long moorland covered with bracken at the close of autumn?—the foliage of the trees is not to be compared with that outspread land of crimson and gold. And there is such a forest smell about it too—that real country aroma, which we get a sniff of in villages where they have only wood-fires—for there is nothing else to compare with the smell of fern where it covers long leagues of wild moorland.

ANIMAL LIFE IN WINTER.

Many little animals are busy, during the autumn, in laying up stores for winter; for though some of them sleep away the greater portion of the cold season, a change in the weather often causes them to awaken, when they have recourse to the provision they have

saved ; and as soon as the mild warm weather is again succeeded by cold, they coil themselves up, and sleep again. The hibernation of the squirrel is shorter than that of any of our winter-sleeping animals, for he is up and away as soon as he is awakened by a mild atmosphere, and as he has generally more than one larder, enjoys himself until slumber again overtakes him ; for we can imagine, from his active habits, that he is not likely to remain in his nest while there is a glimpse of warm sunshine to play in. The hedgehog is a sound sleeper, and stores up no provision, though its hibernation is sometimes broken during a very mild winter, when it may at times be found in the night, searching for food under the sheltered hedges. The pretty dormouse coils itself up like a ball of twine in its winter-nest, curling the tail around the head to the other side of its back, as if tying itself together before going to sleep. Should it awake, there is store of food at hand, which it holds in its forepaws like the squirrel, while sitting up to munch an acorn, hip, or haw, or whatever is stored up, and it is a great hoarder of various kinds of seeds.

But few of these torpid animals store their granaries better than the long-tailed field-mouse ; considering its smallness, the quantity of corn that has been found in a single nest is amazing. Even if we reckon it to have carried from the harvest-field a full ripe ear at a time, it must have made many journeys to accumulate so much food. Nothing seems to come amiss to it, for if there has been no corn-field at hand, its hoard has been found to consist of nuts and acorns, gathered from the neighbouring wood, which has sometimes been five or six hundred yards from its nest. Above five hundred

nuts and acorns have been taken out of its storehouse; and as it can hardly be supposed that so small an animal could carry more than one at a time, we have proof of its industry in the hoard it must have laboured so hard to get together. One might suppose that, early in autumn, when the weather is fine, these little animals would give themselves up to enjoyment, instead of carrying the many loads they do to their nests, did we not find proof to the contrary.

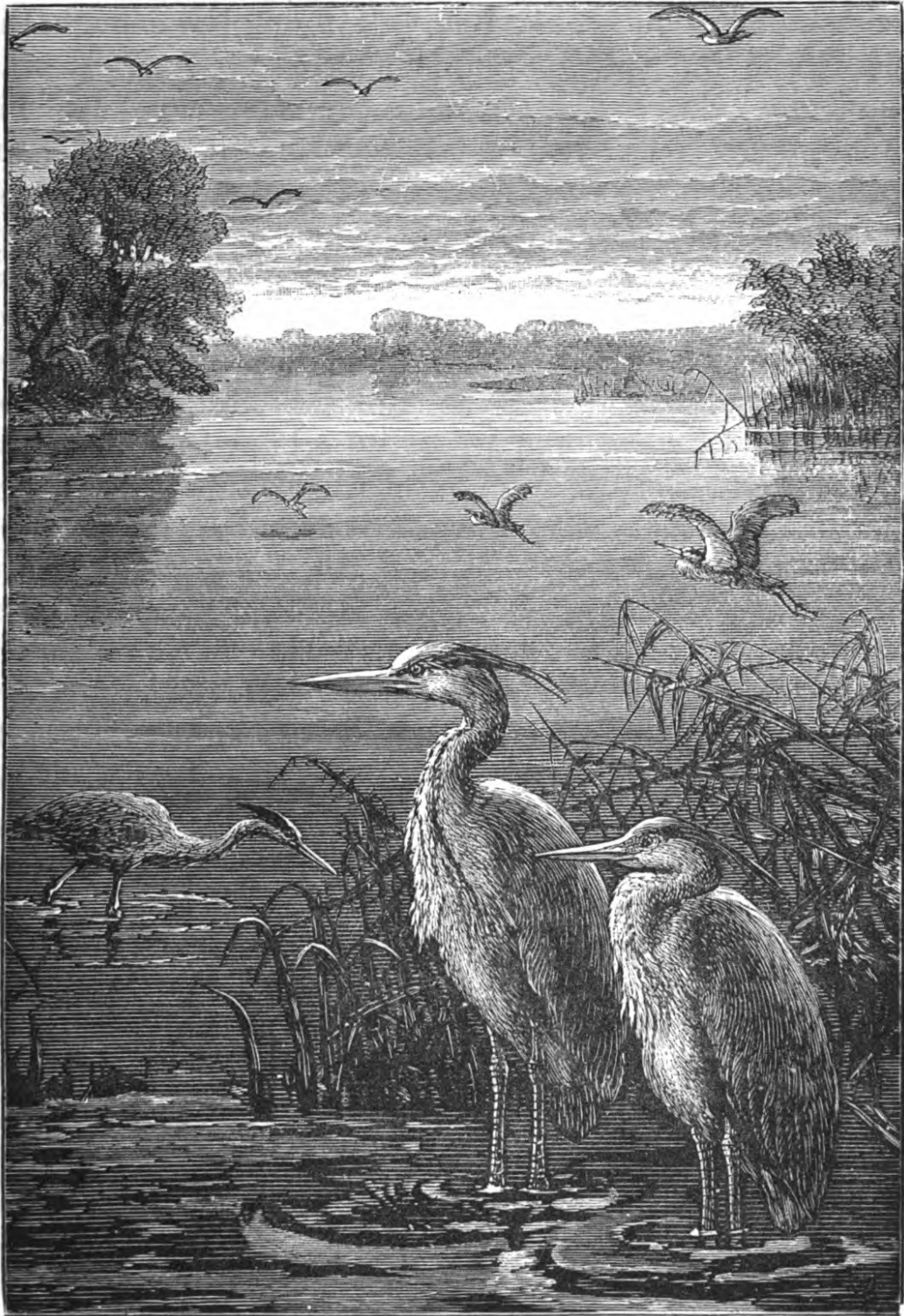
Some naturalists say that the hibernating animals we have glanced at, spread out their provisions in the sun to dry and ripen before carrying them into their nests. That this may be the case we can hardly doubt, having seen ears of corn, nuts, acorns, and seeds, about the roots of trees, at a considerable distance from the spots where they were grown, and in such positions as they could not have fallen into, even had they been shaken down by the wind. The foresight of these hibernating mammals is proved through their laying up provision against the time they may awaken, long weeks before they retire to their winter-sleep. Nor is it less wonderful to note the going out and coming in of the migrating birds in autumn; for though all our songsters that are migratory have long since gone, we now hear the screaming of coming flocks in the still night—the clamour of voices high overhead, which is sometimes startling in the star-lighted silence.

BIRDS IN WINTER.

Most of our aquatic birds land in the night, though long strings of wild-geese are often seen forming a V-like figure in the air, as they wing their way to our fenny and

marshy lands in the daytime. If flying low enough, the leader of the van, forming the point of V or A, who seems to cleave the air, to make a passage for his followers, will be seen after a time to fall into the rear, when another bird takes his place, until he in time also falls back, as if through fatigue; nor can there be any doubt that the leader, who first pierces the air through which the whole flock passes, has to exert himself more than his followers. The heron may now and then be seen, standing as motionless as if sculptured in marble, at some bend of a river or stream. It shifts from place to place in search of food, but, like several others of our birds, is not migratory, though it may be seen in some parts of our island at this season, where it rarely appears during any other portion of the year. It flies very high, and in dull weather may often be heard, while on the wing, far beyond the reach of the eye. At first there appears something strange and mysterious in birds coming over to winter with us, and migrating again at the first appearance of spring, and never, or very rarely, staying to breed with us. One of our celebrated naturalists argues that the sun is the great moving-power; that they are again forced northward in spring by the same impulse which brings back again our summer singing-birds; 'all seeking again those spots where they first saw the light, there to rear their young;' and that a failure of temperature and food causes them to follow the sun in autumn.

Some think that from the time a bird remains with us, a calculation might be made as to the distance it goes after leaving our shores; that, because some remain a month or so longer with us than others, they do not fly



Hérons.

so far away as those which migrate earlier. But the rapidity of the flight of a bird, and its power of remaining on the wing, are objects of consideration; and though the swallow is among the last to leave us, it would fly treble the distance in a few hours than many other birds that leave us earlier, and have neither its strength nor stretch of wing to carry them a great distance. As to the time of departure or arrival of our passenger-birds, that must always depend upon the state of the season at the point of departure; for, as we have before remarked, they can know nothing of the backwardness or forwardness of the autumn or spring in the countries they visit, no more than they can tell before they arrive here whether our April is green, or has had all its buds bitten off by a killing frost, such as we well remember to have seen.

Take the dates of the departures and arrivals of our birds from the calendars of some of the most celebrated English naturalists, and they will be found to vary at times a month or more in different years, especially the arrivals. A summer abounding in insect-food will cause birds to leave us earlier, after a forward spring, because their young were sooner hatched, and are stronger and better able to accompany their parents than they would have been had they left the shell later, and been pinched while fed by the parent-birds, through a scarcity of food. The skylark, which has long been silent, may now be heard in open sunny places; and we find, from a note made several years ago, that we heard it singing on the downs in Surrey in December.

The poetry of home, which we carry with us unconsciously whithersoever we go, was never more beautifully

illustrated than in the poor emigrant's skylark, which he carried with him when he left this country for America. Crowds of English settlers used to collect round his hut to hear it sing, and one of them offered all he had in the world—his horse and cart—for the bird, but the owner refused to part with it. This anecdote shows how the hearts of the rudest class of men are touched at times by some trifle which brings back again home with all its old boughs rustling before the 'inward eye.' No matter in what form it appears, but anything which causes us to turn to nature with an affectionate feeling, elevates both mind and heart, inspires love, and makes us better, for we can hardly do so without catching some glimpse of the Great Creator, which carries the mind far beyond the objects that surround us, to the thoughts of those higher destinies which the soul is heir to, and may be ours if we do not sell our godlike birthright.

APPEARANCE OF THE COUNTRY.

By the end of this month our gardens look desolate. The few chrysanthemums that have survived have a draggled and dirty look after the frost and rain, and nothing out of doors, excepting the evergreens, reminds us of the green flush of departed summer. There is the tapping of rain on our windows, and the roaring of the wind through the long dark nights. The country-roads are soft, and we stick in the mire at every step if we traverse those rutted lanes, which were so delightful to walk along only a few short weeks ago. Even the heart of a brave man beats quicker, who, after passing a treeless and houseless moor, hears the rattling of the bones

and irons of the murderer on the gibbet-post, as he turns to enter the high dark wood, which, when he has groped through, still leaves him a long league from the solitary toll-gate—the only habitable spot he will pass before reaching home. For now, in the solemn language of the Holy Bible, we have many a day ‘of darkness and of gloominess, of clouds and of thick darkness, even very dark, and no brightness in it, for the land is darkened.’

Characteristics of November.

On the 22d of this month, the sun enters the sign of *Sagittarius* or *The Archer*, an emblem said to express the growing predominance of cold which now *shoots* into the substance of the earth, and suspends the vegetative powers of nature. The average temperature of the British Islands for the middle of November is about 43°. On the 1st of the month, the sun rises in the latitude of London at 6 h. 58 m. and sets at 4 h. 31 m.

November is generally regarded as the gloomiest month of the year, and it is perhaps true that less enjoyment is derivable in it from external objects than in any other of the twelve divisions of the calendar. It is popularly regarded as the month of blue devils and suicides. Leaden skies, choking fogs—more especially in London—and torrents of rain, combined frequently with heavy gusts of wind, which shake down the last remaining leaves from the trees, are phenomena of normal occurrence in November, and certainly by no means conducive to buoyancy and cheerfulness of spirits. Summer and autumn, with their exhilarating influences, have fairly departed, and winter, in its gloomiest phases, is approaching, whilst the hilarity and joyousness of the

Christmas-season are still far off. The *negative* character of November, as exemplified in a foggy day of that month in London, is very happily depicted in the following lines, by the prince of modern humorists, Thomas Hood:

No sun—no moon !
 No morn—no noon—
 No dawn—no dusk—no proper time of day—
 No sky—no earthly view—
 No distance looking blue—
 No road—no street—no ‘t’other side the way’—
 No end to any row—
 No indications where the crescents go—
 No top to any steeple—
 No recognitions of familiar people—
 No courtesies for showing ‘em—
 No knowing ‘em !
 No travelling at all—no locomotion,
 No inkling of the way—no notion—
 ‘No go’—by land or ocean—
 No mail—no post—
 No news from any foreign coast—
 No park—no ring—no afternoon gentility—
 No company—no nobility—
 No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease—
 No comfortable feel in any member—
 No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees,
 No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds,
 November !



Key to the Calendar.

NOVEMBER obtained its name from being the ninth (*novem*) month of the Roman year, before the reform effected by Cæsar. Our Anglo-Saxon ancestors called it *Wint-monath* (wind-month).

1. **All-Saints' Day**, a festival of the Romish and English Churches—otherwise called *All-hallow Day*. The evening of the 31st October is called All-hallow Even, or Hallowe'en, as being the vigil or eve of All-hallow Day. Hallow-tide is a comprehensive name for both days. The Roman Church designed this day to be held in honour of all those saints who had not particular days appointed for them.

It does not appear that All-saints' Day, or its eve, was ever marked by very particular observance in the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, there is scarcely any time more distinguished by the common people throughout the British Islands than All-hallow Eve or Hallowe'en. This is probably owing to the fact of November 1st having been one of the four great festivals of our pagan ancestors. The 1st of February, the 1st of May, and the 1st of August were the other three; the ancient names of the latter two are still in vogue—Beltane and Lammas. These four days were celebrated by the kindling of fires in conspicuous places, and performing certain ceremonies. The fires of Beltane and Lammas have already been spoken of; it is probable that those of the February festival are kept up in the *Candlemas Blaze*, with a slight change of day. Fires were kindled in Wales, Ireland, the Scottish Highlands, and even in England, on the 1st of November, till a very recent period; and the custom may still be kept up in some remote places.

Pennant states as follows: 'In North Wales there is a custom upon All-saints' Eve of making a great fire called *Coel Coeth*. Every family, about an hour in the night, makes a great bonfire in the most conspicuous place near the house, and when it is almost extinguished, every one throws a white stone into the ashes, having first marked it; then having said their prayers turning round the fire, they go to bed. In the morning, as soon as they are up, they come to search out the stones, and if any of them are found wanting, they have a notion that the person who threw it in will die before he sees another All-hallow Eve.' The Welsh also practise many of those rites for divining the future which are so prevalent on Hallowe'en in other parts of the United Kingdom.

The Rev. Mr Shaw, in his *History of Moray*, written in the latter part of the last century, speaks of the Hallow-eve fire being still kindled in Buchan. In the *Statistical Account of Scotland*, published at the close of the century, the same fire is spoken of as kept up in various parts of the Highlands. In the parish of Callander, for instance, 'on All-saints' Eve, they set up bonfires in every village. When the bonfire is consumed, the ashes are carefully collected in the form of a circle. There is a stone put in near the circumference, for every person of the several families interested in the bonfire; and whatever stone is moved out of its place, or injured, before the next morning, the person represented by that stone is devoted or *fey*, and is supposed not to live twelve months from that day.'

These ceremonies appear to be amongst the earliest connected with the 1st of November. They are, or have recently been, everywhere prevalent throughout these islands. As they are obviously of a pagan character, we conclude that the notability of this season is of older date than the introduction of Christianity, and that its character as All-saints' Day has comparatively little affected the popular mind.

We have notices from both Perthshire and Ireland of the

1st of November being partly regarded as the proper time for returning thanks for the realised fruits of the earth. The Irish, in this regard, called it *La Mas Ubhal*—that is, the day of the apple-fruit—and celebrated it with a drink or mess composed of bruised roasted apples amongst ale or milk. This drink in time acquired the strange appellation of *lamb's wool*, a corruption apparently of the name of the day in the Celtic language.

It was a custom of our Catholic forefathers to have a cake baked on this eve for every member of the family, as a *soul mass cake* or *soul-cake*. It was composed of oatmeal, and seeded; and pasties and frumenty were incidental to the same evening. In families of good condition, a number were baked and set up on a board like the showbread in old pictures in the Bible, to be given to visitors, or distributed amongst the poor. There was a rhyme for the occasion: 'A soul-cake! a soul-cake! Have mercy on all Christian souls for a soul-cake!'

Essentially connected with all these customs are those better-known ones which Burns has so well and so faithfully described in his poem of *Hallowe'en*. All over the British Islands, the festive and fortune-telling practices of this evening are very nearly the same. As some proof of this, passages from an English, an Irish, and a Scottish poet may be presented side by side:

Two hazel-nuts I threw into the flame,
And to each nut I gave a sweetheart's name:
This with the loudest bounce me sore amazed,
That in a flame of brightest colour blazed;
As blazed the nut, so may thy passion grow,
For 'twas thy nut that did so brightly glow!

—*The Spell*, by GAY.

These glowing nuts are emblems true
Of what in human life we view;
The ill-matched couple fret and fume,
And thus in strife themselves consume;

Or from each other wildly start,
 And with a noise for ever part.
 But see the happy, happy pair,
 Of genuine love and truth sincere :
 With mutual fondness, while they burn
 Still to each other kindly turn ;
 And as the vital sparks decay,
 Together gently sink away :
 Till life's fierce ordeal being past,
 Their mingled ashes rest at last.
 —*Nuts-burning, All-hallow Eve*, by CHARLES GRAYDON.

Jean slips in twa wi' tentie e'e,
 Wha 'twas she wadna tell ;
 But this is Jock and this is me,
 She says in to hersel' :
 He bleezed owre her, and she owre him,
 As they wad never mair part,
 Till fuff! he started up the lum,
 And Jean had e'en a sair heart
 To see 't that night.
 —*Hallowe'en*, by BURNS.

Nuts, besides being thus used for divination, are cracked and eaten ; and hence, in the north of England, All-hallow Eve is often called *Nut-crack Night*. Apples are also extensively eaten, this consumpt of fruit having probably some reference to the heathen character of the day, as that of thanksgiving for the produce of the season. The more noteworthy of the fortune-telling customs described by Burns, besides the above, are—for a solitary person to go to a kiln, and throwing a blue clew into the pot, to wind it, expecting that ere finished it will be held back, when, by inquiring who holds, a response will be obtained disclosing the name of the future husband—to eat an apple at a looking-glass, expecting to see a vision of the future husband peeping over the shoulder—to sow hemp-seed in the yard, saying : 'Hemp-seed, I saw thee ; hemp-seed, I saw thee, and her that is to be my true love come after me and draw thee ;' expecting

that, on looking over the shoulder, a vision will be obtained of the future spouse in the act of pulling grown hemp—to dip a shirt-sleeve in a rivulet at the meeting-point of the lands of three proprietors, and then hang it by the fire to dry, trusting to see such a visionary person come in and turn the other side—to pull stalks of deceased cabbages blindfolded, without choice, and augur, from their straightness or crookedness, the figure of the future spouse—finally, to set three dishes on the floor, one empty, one with clean, and one with foul water, and cause the



Ducking for Apples.

company to approach them blindfolded, and dip in a hand ; when he who dips in the empty one is expected to remain unmarried ; he who dips in the foul one, to marry a widow ; and he who dips

in the clean one, to marry a female not hitherto married. The whole of these rites are as familiar to the Welsh, Irish, and Northumbrian, as to the Ayrshire peasantry. Many of them are also practised in England on St John's Eve, the 23d of June.

Hallowe'en is still observed, but the more daring rites are generally given up. Meetings of young persons take place, and a plentiful store of nuts and apples being provided, a few simple amusements are practised. The experiment of the burning nuts, to test the durability of love or friendship, is still a favourite. Ducking for apples is another. A tub being provided, nearly full of water, and the fruit thrown in, the young people endeavour to seize an apple with their teeth—a task of much more difficulty than might be supposed, and which generally puts the dress and tresses of fair experimentalists into considerable disorder. Or a cross-stick is suspended by a string from the ceiling, with a short burning candle on one end, and an apple on the other. While it swings rapidly round, lads and lasses, with their hands tied, endeavour to catch the apple with their teeth, but generally suffer a good deal from the candle before they succeed in their object.

2. *All-Souls' Day*, or the *Commemoration of the Faithful Departed*.—A very solemn festival of the Romish Church, which has masses and ceremonies appropriate to the occasion, designed in favour of the souls of all the dead. 'Odillon, abbot of Cluny, in the ninth century, first enjoined the ceremony of praying for the dead on this day in his own monastery; and the like practice was partially adopted by other religious houses until the year 998, when it was established as a general festival throughout the western churches. To mark the pre-eminent importance of this festival, if it happened on a Sunday, it was not postponed to the Monday, as was the case with other such solemnities, but kept on the Saturday, *in order that the church might the sooner aid the suffering souls*; and that the dead might have every benefit from the pious exertions of the living, the remembrance of this

ordinance was kept up by persons dressed in black, who went round the different towns, ringing a loud and dismal-toned bell at the corner of each street, every Sunday evening during the month, and calling upon the inhabitants to remember the deceased suffering the expiatory flames of purgatory, and to join in prayers for the repose of their souls.'—*Brady's Clavis Calendaria*.

5. The anniversary of the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, and of the landing of King William III. in 1688. The special service for this day in the ritual of the Church of England was abolished in 1859, by an ordinance of the Queen in Council, but there is still a popular celebration of Guy Fawkes's day. From an early hour, the boys go about collecting materials for a bonfire, or money wherewith to purchase them. In some, perhaps most places, they carried with them a frightful figure composed of an old suit of clothes stuffed with straw, to represent Guy Fawkes. They called on the passengers and householders 'to remember Guy,' or shouted some balderdash rhymes. In the evening, the bonfire is lighted, with Guy Fawkes in the middle of it, amidst tumultuous merriment.

11. **St Martin's Day**, or *Martinmas*, in the Church of England calendar. Popularly, this is one of the most remarkable days of the year, especially in Scotland, where Whitsuntide and *Martinmas* are the two great terms for leases and engagement of servants, the latter being that at which the occupation of farms usually commences. Formerly, it was a quarterly term-day in England: a payment of corn at Martinmas occurs in the Doomsday Survey. The killing of beeves at Martinmas for winter provision was formerly universal in Northern Europe, in consequence of there being no means of keeping them alive in winter; since the improvement of husbandry in some countries, the custom has been given up, and fresh meat used all the year round. The feasting upon the entrails was equally universal. So much was all this associated with Martinmas, that in Scotland a beeve killed at that time was called a *mart* or *mairt*. In the

old book of laws attributed (erroneously) to David I. of Scotland, it is provided that 'the fleshours sall serve the burgessis all the time of the slauchter of *Mairts*.' In Northumberland, also, a Martinmas bullock is called a *mart*. It appears that the contents of the puddings, as made in England, were composed of blood, suet, and groats; and there was an enigmatical proverb thence arising, that 'blood without groats was nothing,' meaning that birth without fortune was of little value. Down to near the end of the last century, there was not a family above the poorest condition in the rural districts of Scotland which had not a *mart*, or a share in one, and salted meat was the only food of the kind used in winter; now, there is no such practice known.

Martin, in whose honour this festival was at first instituted, is said to have been born in Lower Hungary about 316, and to have originally been a soldier. After a number of miraculous adventures, he settled as a hermit in the hollow of a rock near Tours, in the south of France, where he was greatly venerated. He died bishop of Tours in 397. When a few fine days occurred about this time of the year, they were called *St Martin's summer*.

23. *St Clement's Day*, in the Church of England calendar. Clement is spoken of by St Paul as one of his fellow-labourers. Monkish imagination has supplied him with a history and a martyrdom. He is said to have been thrown into the sea with an anchor fixed about his neck. An anchor is therefore assigned to him as an emblem: of this the metropolis presents a conspicuous memorial in the anchor which forms the vane of the church of St Clement Danes, in the Strand. St Clement is held as the patron saint of the blacksmiths.

29. This is one of the days on which *Advent* may commence. Advent (literally, the Coming) is a term applied from an early period of ecclesiastical history to the four weeks preceding Christmas, which were observed with penance and devotion, in reference to the approaching birth of Christ. There are four

Sundays in Advent, the first of which is always the nearest Sunday to St Andrew's Day (November 30).

30. **St Andrew's Day.**—The festival-day of this saint is retained in the Church of England calendar. St Andrew was one of the Apostles. The church legend represents him as martyred in the year 66 at Patræ, in Greece, upon a cross of the form of the letter X, which, accordingly, is still recognised as St Andrew's Cross. A supposed relic of this cross, carried to Brussels in the middle ages, caused its figure to be adopted as a badge for the knights of the Golden Fleece. Some relics of the apostle himself were said to have been carried by a Greek devotee, named St Regulus, to Scotland, where they were placed in a church built at a place which subsequently became distinguished by the name of St Andrews. St Andrews became the seat of the Scottish primacy; and from this cause probably it was that St Andrew was in time considered as the patron saint of Scotland. In that country, however, there is scarcely any observance of this day in any manner; it is only when Scotsmen are abroad, and have occasion to select a day for an annual convivial meeting, that St Andrew's Day comes into notice. There used to be a procession of Scotsmen on this day in London, with singed sheep's heads borne before them. There is an ancient and widely prevalent custom connected with St Andrew's Day, to which Luther has adverted. Maidens, on the eve of this day, sought to learn what sort of husbands they were to have by praying in these terms: 'Oh, St Andrew, cause that I obtain a good pious husband; to-night show me the figure of the man who will take me to wife.'





JOHN LEIGHTON.

DECEMBER

And after him came next the chill December ;
Yet he through merry feasting which he made,
And great bonfires, did not the cold remember ;
His Saviour's birth his mind so much did glad.
Upon a shaggy-bearded goat he rode,
The same wherewith Dan Jove in tender yeares,
They say, was nourisht by th' Idæan mayd ;
And in his hand a broad deepe bowle he beares,
Of which he freely drinks an health to all his peeres.

SPENSER.



DECEMBER DARK December has now come, and brought with him the shortest day and longest night: he turns the mist-like rain into ice with the breath of his nostrils: and with cold that pierces to the very bones, drives the shivering and houseless beggar to seek shelter in the deserted shed. He gives a chilly blue steel-like colour to the shrivelled hips and haws, and

causes the half-starved fieldfares to huddle together in the naked hedge for warmth; while the owl, rolling himself up like a ball in his feathers, creeps as far as he can into the old hollow tree, to get out of the way of the cold.

Even the houses, with their frosted windows, have now a wintery look; and the iron knocker of the door, covered with hoary rime, seems to cut the fingers like a knife when it is touched. The only cheering sight we see as we pass through a village, is the fire in the blacksmith's forge, and boys sliding on the large pond with its screen of pollard-willows, as they break the frosty air with merry shouts, broken now and then by the report of the sportsman's gun, and the puff of smoke which we see for a few moments floating on the air like a white cloud in the distant valley. We see the footprints of the little robin in the snow, and where it lies deep, the long-eared hare betrays her hiding-place by the deep indentations she makes in the feathery flakes. The unfrozen mere looks black through the snow that lies around it, while the flag-like sedges that stand upright appear like sharp sword-blades frosted with silver. The trees mirrored deep down seem as if reflected on polished ebony, until we draw nearer and look at the cold gray sky, that appears to lie countless fathoms below.

THE COUNTRY IN DECEMBER.

When the wind shakes the frosted rushes and the bending water-flags, they seem to talk to one another in hoarse husky whispers, as if they had lost their voices through standing so long in the cold by the water-courses, and forgotten the low murmurings they gave

utterance to in summer. We pity the few sheep that are still left in the fields, burrowing for the cold turnips under the snow, and almost wish their owners had to procure their own food in the same way, for having neglected to fold them. The falling snow, from some overladen branch under which we are passing, makes us shake our heads as we feel it thawing about the neck. Now the mole is compelled to work his way deeper underground in search of food, as the worms he



feeds upon are only to be found beyond the reach of the frost, below which he must penetrate or starve, for his summer hunting-grounds are now tenantless. During a severe frost, myriads of fish perish for want of air in our ponds and rivers, and those who value their stock will not neglect to make holes through the ice, and throw food into the water, for unless this is done, they will devour one another. Cattle also gather about their usual drinking-place, and wait patiently until the ice is broken for them.

That lively little fellow, the water-wagtail, may now be seen pecking about the spots of ground that are unfrozen in moist places, though what he finds to feed upon there,

unless it be loosened bits of grit and gravel, is difficult to ascertain. Many a shy bird, but seldom seen at any other season, now draws near to our habitations in search of food; and sometimes, when entering an outhouse, we are startled by the rush of wings, as the pretty intruder escapes by the open doorway we are entering. The blackbird dashes out of the shed as the farmer's boy enters to fodder the cattle, frightening him for the moment, so unexpected and sudden is the rush; for cattle must now be attended to early and late, and the farmer finds plenty to do, although there is but little labour going on in the fields. Sometimes he has to hurry out half-dressed in the night, for there is a cry of 'murder' in the hen-roost, and he well knows that the fox has broken in some way, and will not retire supperless in spite of the loud outcry. The housewife, when she counts her chickens next morning, and reckons up her loss, wishes the old earth-stopper had been laid up with rheumatism instead of being out all night as he is, blocking up the fox-holes, while Reynard is out feeding, to prevent him from running in when he is hunted. Poor old fellow! we have often felt sorry for him, as we have passed him on a cold winter's night, with his lantern and spade, making the best of his way to some fox's burrow, to block up the entrance, and have often wondered what the fox thinks when he returns home, and finds the doorway filled in with thorns and furze, over which the earth is shovelled. Though a thief, he is a beautifully formed animal, and I like to see him trailing his long bush through the snow, and to hear his feet stirring the fallen leaves as he steals through the wood.

SHAKSPEARE AND WINTER.

How few and apt are the words Shakspeare has used to paint a perfect picture of winter in *Love's Labour's*



Lost! He begins by describing the icicles hanging down the wall, and Dick the shepherd blowing his nails to

warm them, with the same breath that he blows into his porridge to cool it. Next he tells us how Tom drags huge logs to the great hall-fire, which he would rear on the andirons, for grates and coal were not in use in Shakspeare's time; then follows Marian with her red, raw nose, the milk frozen in the pail she carries, pitying the poor birds she saw outside shivering in the snow. Neither do matters mend at church, where there is such a noise of coughing as to drown the parson's 'sixteenthly,' one aisle answering to another, as if the congregation were playing at catching colds instead of balls, for as soon as one has ceased to cough, it is taken up by another, until it goes the whole round of the church.

Outside, at night, the owl keeps crying, 'To-whit, to-whoo,' hidden, perhaps, among the ivy of centuries, which has overgrown the picturesque and ornamented gable. Every line here of the great poet is a picture of winter, though only painted in words; and so distinct is each outline, that any artist with a poetical eye might transfer every figure, with such action as Shakspeare has given to each, to canvas. Now is the time to sit by the hearth and peruse his immortal works; and few, we think, will read a page attentively without discovering something new—some thought that assumes a fresh form, or presents itself to the mind in a new light. For out-of-door pleasure, at times, is not to be found, as the days are short, cold, comfortless, and almost dark; lanes, fields, and woods naked, silent, and desolate; while the dull gray sky seems, at times, as if sheeted with lead. What a brave heart the pretty robin must have to sing at such a season! and if anything can tempt us out of doors, it is a hope that we may hear his cheerful song.

THE IVY AND EVERGREENS.

Beside the song of the robin, the green ivy gives a life to the nakedness, especially when we see it clambering up a gigantic tree, whose branches are bald. In summer we could not see it for the intervening foliage, though it was then green with young leaves. We love to see it romping about our gray old churches, and old English manor-houses; sometimes climbing up the old square tower of the one, and burying under its close-clinging stems the twisted chimneys of the other, forming a warm shelter for the little wrens and titmice from the biting frosts and cutting winds of winter. Then there are the bright holly-bushes, with their rich clusters of crimson berries, which throw quite a cheerful warmth around the places in which they grow, and recall pleasant visions of the coming Christmas, and the happy faces they will flash upon when reflecting the sunny blaze from the snug warm hearth. Here and there, though never very common, we see the mirth-making mistletoe, generally growing on old apple and hawthorn trees, and very rarely on the oak; and it is on records which have been written from ancient traditions, that wherever the Druids selected a grove of oaks for their heathen worship, they always planted apple-trees about the place, so that the mistletoe might be trained around the trunks of the oaks.

The black hellebore, better known as the Christmas-rose, is one of the prettiest flowers now seen out-of-doors, though but seldom met with in the present day, excepting in old gardens, which we much wonder at, as it is a

large, handsome, cup-shaped flower, sometimes white, but more frequently of a rich warm pink colour, and quite as beautiful as any single rose that is cultivated. But few gardens are without evergreens, and the winter-blooming laurustinus, mixed with other shrubs, now make a pretty show, though a noble, old, high holly-hedge is, after all, one of the grandest of green objects we now meet with. Another curious shrub that now occasionally flowers, is the Glastonbury-thorn, which our forefathers believed never bloomed until Christmas-day. It may sometimes be found now covered with blossom, although, like the rest of the thorns, it had bloomed before in May, as will be seen by the berries hanging on it at its second time of flowering, though this after-crop of bloom is not general. All we can see in the kitchen-garden is a little green above the ridge, where the celery is earthed up; a few savoys and kale, with a refreshing rim of parsley here and there, if it has been protected from the frost; and these, excepting the autumn-sown cabbage plants, are about all that now look green.

A BRIGHT WINTER DAY—THE TREES IN DECEMBER.

Still there are occasionally days when the sun comes out, and a mild south wind blows, shaking the icicles that hang from the gray beard of grim old Winter, as if to tell him that he must not sleep too sound, for the shortest day has come, and the snowdrops will soon be in flower, and then a flush of golden crocuses will be seen, that will make his dim eyes dance again as he rubs the hoary rime from his frosted eyelashes. And on these fine December days, great enjoyment may be found in a good bracing country-walk, which will send a summer

glow through the system, and cause us to forget the cold. The sky appears of a more brilliant blue, and looks as if



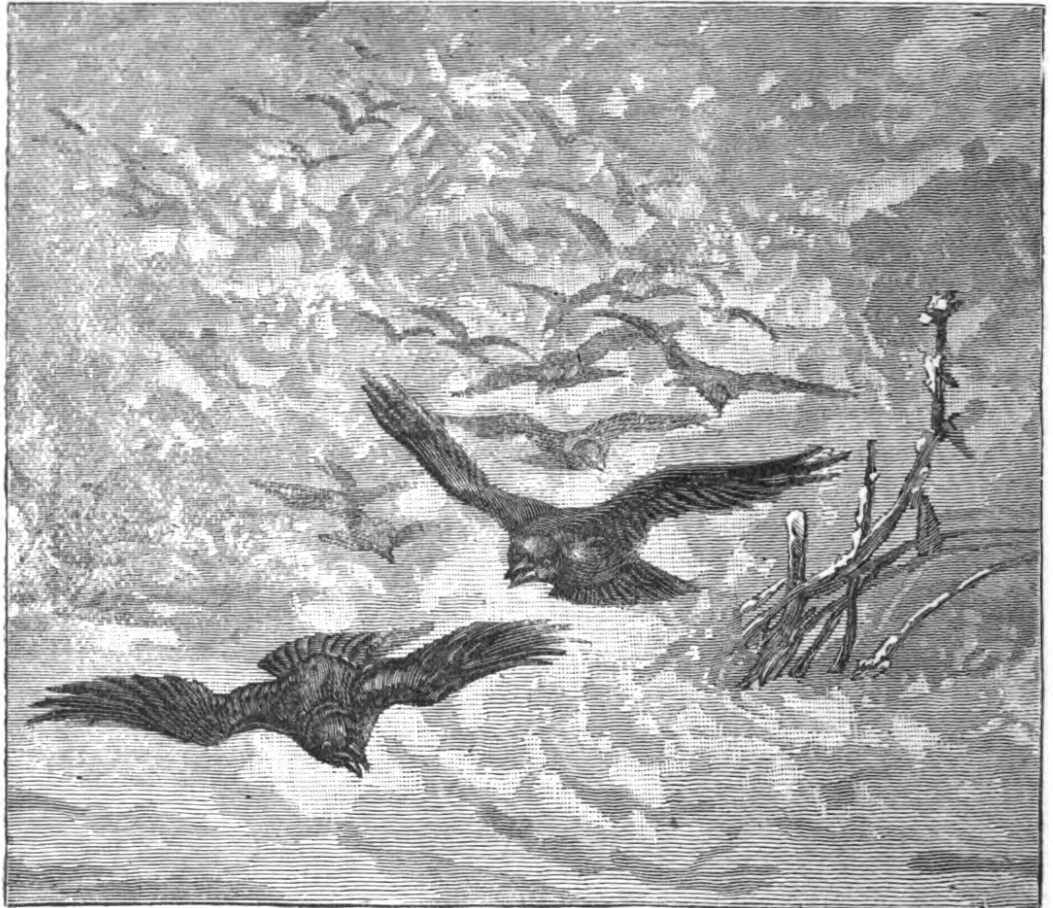
higher up than at any other season, while the winter moon, often seen at noonday, appears to have gone far away beyond her usual altitude.

We see a new beauty in the trees which we beheld not before—the wonderful ramification of the branches as they cross and interlace each other, patterns fit for lace, Nature's rich network—scallop and leaf, that seem as if worked on the sky to which we look up; and we marvel that some of our pattern-drawers have not made copies of these graceful intersections of spray and bough as seen amid the nakedness of winter. Sometimes the branches are hung with frost, which, were it not of so pure a white, we might fancy was some new kind of beautiful shaggy moss, in form like what is often seen

on trees. The bushes, sedge, and withered grasses are covered with it, and look at times as if they were ornaments cut out of gypsum or the purest marble; while some portions of the hedges, where only parts of the branches are seen, look like the blackthorn, which is sheeted with milk-white blossoms long before a green leaf appears.

HOW DO THE BIRDS LIVE?

We often wonder how, during a long and severe frost, the birds contrive to live. That many perish through



cold and want of food, is well known through the

number that are picked up dead and frozen, though a greater number are eaten by the animals that prey upon everything they can find. Many pick up insects in a dormant state from out the stems of decayed trees, old walls, and the thatched roofs of cottages and outhouses, and they also forage among furze-bushes, the underneath portions of which being dead, form a warm shelter for such insects as the gnats, which may be seen out in every gleam of sunshine; for there are numbers of birds that never approach the habitation of man, no matter how severe the winter may be. But most mysterious of all is the manner the waterfowl manage to subsist, when every stream, lake, and river is frozen, which has happened at times, and lasted for several weeks. It is very possible that they then leave our inland waters, and have recourse to the sea, though many naturalists have come to the conclusion that they then return to the countries from whence they came.

There is little doubt that birds feed on many things we are ignorant of. We have startled them, many a time, from some spot where they were pecking at something as fast as their little heads could go up and down; but even with the aid of a powerful magnifying-glass, we were unable to discover anything but small grit, sand, and portions of fine gravel on the spot. Wood-pigeons, we know well, eat the eyeshoots out of the tops of turnips, and devour the tenderest portion of winter-greens. Larks and other birds find a living in the autumn-sown corn-fields, and make sad havoc among the seed. Other birds tear the thatch off corn-stacks, and eat until they are hardly able to fly. Country lads know that there is good shooting to be found in places

like these. Nor does the farmer care so much about what they devour, as the injury they cause to what is left; for where the thatch is off, the rain penetrates, and runs down to the very lowest sheaves in the rick, which, after getting wet, soon become black and rotten. One thing we must consider, birds require less food during these short, dark days than they do at any other season of the year, as they are asleep more than double the time they pass in slumber in summer, nor when awake do they exert themselves so much on the wing as during the long days.

OLD-FASHIONED WINTERS—HIGHWAYMEN.

How dreary must have been the winters through which our forefathers passed, no farther back even than a century ago! Few of our towns were then lighted at night; here and there an oil-lamp flickered, which the wind soon blew out; and these cast such a dull light, and were so far apart, that few old people ventured through the streets on dark nights without carrying lanterns in their hands. Those who could afford it, followed their servants, who were the lantern-bearers. Then the roads were almost impassable in winter, and a few may still be found in the remote corners of England, bad enough, to tell what the generality of highways were in those old days. Coaches were almost unknown, and unless people rode on horseback, there was only the slow-paced stage-wagon, which even a cripple might pass on the road; for the great lumbering tilted vehicle, when it did not stick fast, seldom crept along at the rate of more than two miles an hour. All the miles of villages and roads that went stretching away from the little

town, were in darkness; for when the last dim lamp was left behind at the town-end, no more light was to be seen, unless from the window of some solitary farmhouse, where they had not retired to rest, until you reached your own home in the far-away hamlet; and fortunate you were if you did not lose your shoes in the knee-deep muddy roads.

Men have been known, in those old winters, to stick fast in the roads that run through clay lands, where they were sometimes found dead, or if they survived, were unable to move when pulled out on the following morning, until warmth was restored to the system. On lonesome moors, wide uninclosed commons, and hedgeless heaths, wayfarers, unable to travel along the deep-rutted and muddy roads, lost their way, trying to find a firmer footing elsewhere, and wandered about until the cold gray dawn of winter broke, fortunate if in the night they stumbled upon some dilapidated field-shed or sheep-fold. Goods were carried from one town to another on the backs of packhorses; and the mounted traveller who had to journey far, carried all his necessaries in his saddle-bags, considering himself very fortunate if he had not to give them up, with all his money, to some daring highwayman, who generally rode up, pistol in hand, demanding without ceremony 'Your money, or your life!' Any one glancing over the files of country newspapers that appeared about a century ago, would be startled to read of the number of highway robberies that then took place, and the many wayfarers that perished through cold on the roads during those old hard winters. We, who travel by rail, and live in towns lighted by gas, are not subject to these calamities.

CROSSING A FROZEN COUNTRY.



We have, in our day, seen men compelled to cross the wide fens and marshes when snow has fallen after a hard frost, and it was impossible to tell where the water-courses lay in places that drained these wide low-lying lands, as all appeared alike

a level waste buried under a white snowy pall. For safety they bestrode long leaping-poles, which they used for clearing the dikes in summer, and now employed in throwing themselves across the trenches, so that if the ice broke with them, they were seldom immersed above the legs. And across those long, wide, white windy marshes, where there was neither hoof, wheel, nor footmark to guide them, would these hardy men travel on their errands, with nothing to guide them but some bush or embankment or taller tuft of sedge, whose forms were so altered by the fallen snow, that they went along in doubt as to whether they were the same landmarks they were accustomed to trust to. And sometimes they fell into deep hollows, where the snow drifted over them in the night, and were not found

again for weeks after they were lost, when their bodies were borne back for burial.

SEVERE WINTERS.

From some of those old newspapers now before us, describing the winters a hundred years ago in the country, we find such passages as the following: 'The frost was so severe, the street-lamps could not be lighted on account of the oil being frozen; many people were found frozen to death in the fields and roads, and thousands of birds were picked up dead.'—'So severe was the weather, that only eight or nine people came from the country on market-day; none of the carriers arrived, nor any sheep or cattle; the town has been without water three weeks, except what is got through melting down the ice and snow. Many people have been found dead in the stackyards and sheds without the town.'—And during this severe weather, the quartern-loaf was selling for 1s. 4*d.*, and wheat fetching £6 and £7 a quarter, and that was no longer ago than the first year of the present century. Another of these old papers says: 'The weather was so severe, and the snow so deep, that the judges were detained on the road, and could not come in time to open the assizes.'

Flocks of sheep perished in the snow-drifts during these hard winters, and shepherds who went out to look after them were sometimes lost, nor were their bodies found until spring came and all the snow had melted away. We were shown a deep dell in the wild wolds, where one of the shepherds was found after the snow had gone, and all around where he had so long lain dead there were thousands of primroses in bloom. Even in

the present day, when winters are generally milder, we have often with difficulty climbed some hill, that we might look over the snow-clad country at our feet. The cottages in the distance seem half-buried, as if the snow stood as high as the window-sills and reached half up the doorways, and you wonder how the inhabitants can get out, and make their way over those white untrodden fields, so deep as they are covered with snow.

A SNOWY LANDSCAPE.

The rick-yard looks like mounds of up-coned snow, yet so smooth and equally distributed that no human hand could pile flake above flake in such level and beautiful slopes, so unindented and unbroken, out of any material mechanical art can contrive; and yet so lightly do the flakes lie on one another, that the first gust of wind shakes them loose, and disperses them on the air like full-blown May-blossoms. One might fancy that the long rows of level hedges were thick marble walls, and that the black line far beyond which marks the river, was the deep chasm from which all those miles of upheaving marble have been quarried. We look behind, where hills ascend above hills, with level table-lands between, telling where, for unknown epochs, the ocean spread and sank in desolate silence; and we seem as if looking upon a dead country, from which everything living has long since passed away, and nothing could find sustenance on those cold terraces and bald high uplands of snow, to whose sides the few bare trees that lean over seem to cling in agony, as the wind goes moaning through their naked branches.

But, like the blue of heaven seen through the rift of

clouds beyond, there is hope before us, for the shortest day is past, and soon some little hardy flower will be seen here and there, and far across the snow we shall hear the faint bleating of new-born lambs, and the round green daisies will begin to knock under the earth to be let out, and so frighten grim old Winter in his sleep, that he will jump up and hurry away, looking with averted head over his shoulder, for fear he should be overtaken by Spring.

Characteristics of December.

On the 22d of December, the sun enters the sign of *Capricornus* or the *Goat*. The idea thus allegorised by a *climbing* animal is said to be the ascent of the sun, which, after reaching its lowest declination at the winter-solstice, on the 21st of this month, recommences its upward path, and continues to do so from that date till it attains its highest altitude at the summer-solstice, on the 21st of June.

The average temperature for the middle of December, throughout the British Islands, is about 39°. On the 1st of the month, in the latitude of London, the sun rises at 7 h. 47 m. and sets at 3 h. 52 m. As regards meteorological characteristics, December bears in its earlier portion a considerable resemblance to the preceding month of November. Heavy falls of snow and hard frosts used to be of normal occurrence at the season of Christmas, but in recent years Britain has witnessed such a cycle of mild winters, that, as a general rule, snow rarely descends in any quantity before the commencement of the New Year.

Key to the Calendar.

DECEMBER is so called as being originally the *tenth* of the Roman year. Our Anglo-Saxon ancestors called December *Winter-monath*—that is, winter-month; but after becoming acquainted with Christianity, this name was changed into *Halig-monath*, or holy-month, with reference to the celebration of the nativity on its twenty-fifth day.

6. **St Nicholas's Day.**—Retained in the Church of England calendar. St Nicholas was archbishop of Myra, in Greece, 342 A.D. He is regarded as the patron saint of children and of mariners, probably in consequence of his benevolent zeal in the protection of orphans and stranded seamen. Churches built near the sea are in many instances dedicated to St Nicholas. He is also said to have shown much kind interest in the fate of young women, sometimes secretly throwing purses into the chamber-windows of those who lacked dowries. Hence has arisen a custom prevalent over a large part of the Christian world: on his eve, presents are hid in the shoes of those to whom any one wishes to give a pleasing surprise; and these being found in the morning, are jocularly said to be gifts from St Nicholas.

St Nicholas is also considered as the tutelar saint of scholars, or clerks, and of robbers. The fraternity of parish clerks have thought themselves entitled by their name to adopt him as their patron. How robbers should have come to be called St Nicholas's clerks, or St Nicholas's knights, it is not easy to see, unless it were from the coincidence of his name with one of the slang appellations of the devil.

Throughout the middle ages, there was a universal custom of electing a kind of mock-bishop on St Nicholas's day. A boy,

possibly taken from amongst the choristers, was chosen by his associates as bishop, arrayed in suitable vestments, and indued with appropriate powers, which he enjoyed for some days. He was even allowed to sing mass and to mount the pulpit and preach. Edward I., on his way to Scotland in 1299, heard vespers by a boy-bishop at the chapel of Heton, near Newcastle.

8. **The Conception of the Blessed Virgin in the Romish and English calendars.**

11. The fourteen days from this to Christmas-eve were called the *Halcyon Days*, and supposed to be, in their calm and tranquil character, an exception from the season. The term, which is now a regular adjective in our language, is derived from the bird kingfisher or halcyon, which, from the days of Aristotle at least, has been the subject of a curious superstition. The ancients supposed that it built its nest on the ocean, and brought forth its young at the winter solstice. To account for the preservation of the nest and young amidst the severity of the season, they imagined that the bird had a power of lulling the raging of the waves during the period of incubation; and this power was believed to reside in its song.

13. **St Lucia's Day.**—Retained in the Church of England calendar. St Lucia was a young lady of Syracuse, who obtained a high character for a devout and charitable life, and died in the year 304. The last of the four series of Ember Days commences on the Wednesday following this festival.

16. **O Sapientia.**—This day is so marked in the Church calendar, probably from an anthem sung on this day in the Romish Church, beginning 'O sapientia quæ ex ore altissimi prodidisti,' &c.

21. **St Thomas the Apostle**, a festival of the English Church. It was customary for women to go *a-gooding* on St Thomas's Day; that is, they went about begging money, and presenting in return sprigs of palm and bunches of primroses,

probably with a view to the decoration of their houses against Christmas.

25. **Christmas-day**, observed from an early period as the nativity of our Lord, and celebrated not only by the religious ceremonies from which the name of the day is partly taken, but by popular festivities of the most joyful kind. In England, Christmas is held by the Church as a solemn festival, and distinguished by the complete cessation of business—an honour paid to no other day besides Good Friday. But within the last hundred years, the festivities once appropriate to the day have much fallen off. These at one time lasted with more or less brilliancy till Candlemas, and with great spirit till Twelfth-day; but now a meeting in the evening, little different from a common dinner-party, though sure to be marked by a roast and plum-pudding, and pretty generally followed by a game at cards, is all that distinguishes Christmas in most families.

In former times, the celebration of Christmas began in the latter part of the previous day—Christmas-eve. The house was first decked with holly, ivy, and other evergreens. Candles of an uncommon size were then lighted, under the name of Christmas candles; an enormous log, called the Yule Clog, or Christmas Block, was laid upon the fire; the people sat round, regaling themselves with beer. In the course of the night, small parties of songsters went about from house to house, or through the streets, singing what were called Christmas carols—simple popular ditties, full of joyful allusions to the great gift from God to man in the Redeemer. A mass was commenced in the churches at midnight, a custom still kept up in the Catholic Church.

The carols were more generally sung in the morning of Christmas-day. A contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, in 1811, describing the manner in which Christmas is celebrated in the North Riding of Yorkshire, says: 'About six o'clock on Christmas-day I was awakened by a sweet singing under my

window ; surprised at a visit so early and unexpected, I arose, and looking out of the window, I beheld six young women and



Bringing in the Yule Log.

four men welcoming with sweet music the blessed morn.' It may scarcely be imagined how delightfully at such a moment would fall upon the half-slumbering ear such strains as the following :

God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born upon this day,

ALL ROUND THE YEAR.

To save us all from Satan's power,
When we were gone astray.

O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas-day.

In Bethlehem in Jewry
This blessed babe was born,
And laid upon a manger
Upon this blessed morn ;
The which his mother Mary
Nothing did take in scorn.
O tidings, &c.

Christmas carols are amongst the oldest of English songs. A collection of them was printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1521.

The religious service of Christmas-day receives but a small share of attention from old writers. In fact the day was chiefly distinguished by the popular festivities. Its grand feature was a feast, of great abundance, and at which a few particular dishes regularly appeared, above all, plum-porridge and mince-pie. In every great hall, whether of a man of rank, or of a great corporation, there was a boar's head ushered in by minstrelsy. It was customary for the rich and noble to treat their humble dependents, and to meet with them on terms of equality, as considering that all men are regarded alike by the religion of him whose natal-day they are celebrating. A sort of license prevailed. A branch of the mistletoe being hung up in the hall, or over the doorway, the youths were understood to have a right to kiss any maiden whom they could inveigle under it. It was also customary to elect a person as *Lord of Misrule*, who went about taking the lead in every kind of extravagant sport and merriment which the wit of man could devise. The election and functions of this personage were perhaps the most singular part of the festival. According to Stow, 'at the feast of Christmas there



Christmas Revels in Olden Times.

was in the king's house, wherever he lodged, a Lord of Misrule, or Master of merry Disports, and the like had ye in the house of every Nobleman of honour or good worship, were he spiritual or temporal. The Mayor of London, and either of the Sheriffs, had their several Lords of Misrule, ever contending, without quarrel or offence, who should make the rarest pastime to delight the beholders. These lords, beginning their rule at All-hallond Eve, continued the same till the morrow after the Feast of the Purification, commonly called Candlemas-day: in which space there were fine and subtle disguisings, masks, and mummeries, with playing at Cards for Counters, Nayles, and Points, in every House, more for pastimes than for gaine.'

The management of the plays usually acted at Christmas in the halls of colleges and law societies fell to the care of the Lord of Misrule. The particular functionary elected in the inns of court in London, after exercising all the duties and going through the parade of royalty for a fortnight, at an expense of a couple of thousand pounds, was knighted at Whitehall by the real sovereign of the land.

In Scotland, before the Reformation, the religious houses had a similar officer for the Christmas revels, called the *Abbot of Unreason*, whose particular functions are graphically portrayed by Scott in his novel of *The Abbot*. The custom was suppressed by statute in 1555.

26. **St Stephen's Day**, observed as a festival of the Church of England. There was formerly a widely prevalent dogma that it was good to bleed horses about this time of the year, and St Stephen's Day was that chosen by most people for the purpose. On this day, also, blessings were implored upon pastures.

27. **St John the Evangelist's Day**, observed as a festival by the Church of England. Because John drank poison, without dying in consequence, it was supposed that those who put their trust in him were safe from all injury from that cause.

28. **Childermas**, or *Holy Innocents' Day*, observed by the

Church of Rome with masses for the children killed by Herod. It was considered unlucky to marry, or to begin any work, on Childermas-day. The learned Gregory says: 'It hath been a custom, and yet is elsewhere, to whip up the children upon Innocents' Day Morning, that the memory of Herod's murder might stick the closer, and in a moderate proportion to act over the "crueltie again in kinde."'

31. The last day of the year is called in Scotland *Hogmanay*, a word which has fruitlessly exercised the wits of the etymologists. The Scottish people, overlooking Christmas in obedience to the behests of their religious teachers, have transferred the merriment of the season to Hogmanay and New-year's Day, which they accordingly abandon to all kinds of festivity. Handsel Monday, or the first Monday of the year, is also an occasion of festivity. On the evening of Hogmanay, there are merry-makings, which are always prolonged to twelve o'clock, which has no sooner struck than all start up excitedly, and wish each other a happy new year. Small venturous parties take a kettle with hot ale posset, called 'a het pint,' or, more commonly, a bottle of whisky, and go to the houses of their friends, to wish them a happy new year. Whoever comes first, is called in that house 'the First Foot,' and it is deemed necessary on such occasions to offer the inmates both a piece of cake and a sip from the kettle or the bottle, otherwise they would not be lucky throughout the year. This is called 'First-Footing.'

Next day, visits are paid; presents are given amongst relations; and dinner-parties close the evening. Formerly, the first Monday of the year was also much observed as a festive day, and time for giving presents, from which latter circumstance it was called *Handsel Monday*. The Handsel Monday, old style, is still, in some rural districts, the chief feast-day of the season. In Scotland, message-boys, postmen, dustmen, &c., expect and receive a small *douceur* on Handsel Monday from the householders included in their daily

rounds. On the evenings of Christmas, Hogmanay, New-year's Day, and Handsel Monday, parties of young men and boys went about disguised in old shirts and paper vizards, singing at the various houses for a small guerdon. These *quizaris*, as they were called, also acted a rustic kind of drama, in which the adventures of two rival knights and the feats of a doctor were conspicuous. Almost everywhere in Scotland the festive and frolicsome observances of the New-year tide have very much declined.



Divisions of Time.



TIME is one of those things which cannot be defined. We only appreciate it as a fact in the universal frame of things, when we are enabled to measure it by certain processes of nature.

THE YEAR.

The length of the year is strictly expressed by the space of time required for the revolution of the earth round the sun—namely, 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 50 seconds, for to such a nicety has this time been ascertained. But for convenience in reckoning, it has been found necessary to make the year terminate with a day instead of a fraction of one, lumping the fractions together so as to make up a day among themselves. About forty-five years before Christ, Julius Cæsar, having, by the help of Sosigenes, an Alexandrian philosopher, come to a tolerably clear understanding of the length of the year, decreed that every fourth year should be held to consist of 366 days, for the purpose of absorbing the odd hours.

The arrangement he dictated was a rather clumsy one. A day in February, the sixth (*sextus*) before the calends of March was to be repeated in that fourth year; and each fourth year was thus to be *bissextile*. It was as

if we were to reckon the 23d of February twice over. Seeing that, in reality, a day every fourth year is too much by 11 minutes and 10 seconds, it inevitably followed that the beginning of the year was thrust onward and so made later in coming; in other words, the natural time fell behind the reckoning. Days were reckoned into the end of one year that should have fallen into the beginning of the next; and a natural date like the equinox crept backwards towards the beginning of the nominal year. From the time of the Council of Nice, in 325, when the vernal equinox fell correctly on the 21st of March, Pope Gregory found in 1582 that there had been an over-reckoning to the extent of ten days, and now the vernal equinox fell on the 11th of March. To correct the past error, he decreed that the 5th of October that year should be reckoned as the 15th, and to keep the year right in future, the overplus being upwards of $18\frac{1}{2}$ hours, he ordered that every centurial year that could not be divided by 4 (1700, 1800, 1900, 2100, 2200, &c.), should *not* be bissextile, as it otherwise would be; thus, in short, dropping the extra day three times every four hundred years. The Gregorian style, as it was called, readily obtained sway in Catholic, but not in Protestant countries. It was not adopted in England till the year 1752, by which time the discrepancy between the Julian and Gregorian periods amounted to *eleven* days. An act of parliament was passed, dictating that the 3d of September that year should be reckoned the 14th. It has consequently arisen—1800 not having been a leap-year—that the new and old styles now differ by *twelve* days, the first of January old style being the 13th of the month new style. In Russia, however, in Greece,

and the other countries where the Greek Church is the ruling faith, the old style is still retained; wherefore it becomes necessary for one writing in those countries to any foreign correspondent, to set down his date thus:

$\frac{12\text{th}}{24\text{th}}$ March, or $\frac{25\text{th September}}{7\text{th October}}$; or, it may be $\frac{28\text{th December 1883}}{9\text{th January 1884}}$.

THE MONTH.

• Our arbitrary division of the year into twelve months, has manifestly taken its origin in the natural division determined by the moon's revolutions.

The month of nature, or lunar revolution, is strictly 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, 3 seconds; and there are, of course, twelve such periods, and rather less than 11 days over, in a year. From an early period, there were efforts among some of the civilised nations to arrange the year in a division accordant with the revolutions of the moon; but they were all strangely irregular till Julius Cæsar reformed the Calendar, by establishing the system of three years of 365 followed by one (bissextile) of 366 days, and decreed that the latter should be divided as follows:

Januarius,	31 days.
Februarius,	30 "
Martius,	31 "
Aprilis,	30 "
Maius,	31 "
Junius,	30 "
Quintilis (altered to Julius),	31 "
Sextilis,	30 "
September,	31 "
October,	30 "
November,	31 "
December,	30 "
	<hr style="width: 10%; margin-left: auto; margin-right: 0;"/>
	366 "

The general idea of Cæsar was, that the months should consist of 31 and 30 days alternately; and this was effected in the bissextile or leap-year, consisting, as it did, of twelve times thirty with six over. In ordinary years, consisting of one day less, his arrangement gave 29 days to February. Afterwards, his successor Augustus had the eighth of the series called after himself, and from vanity broke up the regularity of Cæsar's arrangement by taking another day from February to add to his own month, that it might not be shorter than July, named after Julius Cæsar; a change which led to a shift of October and December for September and November as months of 31 days. In this familiar arrangement, the year has since stood in all Christian countries.

THE WEEK AND THE DAY.

The week is a division of time which, whatever trace of a natural origin some may find in it, is certainly in a great measure arbitrary, since it does not consist in all countries of the same number of days. Although found as a civil institution among some of the earliest nations, Hindus, Assyrians, Persians, and others (as probably approximately corresponding to the duration of one of the moon's four quarters), the week of seven days is derived by the Christian world from the Jews, whose sacred scriptures represent it as commemorating the world's having been created by God in six days, with one more on which He rested from his work, and which He therefore sanctified as a day of rest.

Of weeks there are 52, and one day over in ordinary years, or two days over in leap-years; and hence the recurrence of a particular day of the month never falls in

an immediately succeeding year on the same day of the week, but on one a day in advance in the one case, and two in the other. Every twenty-eight years, however, the days of the month and the days of the week once more coincide.

The week, with its terminal day among the Jews, and its initial day among the Christians, observed as a day of rest and of devotion, is to be regarded as in the main a religious institution.

The day of nature, being strictly the time required for one rotation of the earth on its axis, is 23 hours, 56 minutes, 4 seconds, and 1 tenth of a second. In that time, a star comes round to appear in the same place where we had formerly seen it. But the earth, having an additional motion on its orbit round the sun, requires about 3 minutes, 56 seconds more, or 24 hours in all, to have the sun brought round to appear at the same place; in other words, for any place on the surface of the earth to come to the meridian. Thus arises the difference between a *sidereal* day and a *solar* day, between *apparent* and *mean* time.

We find no allusion to hours in the course of the Scriptural histories till we come to the Book of Daniel, who lived 552 years before Christ. 'Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for *one hour*, and his thoughts troubled him.' The Jews and the Romans alike, on introducing a division of the day into twenty-four hours, assigned equal numbers to day and night, without regard to the varying length of these portions of the solar day; consequently, an hour was with them a varying quantity of time, according to the seasons and the latitude. Afterwards, the plan of an equal

division was adopted, as was also that of dividing an hour into 60 minutes, and a minute into 60 seconds.

While the Romans have directly given us the names of the months, we have immediately derived those of the days of the week from our Old English or Anglo-Saxon ancestors. Thus, the first day of the week is *Sunnan-daeg* with the Saxons; *Dies Solis* with the Romans. Monday is *Monan-daeg* with the Saxons; *Dies Lunæ* with the Romans. Tuesday is, among the Saxons, *Tiwes-daeg*—that is, the day of *Tiw*, the war-god; among the Romans it was *Dies Martis*, the day of Mars, their god of war. The fourth day of the week was, among the Saxons, *Wodenes-daeg*, the day of Woden, or Odin, the chief god in the northern mythology; amongst the Romans, however, this day was *Dies Mercurii*, Mercury's Day. The fifth day of the week, *Thors-daeg* of the Saxons, was dedicated to their god Thor, the Thunderer, who, in some respects corresponds with Jupiter, whose day this was (*Dies Jovis*) among the Romans. Friday, dedicated to Venus among the Romans (*Dies Veneris*), was named by the Saxons, in honour of their corresponding deity (*Friga*), *Frige-daeg*. The last day of the week took its Roman name of *Dies Saturni*, and its Saxon appellation of *Saeter-daeg*, from the Roman god Saturn.

THE END.

