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### **KING ALFRED AND HIS SOMERSET HOME.**

This view shows what is, probably, one of the most historically interesting spots in England. In the centre is Borough Mump, from the top of which can be viewed the whole scene of King Alfred's campaign in the year 878. Away to the West, about a mile distant, lies Athelney, the place where Alfred lived and made his warlike preparations which led to the overthrow of the Danes. The ruined building on the top is believed to mark the site of an early religious house. This might have been associated with Athelney Abbey, founded by Alfred.

# CALENDAR

OF

CUSTOMS, SUPERSTITIONS, WEATHER-LORE,

POPULAR SAYINGS,

AND

IMPORTANT EVENTS CONNECTED WITH THE

COUNTY OF SOMERSET.



FOREWORD and INDEX

BY

W. G. WILLIS WATSON, F.R.Hist.S.



*REPRINTED FROM THE SOMERSET COUNTY HERALD,  
1920.*





## FOREWORD.

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All kinds of books are offered to the public. But this one—"A Calendar of Somerset"—is something unique. Probably, there is not another similar publication in the country; if so it does not come prominently before the public gaze, nor figure in the second-hand book lists. This volume is also unique, because, while it will appeal strongly to all natives of "The Land of Summer," it should claim the attention of students of history, folk lore, and old customs wherever they may be found.

What does the book contain? A disjointed history of Somerset, a description of the social life of the natives in the days which have passed, the superstitions which often ruled the lives of the people, the old customs, many of them full of colour such as produced fit subjects for the painter's brush and the poet's song. Would you know of Somerset's great men, the establishers of Christianity in this island, the King who drove the Danish hordes from our shores, and who founded the British Navy, heroes on sea and on land, brilliant men of the Church, and the law, men who rose from obscurity to fame, navigators, poets, inventors—and all these men natives of Somerset? Would you, Somerset folk, read of the times when the Royalists and Parliamentarians warred within your county? Would the student of old customs desire to know how the "wold ancient" native of that land, full of legend and lore, foretold the future or fared under the spell of pixies and the possessor of "the evil eye?" Then turn over these pages, and from the 1st of January to the 31st December cameos will be found revealing rich pictures of how the days "down htwom" were spent in

Somerset from the time when the county was the home of a tribal people through the ages until recent years.

There are few days in the calendar which cannot be associated with noteworthy events in which Somerset played its part. These events have been brought together in the pages which follow by the patient and generous work of those whose names are appended to the various articles.

The compilation of the book has necessitated an immense amount of quarrying. But this has been a labour of love to those who have engaged in it. They offer it as a tribute of their affection for Somerset, and in the hope that the county will assume a pride of place among those who, perhaps, at present, only look upon it as a portion of England "down West."

Appended to the book is a copious index. Every endeavour has been made to render it accurate. It will be of the greatest use to the ordinary reader and a mine of reference for diggers in Somerset lore.

Thanks are due to the Proprietors of the *Somerset County Herald* for allowing the Calendar, which appeared in that paper, in instalments, to be reproduced in this handy form, and to the Director of "Notes and Queries," which is a weekly feature of the *Herald*, for the immense amount of assistance he has so kindly rendered in the publication of this volume.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## JANUARY.

Old customs! Oh I love the sound  
However simple they may be,  
Whate'er with time hath sanction found  
Is welcome, and is dear to me.

January is a month peculiarly associated with New Year customs and superstitious, and "Dear Old Down Along," our beloved Somerset, is full of folklore dealing with this season of the year. The times are rapidly changing, and many of the old customs are falling into desuetude. The habits of the people are undergoing great alteration, but the advent of a New Year must always be a time of special significance, so long as the world exists. The picturesqueness surrounding life is giving way to the demands of utilitarianism, but the native born Somerset man or woman can never be dispossessed of those characteristics which have been passed on in the blood of successive generations from the earliest days—from the time when the Somersetsan themselves, in their peculiar manner, welcomed the advent of a New Year, rejoiced with their friends after having escaped the dangers which attend every year, and congratulated each other for the future by presents and wishes for the happy continuance of that course. Because we know the custom of giving New Year's gifts is as frankly Pagan as the word January, which, of course, is the month sacred to the Roman god, Janus, the double-faced one, who was thus in the convenient position of looking back over the past year and forward into the current one.

New Year's-day is still observed in Somerset, gifts are given and received, although, like other customs, this one is not so closely observed as in the past. We delight in recalling the days of our youth. The more personal gatherings of Christmas gave place to visits to other homes as the New Year opened. There were children's parties on all hands—the happiest days in the children's lives. Holly and mistletoe adorned the hall and the big kitchen. What hours had been spent in making the paper roses and chains which festooned the walls, in hanging up flags, Chinese lanterns, and in transforming the Christ-

mas tree into a thing of dazzling brilliancy. On New Year's-day everyone seemed moved by the spirit of the kindest hearted generosity. It was the season of the year when master and man in Somerset gave tangible expression to the friendly feelings which existed between them. It was a time when men, around the kitchen fire, were wont to refer, with eyes sparkling with pride, to the number of years, they, their fathers and their grandfathers, and even "gurt gran'-faathers" worked on the farms in the district for fathers, grandfathers, and great grandfathers of the men who were their present employers. It was the day when New Year gifts were appreciated to a far greater extent than any are to-day, perhaps, because the present luxuriant age has affected the taste of the rising generations. But the old customs are dear to me—the goose on Christmas-day, the turkey at the head of the board on New Year's-day, the holly, the mistle-toe, the bells, the gifts, the merry parties, the open fireplace and the ashen faggot. Talking of presents they assumed myriads of forms. Sir John Harrington, of Bath, for instance, sent to James I. for a New Year's gift a curious dark lantern. The top was a crown of pure gold serving also to cover a perfume pan. Within it was a shield of silver, embossed to reflect the light: on one side of which were the sun, moon, and planets, and on the other side the story of the birth and passion of Christ "as it is found graved by a King of Scots (David II.) once a prisoner in Nottingham." Sir John caused to be inscribed in Latin, on this present, the following passage for his Majesty's perusal:—"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." It is a common saying in Somerset that horn lanterns were invented by *our* Alfred—Alfred the Great—but it is probably an erroneous one. This costly lantern was, perhaps, not so highly prized as the sawdust-doll taken from a Christmas tree and given to some dear little girl, nor even the apples stuck with nuts that were handed round at the children's parties—a rustic imitation of the common New Year's gift of an orange stuck with cloves, mentioned by Ben Jonson in his "Christmas Masque."

There are some curious customs associated with Somerset and New Year's-day. "Opening the Bible" is one of them, and it may be that it is still practised in some of the rural districts—I hope it is. The rite was generally observed before breakfast. The Holy Book—it is recorded by Poole—is laid on the table unopened, and the parties who wish to consult it open it in succession. They are not allowed to choose any particular part of the book, but must open it

at random. In whatever portion of the sacred volume this may happen to be, the enquirer is to place his finger on any chapter contained in the two open pages, but without perusing its contents. This portion of Scripture is then read aloud and commented on by the people assembled and from it they form their conclusions as to the happiness or misery that will ensue during the coming year. This custom of divining the future was practised by the early Christians, and in Gibbon's "Decline and Fall" is an account of Clovis proceeding to Tours to pray at the shrine of St. Martin. His messengers were instructed to notice the words of the Psalm which should happen to be chanted at the exact moment when they entered the church; as they came into the Cathedral it happened that the Psalm expressed the valour of the champions of the Israelites, which was an earnest of the success for the King's arms.

There are other customs associated with New Year's-day in Somerset. "Never wash anything; if you do you wash one of the family away" was an old saying, and I know that should washing-day happen to fall on the first day of the year our old washerwoman—they are laundresses to-day—would arrange to complete her weekly task the day before or the day after—never on New's Year's-day. "I never 'ooden wash New Year's-day, not for nobody." Then there were the scenes in the old belfry tower—a place which has been purged, and rightly so, of some of the things associated with it in the past. The "Zider vi'kin" was an accompaniment of bell ringing, and more than the legitimate ringers found their way up the winding staircase on New Year's-eve and New Year's-day. It was dry work pulling the ropes, and the season was one given over to jollity and mirth, and the old fogies saw no harm—no sacrilege—in keeping up the old customs even to lubricating their own joints within sacred precincts. It may not have been altogether seemly, but they were religiously carrying on the old customs and were, perhaps, committing less sin than many outside the Churchyard gates.

Then the weather always claimed attention on New Year's-day, for were not the natives of Somerset always taught that the weather of the first three days of January ruled the coming three months.

Next came Twelfth-day (January 6th) on the eve of which an offering, accompanied by a most picturesque ceremony, was made to the Goddess of Fruit—Pomona. The custom of wassailing the apple trees on Old Christmas-eve is, perhaps, one of the best advertised Somerset and West of England customs. Wassailing the trees is a thing

of the past, but it is hashed, and re-hashed, in archaeological journals, in novels, in books of manners and customs, until the whole world knows something about placing toast in the forks of the apple trees, and pouring some of the best cider about the roots in order to propitiate the Fates, and thus lead to a good apple bearing season. Of course there is singing—there always is—or was—in Somerset in the days when people were poorer but apparently happier. And as the wassail bowl circled around, the good old folk sang one or other of the wassail songs lustily enough to bring luck to both the trees, the owner and his wife and children. Raymond has described the scene in an inimitable manner; so has Philpott in his Devonshire stories, and so have others. In West Somerset the custom of wassailing the apple trees has been observed later than in the South, at least, and it is not many years ago at Wiveliscombe the men and lads went round singing to the apple trees as they used to do a century ago :—

Health to thee, good apple tree!  
Well to bear hats full, caps full,  
Three bushel bags full.

In some places guns were fired through the branches of the trees to ward off evil sprites. But the mystic baptism of the trees was the chief feature of the ceremony. Do you know it was always considered wicked by Somerset folk to work on Old Christmas-day? Certain it is not much sin was committed in that direction, because the day was one given over to seasonable jollity, for the good folk of Cider Land realised the Christmas holiday season was drawing to a close. Twelfth-day was followed by St. Dinstaff's-day, when housewives resumed their work, and the first Monday after was Plough Monday, and the husbandmen again took up their vocations.

There are many weather rhymes associated with January. Here are a few :—

If the sun shines on January 12th it fore-shadows much wind.

St. Vincent's-day, January 22nd.—  
Remember on St. Vincent's-day  
If that the sun his beams display,  
Be sure to mark his transient beam  
Which through the casement sheds a gleam ;  
For 'tis a token bright and clear  
Of prosperous weather all the year.

Thus our old grandmothers kept an eye on the skies on St. Vincent's-day, as they did on St. Paul's-day, the 25th January, the old legend running :—

If St. Paul's-day be faire and cleare  
It doth betide a happy yeare ;

But if, by chance, it then should rain,  
 It will make deare all kinds of graine.  
 And if ye clouds make darke ye skie  
 Then neate and fowles this year shall die.  
 If blustering winds do blow aloft,  
 Then wars shall trouble ye realm full oft.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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A snow year,  
 A rich year.  
 If in January you sow oats,  
 It will bring golden groats.  
 The blackest month in all the year  
 Is the month of Janiveer.  
 If the grass grows in Janiveer,  
 It grows the worse for't all the year.  
 If the grass looks green in Janiveer,  
 'Twill look the worser all the year.  
 If Janiveer calends be summerly gay,  
 'Twill be wintry weather till the calends o' May.  
 March in Janiveer,  
 Janiveer in March, I fear.  
 In January should sun appear,  
 March and April will pay full dear.  
 A January spring idden good vur nothing.  
 (Because crops then become too forward,  
 "winter proud" as it is called, and are liable to  
 be damaged by later cold weather).  
 A warnu January, a cold May.  
 A snow year, a rich year.  
 January blossoms fill no man's cellar.  
 A green January, a rich churchyard.  
 As the days do lengthen  
 The cold do strengthen.  
 The two sayings  
 Much rain in January, no blessing to the fruit  
 And  
 Is January wet? The barrel remains empty  
 bear evidence to a general belief that a lot of  
 rain during this month is not desirable.

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### JAN. 1.—NEW YEAR'S DAY.

"New Year's tide,  
 Days lengthen a cock-stride."  
 At New Year's-day, a cock's stride;  
 At Candlemas, an hour wide.

\* \* \*

In the extreme west of the county, and in the  
 neighbouring shire of Devon, many will not wash  
 on New Year's-day for fear of washing out the

life of some one in the family during the year to follow.

\* \* \*

Trimming the nails is as much to be avoided on New Year's-day as it is of a Sunday, of which the rhyme is often quoted :—

“Cut 'em on Sunday, you cut 'em for evil,  
For the rest of the week you'll be ruled by the  
Devil.”

Substitute “New Year” and “year” where required, and you have the ban on the operation.

\* \* \*

“The first person that crosses the threshold to enter the house on New Year's-day, if he be a dark man, brings luck.”

The darker the first visitor is the more luck he brings.

This belief, in a county populated largely by descendants of Saxons, is certainly curious, and one would be inclined to believe it ante-dates the Anglo-Saxon influx. But again, it may be a relic of the time when the very fair-haired Dane was a veritable bogey in the West.

\* \* \*

On New Year's-day it is the custom in some parts of the county to lay open the Family Bible the first thing in the morning, when all the household are down, and before breakfast. The Book is laid upon the table, unopened, and those who wish to consult it open it at a venture, and without choosing a piece, place the hand down on the page to cover a chapter, which is then read aloud, commented upon, and from it are drawn prognostications of good or evil, happiness or ill-fortune.

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We are indebted to Miss N. R. Whittaker for the following additions to the list of local superstitions connected with New Year's-day which we published last week :—

It is lucky to give away money and food on January 1st.

The child who is born on New Year's-day will bring good luck to all the family.

The housewife who sweeps her house before the sun has shone on New Year's morn will be unfortunate.

In addition to a dark first caller bringing good luck, it is said that a sandy or red-haired man will bring evil days to the house.

To obtain good fortune you must go out for the first time on New Year's-day empty-handed and come in full : thou : you will receive more than you give away during the year.



Mr. W. C. Baker kindly sends us the following:—

If a robin fly against the window during the 1st of January it is a sign that someone in the house will die before the year is out.

Tie the garter of the left leg in two bows below the knee on the 1st of January to prevent being bewitched during the year.

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### FIRST MONDAY IN THE YEAR.

According to the late Mr. G. P. R. Pulman, the first Monday in the year is called "Hansel Monday," and on the one hand it is considered lucky to take money as early as possible in the morning—the first sum received being "hansel money"—and on the other hand very "unlucky" to spend anything before breakfast. He defines "Hansel" as "Success in a new undertaking, or with a new implement, as 'to hansel a rod' means to catch fish the first time of using it—considered to be indicative of future good luck. A gift on entering upon a new undertaking is said to be a 'hansel,' as is the first deal with a person."

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### JAN 5.—OLD CHRISTMAS EVE.

Never pick Holy Thorn on Old Christmas-eve when you hear the cracking of the buds, or you will receive a curse.

On this eve at midnight, the cattle are believed to bow and to get on their knees in adoration of our Lord on the eve of His nativity, and one need only apply to old folk of the West Country to receive ample confirmation of this.

Miss Alice King says:—On the eve of Old Christmas-day, as the clock strikes midnight, the finest and handsomest beast of the herd, called "the master bullock," lows softly and musically three times, and then goes down on his knees before the manger. Every West Country farmer believes this as fully as he does in the existence of Dunkery Beacon.

We are indebted to Miss Blanche Masey for a variation of this legend, which makes the cattle kneel down before the Glastonbury Thorn and its off-shoots, including the sprig of it which flourished in Dillington Park, Ilminster.

Several attempts have been made to account for this popular belief, and it has been pointed out that in old pictures of the Nativity the cattle are represented with bended knees around the stable at Bethlehem. A more probable explanation is that cows, in common with all the deer tribe, in rising from the ground raise their

hind feet first and rest on their knees for a moment or so before assuming the full standing position. A stranger entering a cattle stall at midnight at any season of the year would in all probability rouse the inmates, some of whom, at any rate, would be seen quickly to assume the posture in question. It is probable that a knowledge of this fact was made use of in mediæval times to establish the monkish legend of the cattle kneeling on Christmas-eve in adoration of the Holy Child.

\* \* \*

A curious fact worth recording is that Edington and Catcott men used to celebrate Old Christmas-day on January 5th, whilst the next village, Chilton Polden, held to the correct day, January 6th. The custom doubtless originated through the men of the different villages co-operating in wassailing. The same practice was until comparatively recent years in vogue at Porlock and Minchhead, the former place keeping the 5th and the latter the 6th.—C.K.

#### GLASTONBURY THORN.

One of the best known of our Somerset legends is that of the Holy Thorn of Glastonbury, which is said to have had its origin in the staff of Joseph of Arimathea taking root and growing into a tree, when the saint reached the summit of Wearyall Hill on his landing in England to preach the Gospel. Ever afterwards the Thorn was said to blossom at Christmas. One popular form of the legend makes the flowers suddenly burst open at midnight on Old Christmas-eve.

The following interesting paragraph appeared in the *Western Flying Post* for January 15th, 1753:—By a Letter from Glastonbury we hear that a vast Concourse of People attended the Thorn on Christmas Eve, New Stile; but to their great Disappointment, there was no Appearance of its blowing, which made them watch it narrowly the fifth of January, the Christmas-Day, Old Stile, when it blowed as usual and in one Day's Time was as white as a Sheet, to the great Mortification of many Families in that Neighbourhood, who had tapp'd their Ale eleven Days too soon.

In the same year an unknown author published at the price of 1d a small book, entitled "The Wonderful Works of God, Shewing the difference between the Old Christmas and the New, which appears by the Holy Thorn that grows in Glastonbury Field in Somersetshire, which upon the 5th day of January last, 1753, being Old Christmas Day, was in the full bloom, and there was a great many Gentlemen and Ladies from all parts of England to see the beautiful Thorn where Joseph

of Arimathea pitched his staff, within two miles of Glastonbury, to the great surprise of the spectators, to see it bud, blossom and fade at the hour of twelve, on Old Christmas Day, where a sermon was preached at the same time, by one Mr. Smith."

A correspondent of "Notes and Queries," writing some twenty years ago, says that on Old Christmas-day he met, in a North Somerset village, a girl, who told him she was going to see the Christmas thorn in blossom. He went with her to an orchard, where in the hedge was a tree, said to have been a shoot taken from the Glastonbury Thorn. He gathered several sprigs with flowers, and the girl's mother afterwards told him it was the custom for the lads and lassies of the village to gather under the tree at midnight on Christmas-eve to hear the blossoms open, "and as they com'd out you could hear 'em haffer (crackle)."

\* \* \*

Dr. Maton, in his interesting notices of the Western Counties, referring to the Glastonbury Thorn, has suggested whether it might not be a specimen of the common thorn, but originally brought by some pilgrims from the East. It has been also suggested that the "Holy Oak"—the "Cadnam Oak" of the New Forest—may be sprung from some oak introduced from some southern clime, and which has retained through generations its earlier time of budding.

Notwithstanding many unbelievers, there seems to be a large balance of testimony in favour of the fact that the present tree, which may be sprung from the older tree, buds in the depth of winter. Of course, few people believe that this happens on either Old Christmas-day or Christmas-day, and fewer still that "the Monks of old taught the rusties to stick this tree all over with buds, forced by artificial heat, upon the night preceding Christmas-day, which leaves, of course, withered during the day, and that the rusties, for the sake of éelat and pence, kept up the deception as long as they could."

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#### OFF-SHOOTS OF THE HOLY THORN.

A piece of the original Glastonbury Thorn is growing in a cottage garden near West Buckland Church, and is reputed to follow its parent's custom of flowering at midnight on Old Christmas-eve. About 15 years ago there was a special pilgrimage of curious sight-seers from Wellington and the neighbourhood, who visited the tree at midnight on Old Christmas-eve, but although flower-buds were visible these did not open, and I think very few of the visitors expected that they would do so. It seems very probable,

however, that given early cold weather, followed by a mild December and January, such as we have experienced this year, blossom buds might open as early as the first week in January, and old residents at West Buckland state that this has been the case in former years. Possibly modern scepticism is held responsible for the present failure of the miracle.

—W. S. P.

The eve of Old Christmas used to be a great time at West Buckland, where there is a specimen of the Holy Thorn, an offshoot of the famous Glastonbury Thorn. As lately as the latter years of the nineteenth century, it was common on the evening of the 5th to make the journey from places as far apart as Clayhidon and Langford Budville, from a radius of five or six miles, to see the Holy Thorn blossom. One who had not been on the pilgrimage could always be sure of but one answer to the question as to whether the thorn had done all that tradition had told of it. The reply was sure to be that "the tree burst out into blossom exactly as the clock struck twelve," and that "the flowers stayed out five or ten minutes, and then went in again." I was several times shown sprigs of the thorn next morning, with, certainly, buds fairly developed, and was expected to believe that they *had* been out. This bush, once a fine tree, stands in the garden of Victoria Cottage, once the Victoria Inn. (No, Mr. Editor, I *didn't* suggest that that fact might account for the popularity of the pilgrimage.) The owner of the place, when it became a private residence, found the "pilgrims" a perfect nuisance on Old Christmas-eve, and was obliged to put up a board fence to prevent unwanted incursions on his property, which usually resulted in considerable damage. The tree, which had become rather dilapidated through so many taking slips as souvenirs, is now regaining its former healthy look, and blossoms beautifully in January or February (or sometimes later, in a very bitter winter), but the pilgrimage has entirely lost its popularity, and scarcely anyone now asks to see the famous thorn.

There is another scion of the original Holy Thorn growing at Whitestaunton, near Chard, and I have known of people going from Churchstanton to visit that one; whilst many years ago no-one would work beyond the necessary Sunday work on Old Christmas-day. I have frequently been appealed to to confirm the upholding of that day as the "real" Christmas: "Must be the right day, doant 'ee think, else the thorn wouldn't bloom then."

The native of Somerset is not alone in his veneration for "The Thorn." It is related of a village in Buckinghamshire that one winter when the local descendant of St. Joseph's staff did not bloom at Christmastide, the villagers declared the almanac must be wrong, and would not attend the service due to be held at church, which had to be postponed till the Thorn *did* bloom.

—F. W. MATHEWS.

#### THE ASHEN FAGGOT.

The burning of a large ashen faggot on both Old and New Christmas Eve is a very ancient ceremony, generally observed in West Somerset. The late Mr. F. T. Elworthy said "We know nothing of a Yule Log in the West. The large faggot burnt at the merry-making on Christmas Eve, both Old and New, is always made of ash. It is from the carouse over the ashen faggot that farmers with their men and guests go out to wassail the apple trees on Old Christmas Eve. Why ash is *de rigueur* I have never been able to find out, but the custom of burning that wood is probably as old as Saxon times. The faggot is always specially made with a number of the ordinary *halse bands*, or hazel withes, and in many cases, if large, it is bound with chains as well, to prevent its falling to pieces when the binds are burnt through. It is usual to call for fresh drink at the bursting of each of the withes."

Mr. C. H. Poole, in his Customs, Superstitions, &c., of Somerset, says the faggot is composed of ashen sticks, hooped round with bands of the same tree, nine in number. Every time the bands crack by reason of the heat of the fire, all present are supposed to drink liberally of cider or egg-hot, a mixture of cider, eggs, &c. The reason why ash is selected in preference to any other timber is, that tradition assigns it as the wood with which Our Lady kindled a fire in order to wash her new-born Son.

A variation of this tradition given in some parts of West Somerset is that the Blessed Virgin being cold and suffering from the scanty shelter of the stable, St. Joseph collected a bundle of sticks to make a fire, but selected ash twigs in preference to others because he knew they were the only green ones that would burn.

A correspondent informs us that when he was a child his mother told him that the reason why an *ashen faggot* is burnt on Old Christmas-eve is that sticks from this tree were used to heat the water when Christ was born.

In many farm-houses the last end of the ash stick which remains unburnt is kept to light

next year's faggot with; and it is frequently placed in the cow stall to bring good luck in rearing calves through the year.

#### ASHEN FAGGOT BALL.

In several of our West Somerset towns it was customary to hold an "Ashen Faggot Ball" early in the New Year, and the following extracts from old newspapers are fairly typical of many such paragraphs to be found in the files of our local papers. For the first of these two paragraphs we are indebted to Mr. L. St. George Gray:—

THE ASHEN FAGGOT BALL, TAUNTON.—We read in the *Western Flying Post* that this ball, held at the Castle, Taunton, on January 2nd, 1826, "was most respectably attended by the principal families of the town and neighbourhood." Another of these balls, held at the same place on January 1st, 1827, "was attended by upwards of one hundred persons of fashion and respectability. Under the truly polite and assiduous attentions of F. N. Rogers, Esq., who officiated as steward, the company kept up the entertainment with much spirit until a late hour."

TAUNTON.—The Ashen Faggot Ball, on Wednesday night (January 7th) has not been so numerously and fashionably attended for several years past; at one time there were not less than four hundred in the room, and among them were nearly all the leading families in the neighbourhood. . . . The music was spirited, novel, and highly pleasing, and performed with the accustomed skill of Summerhayes's band.—*Western Flying Post*, January 10th, 1846.

#### WASSAIL SONGS.

The very old custom of "waits" singing the "wassail" was kept up with much spirit in the quaint old town of Henester until a year or so ago, and its discontinuance can probably be traced to the war, which can be said to claim another "victim" in this custom of the "good old times." For generations a party of villagers would sally out on the eve of Old Christmas-day (January 5th) and sing in true Somerset dialect a series of old-fashioned verses at the residences of the principal inhabitants. These were rendered to regular tunes, the first being of the "rollicking" type and another of the "dirge" variety. The verses, which we print below, made two songs, one chiefly referring to "Old English Fare" and the other to the trials and troubles of some village worthy or "oldest inhabitant," who lived many years ago, and whose memory was kept green,

probably unwittingly in later years, by succeeding generations in the village.

“WASSAIL.”

I.

'Tis our Wassail all over the Town,  
The Cup is so white, and the Ale is so brown.  
'Tis your Wassail—'Tis our Wassail,  
And Jolly come to our Jolly Wassail,  
And Jolly come to our Jolly Wassail.

Now, Master and Missus, if you be so well pleased,  
Bring out your Brown Bread and your raw milk  
cheese.

'Tis your Wassail—'Tis our Wassail,  
And Jolly come to our Jolly Wassail,  
And Jolly come to our Jolly Wassail.

The Cup it is made of the Nation's Tree,  
And the Ale it is made of the best of Barlee.  
'Tis your Wassail, &c.

Maid, Maid, with the Silver peg,  
Pray open the Door and show us your leg.  
'Tis your Wassail, &c.

Maid, Maid, with the Silver pin,  
Pray open the door and let us all in.  
'Tis your Wassail, &c.

There was an old man, and he had an old cow,  
And how for to kip 'um he didden know how ;  
So he built up a Barn, to keep his cow warm.  
Harm, boys, Harm !  
A little mwore Cider will do us no harm.  
Harm, Boys, Harm !  
A little mwore Cider will do us no harm.

II.

Old Jarge Marle is dead and gone,  
Which grieved my heart full sore,  
Which grieved my heart full sore  
Which grieved my heart full sore.

He used to wear an old grey Coat,  
Beach Buttons down before,  
Beach Buttons down before,  
Beach Buttons down before.

He bought Seven Yards and half of Sarge,  
My Waistecoat for to do,  
My Waistecoat for to do,  
My Waistecoat for to do,

He bought Seven Yards and half mwore Sarge  
And spwiled my Waistecoat, too.  
And spwiled my Waistecoat, too.  
And spwiled my Waistecoat, too.

He stole away the Post and Rails,  
Which stood before my Plain,  
Which stood before my Plain,  
Which stood before my Plain.

I tied him to the Whipping Post,  
 And *Scourged* him for the crime,  
 And *Scourged* him for the crime,  
 And *Scourged* him for the crime.

I wish I was some Brewer's Hoss,  
 Or else some Brewer's Mare,  
 Or else some Brewer's Mare,  
 Or else some Brewer's Mare.

I'd jump into the mashing tub,  
 And drink up ALL the Beer,  
 And drink up ALL the Beer,  
 And drink up ALL the Beer.

F. BEEL.

### A CURIOUS OLD SONG.

At a party on Old Christmas-eve I once heard the following song, which took a considerable time in the singing, and called for a good memory on the part of the singer. It was of the cumulative type, of the "House-that-Jack-built" style. In taking it down afterwards, and noting the zoological category of the gifts, I suggested that I had perhaps mis-heard the ending of the fifth line, possibly it was "golden wrens," but my friend would have none of it, it was "golden rings"—so there I left it.

"On the first day of Christmas my true love sent to me, a part of a juniper tree.  
 On the second day of Christmas my true love sent to me, two turtle doves and a part of a juniper tree.  
 On the third day of Christmas my true love sent to me, three French hens, two turtle doves, &c.  
 On the fourth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, four collie birds, three French hens, &c.  
 On the fifth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, five golden rings, &c.  
 On the sixth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, six geese a-laying, &c.  
 On the seventh day of Christmas my true love sent to me, seven swans a-swimming, &c.  
 On the eighth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, eight hares a-running, &c.  
 On the ninth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, nine bears a-biting, &c.  
 On the tenth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, ten ladies a-dancing, &c.  
 On the eleventh day of Christmas my true love sent to me, 'leven lords a-leaping, &c.  
 On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love sent to me, twelve bulls a-blaring, 'leven lords a-leaping, ten ladies a-dancing, &c., . . .  
 and a part of a juniper tree.

F. W. MATHEWS.

\* \* \*

About 15 years ago a resident of Catcott gave us the words of a song almost identical with



those printed above, which she informed us had until within a few years previously always been sung by the wassailers at that place on Old Christmas-eve. The following are the most important points in which the Catcott version differs from the foregoing:—

The first day of Christmas my true love sent to me, a partridge in a fair oak tree.

Eighth day, "Eight men ringing."

Ninth day, "Nine cows calving."

Tenth day, "Ten bulls baiting."

Eleventh day, "Eleven hares running."

Twelfth day, "Twelve ladies dancing."

In view of our correspondent's comment with regard to the fifth line, it is interesting to note that in the Catcott version this is also given as "Five gold rings."

### JAN. 6.—OLD CHRISTMAS DAY OR 12th DAY.

It was formerly believed that if Old Christmas-day came during a waxing moon a good year would follow: if during the waning moon it prognosticated a hard year, and the nearer the end of the moon the worse were the expectations.

It is unlucky to take down the holly used for Christmas decorations before Old Christmas Day, and it is still more unlucky to burn it. On the other hand another old superstition tells us the decorations *must be burnt* and not thrown away. Readers may take their choice.

It is said that if the sun shines before twelve o'clock on Old Christmas-day there will be an abundance of apple blossom and fruit during the year. Also if the sun shines through the apple trees on that day it will be a good cider year.

Miss Masey informs us that the men who formerly came wassailing at Enmore were invariably dressed as mummers: the disguise was usually rather thin, but it afforded much pleasure to all concerned. Large draughts of cider were always their reward.

Miss Alice King says: "On the festival of Twelfth Day, which in the West Country is always called 'Old Christmas-day,' no horse owner will allow a horse to be taken for use out of his stables. Anyone who rides or drives on that day is certain to meet with an accident, as it is believed that this day is the horse's special holiday."

There is an old belief that a mince-pie eaten in a different house on each night of the Twelves (*i.e.*, days between Christmas-day and the Epiphany), ensures 12 lucky months. A popular variation of this belief is practised in Somerset by young people, who try to taste as many as

possible of their friends' and neighbours' Christmas puddings, up to a total of 12, in the hope of securing that number of happy months.

This was formerly one of our great English holidays, and the occasion of a number of curious popular ceremonies, but it is now almost forgotten, the most recent relic of all its past splendours being the "Twelfth Cakes," whose sugared tops and quaint decorations formerly made such a show in our confectioners' windows. One of the most popular ceremonies connected with Twelfth Day was the election of "Kings" by beans. For this purpose a great cake was made in every household, and a pea and a bean were concealed in it. After it had been baked it was divided into as many portions as there were members in the family, and each drew his share by lot. Whoever got the piece with the bean in it was declared King, and whoever received the pea became Queen, and the two sovereigns afterwards appointed the various officers of their mimic court, and presided over the festivities.

Twelfth Day is also a season when superstition reigns supreme. Miss Alice King, who died in 1895, was long resident in West Somerset, and was a well-known authority upon local customs and beliefs. She says that on Twelfth Day, *i.e.*, Old Christmas-day, each farmer is supposed to double the allowance of fodder. Should he omit this duty, disaster in various forms will infallibly overtake him, as witness the story of the penurious housewife who once deprived the cattle of the extra provender allotted by her more liberal lord. What was the result? Blighted were the crops; barren were the hens; the cows kicked over the milk pails; her daughter lost her sweet-heart; and she herself met with an accident and broke her right arm. In some districts no master or mistress will allow servants or labourers to work on Old Christmas-day, which is—or was until recently—kept as a general holiday on the farms. Many farmers would no more think of taking out a horse on this day than they would on a Sunday. Miss King tells a story of a "terrible near woman," whose love of money tempted her to break the time-honoured custom, and who, on the morning of Old Christmas-day, instead of putting on her best dress and bonnet, and going to church, as all West Country good Christians do, she put on her second-best bonnet and her thick grey cloak, and had the horse harnessed, and put into her tax cart, and drove to the nearest market town to sell her butter and eggs. All went well with the dame at first; she disposed of all her wares in the most satisfactory way and at a high price. But on the way home a thick fog came suddenly on, after

the fashion of fogs near Exmoor, and when within half-a-mile of her home, her little horse started violently, upset dame, cart, and baskets, freed himself from his harness, and galloped home without them. The dame was picked up with a broken leg, from the consequence of which she limped all her life after. The conduct of the horse was attributed to supernatural intervention.

\* \* \*

Miss Masey informs us that another Epiphany custom was for the ploughmen to take their Twelfth cake and Wassail bowl into the ox-house and wassail the stock.

\* \* \*

That the old superstitions and customs have not yet died out in West Somerset was evidenced only this year. A washerwoman who was wanted to wash at a farm-house on Tuesday, January 6th (Tuesday being the regular washing-day), positively refused, and when asked why, said "It's unlucky; it's throwing soapsuds in the Saviour's face." I have never heard this remark before.

—W.S.P.

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#### LICENSED VICTUALLERS' OPEN HOUSE.

In many villages in Somerset it is the custom, or at least it was before the war, for the landlord of the village inn to keep "open house" for one night. The custom was usually observed on "Twelfth" night, and then all and sundry, who cared to do so, were invited to partake of "Mine host's" hospitality. Farmers in the neighbourhood usually brought with them an Ashen faggot, and these were in turn placed upon the fire—often an open hearth—and the night was given over to conviviality. On that particular night it could not be said that village life was dull, at least for a section of the community, for the fun was fast and furious. It would be interesting to learn in what villages, if any, the custom still survives.

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#### OLD CHRISTMAS DAY OR TWELFTH DAY.

We are indebted to the Rev. Father Ethelbert Horne for the following interesting note:—

This is the heading under January 6th in your last week's "Calendar of Customs." As a matter of fact, the two titles have nothing whatever to do with one another, and I doubt if any of the interesting customs you describe relate to

Old Christmas-day (as such) in any way at all. The term "Old Christmas-day" was unknown before the year 1752. For many centuries (Venerable Bede wrote about it in 730) it was known that the sun and the calendar in use up to 1582 were at variance. That is to say, for example, that the two days in the year when the days and nights are of exactly equal length did not fall on the two dates in the calendar when they should, but were as much as ten days out. The old church calendar counted  $365\frac{1}{4}$  days in the solar year, but this was a slightly incorrect calculation, and in four years would amount to an error as much as a whole day too little. By a brief, dated March, 1582, Pope Gregory XIII. pointed this out to the whole civilised world, and suggested the remedy that had been worked out for him by the greatest astronomers of that age. The Gregorian calendar was at once taken up by the countries of Europe, but England, inasmuch as the reform had been instituted by a Pope, would have nothing to do with it. It was not until the year 1750, under George II., that an Act of Parliament was made correcting the calendar for this country. It was enacted that the day following September 2nd, 1752, was to count as September 14th, thus dropping eleven days out of the year. By this means the calendar once more preserved its correspondence with the seasons, but the change, which had been resisted so long in England, on account of its Popish origin, was only received at last with considerable opposition. Bands of persons went about shouting "Give us back our eleven days," "No Popery," and threats that they would take no notice of the change when the Government made it. Christmas-day, as the most popular of English holidays, was kept for some time after the change twelve days later, and called "Old Christmas-day," and in this West Country many of the old people still consider that January 6th is the real Christmas-day. January 6th is the Feast of the Epiphany, or the day when the visit of the Magi, or three Kings, was made to the new-born Saviour. The Catholic Church has always counted this as one of the greatest feasts of the year, as this "Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles" showed that His religion was not to be for the Jewish race alone (as the Jews expected it to be), but for the whole world. On this day a semi-religious ceremony of electing a boy-king took place in our old public schools; there were special services, in which Royalty took part, in all the Christian courts of Europe, and the day was everywhere observed (as it still is by the Catholic Church) as a Sunday, with the obligation of hearing Mass and resting from

certain classes of work. The grandly decorated cakes—often gilt in part—represented the gifts of the three kings, and the mince-pies, originally eaten on this day and not at Christmas, also typified the boxes in which the Magi brought their offerings. It must be remembered that the Epiphany brought to a close the Christmas holiday and festivities, and as the last and crowning day of this great season, it was kept with even greater social gaiety than Christmas-day itself. The names Twelfth Day and Twelfth Night, as applied to the Epiphany, were popular names, and were at least as old as the tenth century, and were obviously given to a day that fell on the twelfth from Christmas.

I hope I may have made it clear that the customs your correspondents describe have nothing whatever to do with "Old Christmas-day," which is merely a term surviving from a rather disgraceful outbreak of ignorance and bigotry on the part of our ancestors, some 160 years ago, but that they gathered round the Church festival of the Epiphany, which had been kept, in varying forms, from the fourth century.

—ETHELBERT HORNE.

January, 1920.

\* \* \*

In reference to the Rev. Father Ethelbert Horne's note in last week's issue as to Old Christmas-day or Epiphany a correspondent has kindly sent us the following extract from an article by Miss Alice King, which appeared in "Home Chimes" for December, 1891:—"The grandfather tells us especially about the customs and beliefs in the West-country with regard to what he calls 'Old Christmas-day,' which is, in fact, the Festival of the Epiphany. Many of the old West-country folk regard this day with peculiar affection and veneration; they have evidently an inward and firm belief that this is the right Christmas-day after all. The old man tells us how, on Old Christmas-eve, the mummers used to wander from farm to farm to enact their strange, old-world plays in every farmhouse kitchen. The villain of the piece was always a diabolically-minded individual called 'The Turkish Knight,' who always got hard poetical justice dealt out to him at the end of the performance in the shape of sundry kicks and cuffs. The heroine was forcibly represented by a handsome lad, who raised his petticoats in the dance, with which it was *de rigueur* to end the entertainment, in quite a ballet-like style."

**JAN. 7.—MUCHELNEY ABBEY DEDICATED,  
939.**

Athelstan, in gratitude to God, formed and endowed a number of religious houses, Muchelney being one of them. The church was dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul on the 7th January, 939. It was under the Benedictine rule, as were Glastonbury and Athelney, and the head of it was a mitred abbot, though he had no seat in Parliament. It gradually became a very wealthy house, and at the Dissolution, in 1538, is said to have been worth close on £500, perhaps £3,000 or more in these days, per annum. On the 1st January, 1538, the Monastery and Manor, with the lands, were granted to the Earl of Hertford, Duke of Somerset. There then belonged to the Abbey the manors of Muchelney, Drayton, Westover, Earnshill, Camel, Donyatt, Ile Abbot, Ilminster, Hylcombe, Fivehead, Chypstapul, Middleness, Yeovil, Hechester, Milton, Marston, Langport, and Andresey: 10,000 messuages, 30,000 acres of land, 5,000 acres of furze and heath, and £100 rent, and the rectories of Muchelney, Drayton, Ile Abbot, Ilminster, Hilton, Horton, Fivehead, Somerton, Morton, Merriott, and Chypstapul. Little of the Abbey is now left above ground but a part of the domestic building.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**JAN. 9.—ST. BRITHWALD.**

Though the name of St. Brithwald has been removed from the English Calendar, it still remains in the Roman hagiology on January 9th; and indeed he well deserves to be had in loving remembrance. He was educated at Glastonbury, of which he rose to be Abbot, and he subsequently became Archbishop of Canterbury. The Saxon *Chronicle* speaks of him as the *first* English Archbishop of Canterbury, but Mrs. Boger, in her "Myths, Scenes, and Worthies of Somerset," shows that he was probably the *second* Englishman who filled Augustine's Chair. Brithwald was consecrated Archbishop on Sunday, June 29th, 692, and installed in his Cathedral on Sunday, August 31st.

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**JAN. 10.—F. T. ELWORTHY BORN, 1830.  
PENNY POST INTRODUCED, 1840.**

We hope that none of our readers will consider we are departing from the lines we laid down for the compiling of this Calendar if we refer

under this date to two events which we consider too important to be passed over.

#### MR. F. T. ELWORTHY.

It was on January 10th, 1830, that the late Mr. F. T. Elworthy was born. His knowledge of, and interest in, our West Somerset dialect, customs, superstitions, sayings, &c., were probably unequalled, and he will long be remembered by the scholarly works which he published on these and kindred subjects. He was a frequent contributor to our own "Notes and Queries" columns up to a short time before his death. In the "Evil Eye" he quotes from a curious little black-letter book, published in 1612, which gives a chapter headed "Of the infortunate and fatal dayes of the yeare," &c., in which the infortunate days of the first four months were given as follows:—

January the 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 15, 17, 19.

February the 8, 10, and the 17.

March the 15, 16, and the 19.

April the 16 and 21. Not so cuill the 7, 8, 10, 20.

In a footnote referring to January 10th, Mr. Elworthy said "The present writer has no practical reason to complain of this day, during the many "happy returns of it," for which he has given thanks.

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#### THE PENNY POST.

It was on January 10th, 1840, that the Penny Postage was first introduced, and letters could be sent to and from any part of the country for so small a sum. "Cary's English Atlas," dated January 1st, 1793, gave a list of the principal post towns in Somerset, with the cost of postage, and the time of arrival from and departure to London at that date. The rates for Bath, Frome, and Ilminster, were there given as 7d; Bridgwater, Bruton, Castle Cary, Chard, Crewkerne, Glastonbury, Ilchester, Langport, Shepton Mallet, Somerton, Taunton, Wellington, Wells, Yeovil, 8d; and Minehead, 9d. Against this the "London Directory," published in 1791, gave a list of the post towns in England, the Postmasters' names and the price of postage of a "single letter" (that is a single sheet of letter paper, without envelope or enclosure to or from London), and in this publication the postage between Ilminster, Wells, Frome, Wincanton, and London was given as 5d. The "Castle Cary Visitor" states that in 1793 there were only four mails each week to and from London, and the postage of a "single letter" was 6d.

In his "Heart of Mendip" the late Mr. Frank Knight states that an interesting entry in the

Burrington register in 1821 shows that in that year the postage of a letter from Wedmore to Burrington (some eight or ten miles across country) amounted to 8d. It appears to the writer, however, that as the letter seems to have come *from* Wedmore and the charge was paid at Burrington the postage could not have been pre-paid and presumably the letter was charged at a higher rate in consequence.

We have searched the files of the *Taunton Courier* and other Somersetshire papers of 80 years ago in the hope of obtaining some information of local interest with regard to the innovation, but we find very little indeed relating to Somersetshire. The *Courier* apparently makes no reference whatever to the change as it affected the Post-office in Taunton or in any other town in the district, although it quotes from Bath, London, Edinburgh, Dublin, and other newspapers as to the effect upon the work of the Post-office in those cities. In Bath the number of letters which passed through the post was quadrupled on the day the penny postage came into force.

### JAN. 12.—PLOUGH MONDAY.

The first Monday after Twelfth-day is called Plough Monday, and owes its name to the fact that in the "good old times" this was the first day after Christmas on which husbandmen returned to their work. On the night of this day many farmers used to give their men a good supper and strong ale. Before commencing work for the day the agricultural labourers were accustomed to go about in procession, often dressed as mummers, and dragging from house to house a plough decked with ribbons. Verses were sung on the way and outside the principal houses, and money was asked for to be spent in conviviality. If at any house a contribution was refused the ploughshare would often be driven into the earth before the door, and with all the labourers pulling together the ground in front of the house soon resembled a ploughed field. Formerly the proceedings also included a dance with swords. Hone, writing in 1832, said "In a very few places they still drag the plough, but without the sword dance or any mumming."

\* \* \*

The following paragraph appeared in the *Daily News* of Monday, January 10th, 1919:—  
It is Plough Monday to-day, but to the vast majority of our modern countryfolk the term, I fear, will signify nothing. There were West Country districts thirty years ago in which, on this, the first Monday after Epiphany, the plough



went the round of the village in noisy procession, gathering money as it went, to be spent in revels more or less Bacchanalian in character. You can't hitch old-world sentiment of this kind to a motor tractor. And so the only thing left to remind us that to-day is "the herald of the ploughing season" is the fact that, in theory, it is the day on which the Christmas holidays end and the studies of a new term begin.

#### JAN. 14.—BISHOP BECKINGTON DIED, 1465

Thomas Beckington was born at Beckington, near Frome, about 1390, and is said to have been the son of a weaver. Before his consecration as Bishop of Bath and Wells, in 1443, he held many offices in Church and State. At the time of his consecration he was private secretary to Henry VI. He was a magnificent prelate, and spent no less than 6,000 marks in building and repairing different houses belonging to the Bishopric. Chief among these buildings is the Vicar's Close at Wells. He erected the beautiful vicarage house at Congresbury, and was a liberal benefactor to Winchester and New College and to Lincoln College.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### JAN. 17.—OLD TWELFTH DAY EVE.

The glossary to the Exmoor dialect has "Watsail—a drinking song on Twelfth-day eve, throwing toast to the apple trees, in order to have a fruitful year, which seems to be a relic of the heathen sacrifice to Pomona."

\* \* \*

When I was a boy I remember going on Old Christmas-eve to several orchards in the district to hear men singing to the apple trees. They had previously scooped out the inside of a large mangold, making apertures to represent the mouth, nose, and eyes of a human face. A lighted candle was put inside the mangold which was then placed amongst the topmost branches. Several wassails were sung under what were considered to be the best trees, and the singers were then rewarded by the farmers with a plentiful supply of cider.

—B.T.A.

\* \* \*

In Aubrey's "Remains of Gentilisme" published as long ago as 1686 we read:—Memorandum that *non obstante* the change of religion, the ploughboies, and also the schooleboies, will keep-up and retaine their old ceremonies and customes and priviledges, which in the West of England is used still (and I believe) in other parts. So in Somersetshire when the wassaile

(which is on— I think Twelve-ave) the ploughmen have their Twelve-cake, and they go into the Ox-house to the oxen with the wassell-bowl, and drink to the ox with crumpled horne, that treads out the corne; they have an old concerned rhythme; and afterwards they goe with their wassel-bowle into the orchard and goe about the trees to blesse them, and putt a piece of tost upon the roots in order to it.

\* \* \*

#### “ WASSAILING ” APPLE TREES.

With a tenacity that is surprising in the face of modern sentiment, or rather lack of sentiment, that old and once popular custom of wassailing the apple-trees on the night of January 17th still persists to some extent in the westernmost corner of Somerset. Less than ten years ago it was kept up with spirit at farms near Minchhead, and, although in the town itself interest in the custom has decayed, it cannot be said to have altogether fallen through. Even during the Great War, when many customs both ancient and modern were abandoned, wassailing was observed in the neighbourhood of Minchhead, and the elements still remaining may possibly cause the custom to blossom out fully again.

The wassailing of the apple trees has been annually performed up to a recent date not as a barren function, the mere keeping up of an old custom, but because many of the wassailers seriously believed that if the practice was omitted a poor crop of apples would assuredly follow. For the cider supply to fail is a most serious matter to a West-Countryman. Wassailing the apple-trees for luck is undoubtedly an ancient custom whose origin is lost in the hazy mist of time. The word “ wassail ” is derived from the Saxon “ waes-hael ” (health be to you), and the term was applied to a liquor composed of apples, sugar, and ale, anciently in great request at carnivals, hence in some wassail songs the allusion to ale. At Edington, near Bridgwater, on old Christmas-day, wassailers were wont to visit the farmhouses singing a curious Christmas song commencing :

“ Wassail, wassail, all round the town,  
The cup is white, the ale is brown;  
The cup is made of a good ash tree,  
And the drink is made of the best barley.”

In some parts of England Christmas-eve is said to have been the night for apple wassailing, while some writers on the custom mention any night between Christmas-eve and Twelfth-day, but in West Somerset Old Christmas-eve has been from time immemorial considered the proper night on which to invoke the bearing power of

the orchards, and it is curious to note that while other customs changed their dates when the alterations from old to new style was made in 1752 this practice in West Somerset did not change, and still continued up to very recent times to be practised on the 17th January, that being, according to the old calendar, the eve of Twelfth-day.

As observed locally in the Minehead district the custom is shorn of much of its old picturesque-ness, and has resolved itself into a parade of one or two orchards where 20 years ago perhaps 20 or more orchards might have been visited and the rites of firing through the trees and the singing of wassail songs religiously performed. At one time it was considered indispensable that a bonfire should be lit at the entrance to the orchard in which the ceremony was being performed and that hot cider, with toast floating upon it, should be drunk, a cup-full being thrown over the tree, and the toast being placed, as a sop to the robins, in the forked branch of a tree, the oldest in the orchard being selected for wassailing.

Some profess to see in the practice traces of past belief in tree spirits, good and bad, the noise, the firing of the guns, and the light being to scare away evil spirits and the toast a propitiatory offering or oblation to the good. Whatever may have been the origin of wassailing the apple-trees, its present observance leads no doubt to a considerable amount of drinking, and so is not that "straight-laced" custom that people would be inclined to look on with favour. Fortunately, there are many people, who, dwelling on the fact that such practices are of such venerable antiquity, would be very loth to see them wholly relinquished. The gun license has done more in killing apple wassailing than anything else. Years ago anyone might carry a gun, and most of the wassailers possessed old muskets or could borrow a gun to make a noise with, but now only those who have gun licenses can help in this most important part of the ceremony, and they are of a class that do not readily lend themselves to the keeping up of old customs.

—C.K.

\* \* \*

The conclusion of the Christmas festivities on the twelfth night after Old Christmas was formerly celebrated in many farm-houses by a feast after the style of a harvest supper, and by the singing of quaint old carols sung to the accompaniment of fiddle and bass-viol. This was succeeded by a visit of a good part of the company to the orchards, where a wassail was sung for the good crop of fruit, and a cup of cider

thrown over the oldest tree in the orchard as a libation.

Shots were fired into the boughs, from an old blunderbuss by preference, and a loud shout given, when all returned to the farm-house kitchen, for a drop more "to keep out the cold."

The custom of shooting at the apple trees is still kept up in West Somerset (one need hardly say that the drinking part is not omitted), and on the evening of the 17th or 18th of January a person out for a stroll will often be startled by shots and shouts proceeding from an orchard near by.

Appended is one version of the Somerset wassailing song, used in the neighbourhood of Wellington:—

Wassail, wassail, all round our town,  
Our cup it is white, our ale it is brown,  
Our bowl is made of the good old ash tree,  
So now my brave fellows, let's drink unto thee.

*Chorus*

Haffals, capfuls, dree bushel bagfuls,  
And a gart heap under the stairs.

Hip, hip, harrah (*ad lib.*).

There was an old man who had an old cow,  
And how for to keep her, he couldn't tell how,  
So he built up a barn for to keep his cow warm,  
And a little more cider won't do us no harm.

*Chorus*

Harm, me boys, harm; harm, me boys, harm,  
A little more cider won't do us no harm.

Haffals, capfuls, &c.

Down in an old lane there lived an old fox,  
And all the day long he sat mopping his chops,  
Shall we go and catch him, oh yes, if we can,  
Ten thousand to one if we catch him or not.

*Chorus*

Harm, me boys, harm, &c.

A poor little robin sits up in the tree,  
And all the day long so merry sings he,  
A-widdling and twiddling to keep himself warm,  
And a little more cider won't do us no harm.

*Chorus*

Harm, me boys, harm, &c.

A lady comes round with her silver pin,  
Pray open the door and let us all in,  
For this is our 'sail, our jolly Wassail,  
And jolly go we to our jolly Wassail.

*Chorus*

Harm, me boys, harm, &c.

Prolonged hurrahs to finish.

Our correspondent kindly sends us the music of the traditional tune, which we regret we are unable to re-produce, but, as he very truly remarks,

the tune does not matter much on such a jovial occasion. The main point is that you throw as much gusto as possible into the line "A little more cider won't do us no harm," and "holler out" the wish for "Hatfuls, capfuls, dree-bushel bagfuls, and a gurt heap under the stairs," as fervently as conditions will allow.

\* \* \*

The *West Somerset Free Press* for January 25th, 1896, contained an account of the observance of the old superstitious custom of firing the apple trees in the neighbourhood of Minehead, on the evening of January 17th, that being twelfth night, according to the old style. Shots were fired at the apple trees in the various orchards to induce them to bear a good crop next season. The wassailing song, followed by loud cheering, was then heartily sung, as follows:—

Old apple tree, apple tree,  
 We are come to wassail thee;  
 To bear and to bow apples enow,  
 Hats full! caps full! three bushel bags full!  
 Barns full! and a little heap under the stairs.  
 Hip, hip, Hurrah!"

Then the party moistened their throats with cider, which in most cases had been more than flavoured with elder wine, or some such cheering beverage, and after another song the party moved off to another orchard to carry out the same ceremony.

\* \* \*

The following interesting account of Wassailing in Somerset appeared in these columns in January, 1904, having been contributed by an esteemed correspondent who concealed his identity under the initials "H.K.":—

The old custom of "wassailing" or "singing to the apple trees" is, I believe, at the present time only observed in West Somerset and some parts of Devon. On Old Twelfth Eve (17th January), a small band of farm labourers, sometimes supplemented by the local blacksmith or carpenter, pays a visit to all the orchards in the neighbourhood to carry out this function of wassailing. The tour of the orchards generally begins about 7 p.m., when the men have left work; on entering the orchard they form a circle beneath the largest tree and sing the wassail song. This song varies in each parish, but in Minehead and the neighbourhood the following words are used, these not being sung, but recited in a high monotone by the whole party:—

Oh, apple tree, oh, apple tree,  
 We've come to wassail thee  
 In hoping thou wilt bear,

For the Lord doth know where we shall be  
 To be merry another year.  
 So merry let us be.  
 Let every man drink up his cup,  
 And health to the apple tree.  
 Oh, apple tree, oh, apple tree,  
 We've come to wassail thee,  
 To blow and to bear apples enow.  
 Hats full, caps full,  
 Three bushel bags full,  
 Barn-floors full, and a little heap under the stairs.  
 Hip, hip, hurrah.

Then a tremendous shout is sent up, and guns and pistols fired off, and a flagon of cider, with some pieces of toast floating on the top, is brought out. The toast is placed in a fork of the tree for the robins, some of the cider is sprinkled over the tree, and the rest goes to lubricate the throats of the wassailers. The next orchard is then visited, where the same performance is gone through. The custom is supposed really to be a relic of the ancient belief in tree spirits, the bad spirits being frightened by the noise of the guns and propitiated by the offering of the toast.

The same week a correspondent of one of our contemporaries, writing from Milverton, gave the following form of wassail song as having been sung at Ash Priors on Saturday, January 16th, 1904, in consequence of "Old Twelfth Eve" having fallen on Sunday in that year. He said the various orchards in the village were visited, and this was the song our rural friends lustily sang under the apple tree, as told to him by one of the party:—

Wassail, wassail, all round our town,  
 Our cup is white and our ale is brown;  
 Our bowl is made of good ashen tree,  
 And here, kind fellows, we'll sing to thee.

*Chorus:*

We'll sing to thee with all our heart,  
 We'll sing to thee before we part;  
 For it's our wassail, the jolly wassail,  
 And joy go with our jolly wassail,  
 The jingles and the jingles and the tenour of the  
 song

Go merrily,

Hurrah! Hurrah!! Hurrah!!!

There was an old fox down in a green copse,  
 Clothing his den and smacking his chops:  
 Shall I go and catch him? Yes, if you can,  
 Ten thousand to one you'll catch him or none.

*Chorus.*

There was an old man, he had an old cow,  
 How to keep him he couldn't tell how:  
 He built up a barn to keep his cow warm.

And a little more cider will do us no harm.

Harm, boys, harm.

And a little more cider will do us no harm.

*Chorus.*

Oh, lily, white lily, oh, lily white smock,  
 Please to come down and shut back the lock,  
 For it's our Wassail, our jolly Wassail;  
 Oh, lily, white lily, oh, lily white pin,  
 Please to come down and let us all in.  
 O, Missus and Master, O, now if you please,  
 Please to bring forth the white loaf and cheese.

*Chorus.*

The song completed, the party all joined in loudly exclaiming :—

Hatfulls, cupfulls, three bushel bagfulls,  
 And a little heap under the stairs.

\* \* \*

Mr. W. Elton says :—A bucket of hot cider with toast floating on the top is now sent out by the owner of the orchard, be he 'squire or farmer ; the toast is placed in the apple trees for robins to eat, while the cider lubricates the throats of the singers. They form a curious and picturesque sight, these men in their rough working clothes on a bright and frosty night, with the moon shining down through the bare and rugged branches of the apple trees on their scarcely less rugged features ; and if by chance there be a few inches of snow on the ground, the effect is perfect. One forgets that it is the end of the nineteenth century, and you fancy yourself assisting at a Druidical function of the dark ages. The whole company then march up to the back entrance of the house, singing a verse which ends with the line :—

So open the door, and let us all in.

Upon which knocking is heard, the door is opened, and the men come in. More cider is supplied, and dancing is indulged in, usually to the accompaniment of a somewhat asthmatic accordion ; if the maidservants of the establishment are many and comely, the visit is often prolonged. Cheers for the family bring the visit to a close, and the men troop off to go through the business again at the next orchard. It is astonishing that many of the older men really believe that if this custom were omitted, a poor crop of apples would assuredly follow ; and if a man is unpopular, his orchard is purposely avoided.

\* \* \*

The following short article appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* of Friday, January 17th, 1913 :—

To-night the orchards of West Somerset will echo with the wassail song.

It is a curious fact that while in Devon the apple-wassailing takes place on the eve of the twelfth night, in the county of Somerset, or at least in the western part of it, the festival occurs on the night of January 17th.

That means that for some inexplicable reason, when the calendar in 1751 was changed from the old style into the new the country folks in West Somerset took no notice of the changes as regards wassailing, and continued to visit the apple orchards on the eve, not of the new Twelfth Night, but the old one, January 18th, and the custom is still continued, though the wassailers have long ago forgotten why January 17th should be the night of all nights when the orchards should be most amendable to their noisy appeal for a lusty crop.

Hats full, caps full,  
Big bushel bags full,  
And a little heap under the stairs.

Around Minchhead, Alcombe, Dunster, Porlock, and the Hill Country generally wassailing parties usually are out "singing to the orchards," and there is much cheering, shouting, and gunfiring, with not a little cider drinking.

Indeed, it is recorded that on one memorable occasion, not very long ago, the farmers had been so hospitable, that when the revellers reached the last farm on the list, they were in that condition that they solemnly wassailed a lilac bush in mistake for an apple tree. That, however, may be taken as an incident by itself.

The apple trees are besprinkled with cider, and a toast dipped in the same beverage is left in the fork of a tree "for the robins."

The custom is an ancient one dating back probably to Pagan times, and the belief in tree spirits. The ceremony is to propitiate the good, and the noise to drive away the evil spirits that inhabit the trees.

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### JAN. 23.—ST. AGNES'S-EVE.

The feast of St. Agnes (January 21st) was formerly held as in a special degree a holiday for women. It was thought possible for a girl on the eve of St. Agnes, to obtain by divination a knowledge of her future husband. She might take a row of pins and plucking them out one after another stick them in her sleeve, singing the whilst a Paternoster. Lying down on her back that night, with her hands under her head, the anxious maiden was led to expect that her future spouse would appear in a dream and salute her with a kiss.



**JAN. 21.—ST. AGNES'S-DAY.**

We are indebted to Mr. W. C. Baker for the following interesting superstition:—On seeing the first new moon of the year you should salute the moon three times and say:—

New moon, new moon,

First time I seed 'ee;

Hope 'fore the year's out

Shall have something gi'd me.

The first new moon of the year is at 5.27 a.m. to-day.

**JAN. 25.—ST. PAUL'S-DAY.**

This is the festival of the Conversion of St. Paul. It is not necessary to repeat under this heading the lines quoted by Mr. Willis Watson in his introductory article, setting out in verse the prognostications our forefathers made with regard to the weather throughout the year, which they believed would be greatly influenced by the weather on this particular day.—Fair weather on St. Paul's-day betided a prosperous year; snow or rain betokened a dear year, and therefore an unfruitful one; clouds foreboded great mortality among cattle; and winds were supposed to be the fore-runners of war. Other days in the month of January enjoyed at different times a reputation among the old prognosticators for indicating the character of the weather which would follow, but none of them were anything like so generally held and believed in as the day of the Conversion of St. Paul.

**JAN. 29.—ST. GILDAS.**

Gildas Badonicus, known also as Gildas the Wise, or sometimes Gildas the Querulous was born at Bath in the year 520. He was educated at Glastonbury, where he took the vows and professed himself a monk. It is said that whilst he was here Guinivere sought refuge in the abbey from her husband's indignation at the discovery of her frailty. Arthur besieged the monastery but through the mediation of the Abbot and of Gildas himself, who was probably a relation, he was persuaded to receive back his wife and depart peaceably. For some time Gildas lived a hermit life on one, or perhaps both (passing from one to the other) of the Islands in the Bristol Channel known as the Steep and Flat Holms. But as old age came on he returned to the home of his younger days at Glastonbury, where he died and was buried about the year 581, or possibly later. He was an historian and reputed prophet—the most noteworthy characteristics of his writings (according to Mrs.

Boger) being "First, the melancholy despairing tone of every word in them, for, with the exception of the 'Lamentations of Jeremiah' they are perhaps the most sorrowful wail that was ever penned; secondly, the intimate knowledge they show of the whole Bible."



# FEBRUARY.

Wet February next comes by,  
With chill, damp earth and dripping sky ;  
But heart cheer up ! the days speed on,  
Winds blow, sun shines, and thaws are gone,  
And in the garden may be seen  
Up-springing flowers and buddings green.

W. HOWITT.

February was called by our Saxon ancestors Sprout-Kele, because, says Verstegan, the Coleworth, which was the chief article of winter sustenance of the husbandman, in this month began to yield out wholesome young sprouts. Its modern appellation it derives from the Februalia, or expiatory sacrifices which the Romans were wont to offer at this season.

It is the month of thaws, and is known to the Somerset native—as it is generally—by the expressive name of “February fill-dyke.” Its general character is moist, raw, and disagreeable, but it continually gives us signs of returning spring. The birds begin to mate, there is early music in the groves, and the snowdrops, “fair maids of February,” are generally fully opened from the beginning of the month. Then come the crocuses, “like drops of gold studded on the deep brown mould.” A West Country saying is “A February spring is not worth a pin,” and along the whole gamut of weather lore is heard lamentation about the results of a fair month. Snow or rain is to be preferred to sun, for

“If February give much snow,  
A fine summer it doth foreshow.”

Another is :

All the months in the year  
Curse a fair Februcer.

When gnats dance in February, the husbandman becomes a beggar.

It is therefore to be hoped that  
February fill the dyke,  
Weather either black or white.

Another version is :—

February fill ditch,  
Black or white (*i.e.*, rain or snow), don't care which;  
If it be white,  
It's tho better to like.

And

Violent north winds in February herald a  
fertile year. —W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

The need for a thorough soaking of the soil in February, to be succeeded by a dry sowing time in March, is felt to an intimate degree by the inhabitants of Somerset, who are so largely engaged in agriculture, and one often hears a doggerel couplet of the style of

“ If it rains in February every day,  
In June you’re sure of plenty of hay.”

The 2nd of the month is specially selected for distinction, thus :—

“ On Candlemas-day if the thorn hangs a drop,  
Then you’re sure of a good pea crop.”

At Candlemas, that is, between the New Candlemas (2nd) and Old Candlemas-day, the 15th, Somerset farmers have long been advised to “ sow beans in Candlemas waddle,” that is, in the waning of the moon.

This month usually sees the earliest primroses, but if picked in small quantities, they must only be worn on the person, and not brought indoors. To bring in less than a good big bunch would bring some misfortune, and many a little Somerset child, proud to bring the first primrose, has been shrilly told to “ earr they old things out o’ doors, doän ee bring em in yer, we doänt want no more bad luck in theäse house.”

The holly, almost exclusive to Christmas, New and Old, occasionally finds another use this month. February, the season of wet, is to the countryman the time also for rheumatism, and it is recommended to beat the afflicted portion of the body with a holly spray, to effect a cure. Heroic measure! the townsman would prefer to go to a druggist for a liniment.

—F. W. MATHEWS.

\* \* \*  
When it rains in Februer,  
’Twill be temperate all the year.

\* \* \*  
In February if thou hearest thunder,  
Thou wilt see a summer’s wonder.

\* \* \*  
February makes a bridge and March breaks it.

\* \* \*  
Februer doth cut and shear.

## FEB. 1.—CANDLEMAS-EVE. ST. BRIDGET’S DAY.

An old saying familiar among agriculturists in West Somerset used to be “ Sow oats when parson begins to read Genesis.” This is reminiscent of the times when country church-going people took a little more interest in their church than they perhaps do now, and all times and

seasons were regulated according to the Church calendar. This year Septuagesima Sunday falls on February 1st, and on this Sunday the book of Genesis is commenced to be read. Whether the land, after the past heavy rains, is this year fit for sowing oats or any other grain is another matter. Another similar local saying in respect to seed-time runs :—

“When the elm leaf’s big as a mouse’s ear,  
Sow your barley without any fear.”

—C.K.

\* \* \*

A Somerset superstition tells us that if every remnant of Christmas decoration is not cleared out of the Church *before Candlemas-day* there will be a death that year in the family occupying the pew where a leaf or a berry is left.

\* \* \*

We are indebted to the Rev. Robert Herrick (1591-1674), a Devonshire clergyman, for interesting records of many old customs and superstitions of which we should probably have had no knowledge to-day but for his writings. For Candlemas-eve he gives the following (amongst other) injunctions :—

Kindle the Christmas Brand, and then  
Till sunne-set let it burne,  
Which quencht, then lay it up agen,  
Till Christmas next returne.  
Part must be kept wherewith to teend  
The Christmas Log next yeare,  
And where ’tis safely kept, the fiend  
Can do no mischief there.

Down with the Rosemary, and so  
Down with the Baies and Mistletoe ;  
Down with the Holly, Ivie, all  
Wherewith ye drest the Christmas Hall ;  
That so the superstitious find  
No one least Branch there left behind :  
For look, how many leaves there be  
Neglected there, maids, trust to me,  
So many goblins you shall see.

#### ST. BRIDGET’S-DAY.

The Churches of Chelvey and Brean are the only ones in Somerset dedicated to this saint. But the county is peculiarly interested in St. Bridget, for it is said she came to Glastonbury about A.D. 488, and that she passed some years in a certain island called Beckery, where there was earlier still a chapel dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene, and that on her return to Ireland, shortly before her death, she left her wallet, her rosary, and her weaving tools at Beckery, which things, in consequence of the sweetness of her

memory, were there preserved as reliques and revered. Moreover, the chapel was afterwards known by her name, in which chapel there was, in the southern part, a hole, through which all who passed would, according to common belief, receive forgiveness of their sins. Beckery lies nearly due west from Glastonbury—it consists of a ridge of no great elevation, stretching from near the site of the present railway station to the River Brue. St. Bridget is fabled to have nursed St. Patrick at Glastonbury in his last illness, and embroidered his shroud for him. She is also said to have been buried at Glastonbury, although Kildare and Downpatrick in Ireland, and Abernethy, in Scotland, claim to have received her body. St. Bridget is pictorially represented as sitting with a bowl of milk in her lap, and a Glastonbury church tower bears a sculpture of what appears to be a dairy-maid milking a cow. Mr. Bligh Bond attributes this as representing St. Bridget, who is reputed to have possessed many good characteristics. It is said that “wild ducks, swimming in the water, or flying in the air, obeyed her call, came to her hand, let her embrace them, and then she let them fly away again.” In the Breviary of Sarum it is reported to be recorded that when she was sent a-milking to make butter, she gave away all the milk to the poor, that when the rest of the maids brought in their milk she prayed, and the butter multiplied; that the butter she gave away she divided into twelve parts, “as if it were the twelve Apostles,” and one part she made bigger than any of the rest, which stood for Christ’s portion, “though it is strange,” says Bishop Patrick, “that she forgot to make another inequality by ordering one portion of the butter to be made bigger than the remaining ones in honour of St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles.”

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## FEB. 2.—CANDLEMAS-DAY.

This is a most important day so far as weather lore is concerned, and there are scores of rhymes bearing on the subject. Most of them tell us deliberately that if Candlemas-day be fair we are in for much wintry weather. One well-known in Somerset is:—

If Candlemas-day be fair and bright,  
Winter will have another flight.

At Candlemas  
Cold comes to us.

On Candlemas-day  
You must have half your straw and half your hay.

If Candlemas-day be fine and clear,  
Corn and fruits will then be dear.

As far as the sun shines in on Candlemas-day,  
So far will the snow blow in afore old May.

If Candlemas-day be fair and bright,  
Winter will have another flight.

But if Candlemas-day brings clouds and rain,  
Winter is gone and won't come again.

Down Lopen way, where they used to grow a  
deal of flax, the rhyme was heard :

February 2nd, bright and clear,  
Gives a good flax year.

We don't want east wind on this day,  
because :

When the wind's in the east on Candlemas-day,  
There it will stick to the 2nd of May.

Don't forget that in Somerset it is always  
said that one must sow or set beans in Candlemas  
Waddle (wane of the moon).

And Wessex folk know that if the dew-drops  
hang thickly upon the thorn bushes on Candlemas  
morning it forbodes a fruitful year for peas.

Candlemas-day, on which is commemorated  
the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, com-  
monly called the Purification of St. Mary the  
Virgin, is the fitting conclusion of the Christmas  
season. The evergreens used to be kept up till  
this time in the houses, when they were taken  
down, the ho'ly and ivy being re-placed by box,  
which, at Easter, in its turn, gave place to yew.  
For every leaf of Christmas decorations left up  
beyond this time a goblin would appear to the  
untidy housemaid.

The day is so called because in the papal  
church a Mass was celebrated, and candles were  
consecrated for the church processions. It is to  
be noted that from Candlemas the use of tapers  
at vespers and litanies, which prevailed through-  
out the winter, ceased until the ensuing All  
Hallow Mass; and hence the origin of an old  
English proverb in Ray's collection :

" On Candlemas-day,  
Throw candle and candlestick away."

Candlemas candle carrying remained in England  
till its abolition, by an Order in Council, in the  
second year of King Edward VI.

There is a tale told by Voragine, in the " Golden  
Legend," how, on the Feast of the Purification,  
the people went, with great devotion, to the  
Church of our Lady at Glaston, amongst others,  
Herstan, the father of St. Dunstan, and Kinedrida,  
his mother, who was then with child of him :—  
" It was so that on a Candlemas-day, as all the  
people were in the church with tapers in their  
hands, suddenly all the lights in the church were

quenched at once, save only the taper which St. Dunstan's mother bare, for that burned still fair. Whereof all the people marvelled greatly; howbeit her taper was out, but by the power of our Lord it lighted again by itself, and burned full bright, so that all the others came and lighted their tapers at the taper of St. Dunstan's mother. Wherefore all the people gave laud and thankings unto our Lord God for His great miracle. And then there was a holy man that said that 'the child that she then bare should give light to all England by his holy living.'" This is the legend of Kinedrida, the mother of St. Dunstan.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON

\* \* \*

At New Year's-day, a cock's stride;

At Candlemas, an hour wide.

(Alluding to the gradual lengthening of the day.)

\* \* \*

On Candlemas-day

A good goose will lay.

\* \* \*

On Candlemas-day

Every good duck and goose ought to lay.

\* \* \*

That's a good goose that do lay

On Candlemas-day.

\* \* \*

Candlemas-day high or low,

Out the candles we must blow.

\* \* \*

Plant raspberry canes on Lord Mayor's-day (November 9th), and cut them down the first year on Candlemas-day.

\* \* \*

Apples, pears, hawthorn, quick, oak, set them at All Hallow Tide and command them to prosper; set them at Candlemas, and intreat them to grow.

\* \* \*

Miss Masey kindly informs us that at Ermore, and probably other churches, it was usual to keep up Christmas decorations until this date, and then remove them. Holly was always used in these decorations, and was believed to protect from lightning and to keep off evil spirits.

\* \* \*

The popular name Candlemas is derived from the ceremony which the Church of Rome dictates to be observed on this day, namely, a blessing of candles by the clergy, and a distribution of them amongst the people, by whom they are afterwards carried lighted in solemn procession. Henry VIII. proclaimed in 1539: "On Candlemas-day it shall be declared, that the bearing



of candles is done in memory of Christ, the spiritual light, whom Simeon did prophesy, as it is read in the Church that day!" It is curious to find it noticed as a custom down to the time of Charles II., that when lights were brought in at nightfall, people would say "God send us the light of heaven!"

It was regarded as an evil omen if the candles burnt in the church began to splutter. If any went out it was thought to foretell the worst of luck.

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### WEATHER PROVERBS.

If Candlemas shine  
Winter is behind.

If Candlemas-day be fair and fine,  
Half the winter is left behind.

[ On the eve of Candlemas-day  
Winter gets stronger or passes away.

On Candlemas-day, if the sun shines clear,  
The shepherd had rather see his wife on the bier.

If Candlemas-day be cloudy and black  
'Twill carry cold winter away on its back;  
But if Candlemas-day be fine and clear  
Then half the winter's to come this year.

If the sun shines on Candlemas-day hard frost  
is sure to set in.

As much ground as is covered with sun on  
Candlemas-day, will be covered with snow before  
Lady-day.

CANDLEMAS-DAY, February 2nd, according to  
a West Country superstition, is supposed to  
have an effect upon the severity or otherwise of  
the winter, as shown by the following couplet:—

"So far as the sun shines in the hall,  
So far will the snow fall in the stall."

Thus, if we have bright sunshine on Candle-  
mas-day, we can look forward to a plentiful fall  
of snow.

\* \* \*

A few evenings ago a friend in our house gave  
a version of the Caudlemas weather lore as:—

"Candlemas-day be fair and fine,  
Half the winter is left behind;  
Candlemas-day be dull and gloom,  
Half the winter is yet to come."

—F. W. MATHEWS.

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### FEB. 3.—ST. BLAIZE'S-DAY.

A charter of Queen Elizabeth provided for  
four fairs for Axbridge, of which the first was

on the Day of St. Blaize. This is still held, but is now known as Candlemas Fair.

\* \* \*

Beau Nash, who founded the modern prosperity of Bath, died at St. John's-place, Bath, February 3rd, 1761. The Corporation gave him a public funeral, and he was buried in Bath Abbey.

\* \* \*

The Hospital of St. John in Bridgwater (founded in 1216) surrendered to Henry VIII. on February 3rd, 1539. Having been expelled pensions were assigned to "the late master and Brethern of the surrendryde house of Seynte loones in Brydgewater. And they and every of theym to have their halff yeers percion at Thaurun iacon of oure Lady next comyng whiche shalbe in the yere of our Lorde godd 1539."

#### BISHOP BLAIZE.

A correspondent in "Notes and Queries" of 1900 tells us that the portrait of Bishop Blaise (Blase, Blaise, Blaize) was said to be suspended from every sign-post in Taunton. Blaise was a very great man, or rather a very great glorified spirit in the estimation of the Taunton weavers. They may even have had at one time a special altar of St. Blaise, as the weavers of Lincoln had in Lincoln Cathedral, for the sake of obtaining his favour more readily. It is recorded that Blaise invented weaving; that he was the principal patron of Ragusa, titular patron of the wool combers; and that he was tormented with iron combs and martyred under Lucinius in 316. The wool comb became the symbol of his martyrdom, and gave occasion, it would seem, to the wool combers to claim him as their patron. As the wool trade was such an important industry in the West, Bishop Blaise was a well worshipped personage, and, in some places, his name still continues to designate public-houses—there is one at Exeter—but Somerset does not seem to perpetuate him in this manner.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

Apparently for no better reason than the fact that the good Bishop Blaise was martyred in 316 by having his flesh torn from him by iron *combs*, he is popularly regarded as the inventor of wool-combing, and has always been the patron saint of the wool-combers, who formerly organised magnificent demonstrations on this saint's day in Bradford and in other towns engaged in the woollen industry. Apparently also for no better reason than the sound of the venerated prelate's name, it was formerly the custom to light fires

on the evening of this day on hill tops or other conspicuous places.

\* \* \*

Mr. A. L. Humphreys, in his "History of Wellington" (1889), says:—Until about forty years ago the festival of Bishop Blaize was regularly celebrated in the town on the third of February. The Bishop was the chosen patron saint of the wool-combers, and his festival was recognised in most towns where woollen materials were made. The ceremony here in Wellington was held at the Club-house of the wool-combers (The Bell Inn) or at some ale-house in the town. The Bishop was chosen from among the combers, and during the ceremony he sat enrobed in mitre upon a throne, with high candlesticks on the right and left, and boys with charcoaled faces stood in front, also bearing candles. The festival was kept up all night, and homage was paid to the Bishop by the combers during the time that he sat enthroned. The last Bishop Blaize festival was held at the house of Joseph Neath in Mantle-street. On that occasion William Eveleigh was the Bishop. The assembled company was always addressed in lines commencing thus:—

Behold our Bishop Blaize,  
Who first invented combing;  
Some say he has been dead long time,  
But now we're come to show him.

The ceremony was engaged in by wool-staplers, spinners, apprentices, wool-sorters, comb-makers, dyers, and others, and there can be no doubt that at one time this custom was one of great local importance, and what is known of it now are but the last flickerings ere it became extinct.

\* \* \*

It was formerly believed that by a charm in the name of St. Blaize a thorn could be extracted from the flesh, or a bone from the throat. It was only necessary to hold the patient and say, "Blaize, the martyr and servant of Jesus Christ, commands thee (in the case of a bone in the throat) to pass up or down; (in the case of a thorn) to come forth, and the command was instantly effectual." It is also said that the candles offered to St. Blaize were good for the toothache and for diseased cattle.

\* \* \*

A correspondent has kindly sent us the following paragraph which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* of February 3rd:—In the faith that it would ward off influenza, a little company of men and women had their throats "blessed" yesterday at the Church of St. Etheldreda, in Ely-place, Holborn. It was the feast of Candlemas, and the ancient ceremony known in Roman

ritual as the Blessing of S'. Blaze was performed after the lunch-hour service of Benediction. A notice which hung on the gates of Ely-place had intimated that the blessing would be given, and a number of people came to the thirteenth century church to see what would happen. The ceremony was very simple. A priest invited those who wished to have their throats blessed to come to the altar rails after the service, and very many of those present complied, kneeling to receive the blessing. A priest visited each person, and, laying two tall lighted candles across the throat in the form of a cross, invoked the aid of the Blessed Virgin and St. Blaze to keep away all harm. Traditionally St. Blaze is the patron saint of the throat. ———

### FEB. 5.—S.S. INDRACT and DOMINICA.

King Ine built a minster to the east of St. David's Church, Glastonbury, the seed of the Great Church of S.S. Peter and Paul of later days. He established the right of sanctuary; he built a monastery, and gathered together the hermit monks. He erected at least one of the two stone obelisks to mark the graves of many noble dead. He translated to the place the relics of St. Indract and his seven friends, who were Irish pilgrims to St. Patrick's tomb, murdered at Shapwick because the flash of their brass-topped staves was mistaken for gold. Capgrave relates that a pillar of light from heaven was observed overhanging the place of interment for three nights, by which miraculous portent their bodies were discovered, and so, by King Ine, were transferred to the Abbey of Glastonbury. William of Worcester, however, mentions that St. Indract was buried in the Parish Church of Shepton Mallet with a hundred companions.

Baring Gould, writing of S. Indract, says:—"Of old, on the 5th of February, were commemorated in the famous monastery of Glastonbury, S. Indract, S. Dominica, and nine companions, martyrs. He was of Royal extraction, son of one of the Kings of Ireland; but quitted all this world could give for the love of God. He left his country, with his sister Dominica or Drusa, and seven, or, according to another account, nine, companions, and settled at Skipwish, near Glastonbury, in Somersetshire, where they lived a retired and eremitical life. At length, some wicked men, thinking to meet with great booty, murdered them at night, and to conceal their villainy, cast the bodies into a deep pit. But a column of light standing over the place warned the neighbours that some sacred bodies lay there, and the relics were removed to Glastonbury, in the reign of King Ina."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## FEB. 8.—ATHELNEY ABBEY SUR- RENDERED, 1539.

The Rev. W. Hunt gives the following brief account in his Diocesan History of Bath and Wells:—"In some cases intimidation was tried; in others, agents were employed to bribe the abbots. Athelney was in debt £869 12s 7d, and shortly before the visitation the Abbot wrote to Cromwell sending him a statement of his debts, and asking him whether he had a friend that 'wolde lene iiiiij. or v hundred pounds without any prophet or lucour.' When the time came to take measures for the destruction of the abbey this letter was not forgotten. Cromwell and Lord Audley, the chancellor, who coveted the house, sent an agent to tempt the abbot to make advantageous terms. The report the man sent of his mission exhibits the way these creatures did their work. The abbot yielded to temptation. He and his eight monks surrendered February 8th, 1540." (1539).

## FEB. 9.—ST. APOLLONIA.

It was formerly believed that whoever said a prayer to the Virgin Saint Apollonia should have no pain in his teeth on the day of the prayer.

\* \* \*

A capital in Wells Cathedral bears a figure representative of a person suffering from the toothache. This probably refers to St. Apollonia—the patron saint of people with toothache. She is called by Butler "the admirable Apollonia, whom old age and the state of virginity rendered equally venerable." He relates that in a persecution of the Christians, stirred up by "a certain poet of Alexandria," she was seized, and all her teeth were beaten out, with threats that she should be cast into the fire "if she did not utter certain impious words," whereupon, of her own accord, she leaped into the flames. In the "Horæ B. Virginis," is the following prayer:—"O Saint Apollonia, by thy passion, obtain for us the remission of all the sins, which, with teeth and mouth, we have committed through gluttony and speech; that we may be delivered from pain and gnashing of teeth here and hereafter; and loving cleanness of heart, by the grace of our lips we may have the king of angels our friend. Amen."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## FEB. 10.

Mr. W. C. Baker kindly sends us the following couplet:—

If by the 10th the snowdrops are out,  
More snow through the month without a doubt.

**FEB. 11.**

An old rhyme says :  
 If the eighteen last days of February be  
 Wet, and the first ten of March, you'll see  
 That the spring quarter and the summer too  
 Will prove too wet, and danger to ensue.

**FEB. 12.—ST. EULALIE'S DAY.  
 SUPPRESSION OF TAUNTON  
 PRIORY, 1539.**

If the sun shines on St. Eulalie's-day  
 It is good for apples and cider, they say.

\* \* \*

Taunton Priory—says Hugo—derived its origin from the piety and munificence of William Gyffarde, Bishop of Winchester and Chancellor of England, about the year 1115. The House was founded for Black Canons or Canons Regular, of the order of S. Augustine, and was dedicated to the Apostles St. Peter and Paul. The Priory, immediately upon its foundation, was possessed of powerful friends, and soon became a wealthy and flourishing community. The surrender of the House was signed on the 12th February, 1539. "Not a pier of the noble conventual church, not a boss from the vaulted roof, not a fragment of tracery through which the light fell in soft and many coloured radiance upon the chequered pavement, not even the half obliterated lines of a sculptured slab that once told of saintly Prior or learned Canon, who had gone to his reward, and left the memory of his virtues to devoted and faithful hearts—not a solitary relic of that glorious whole has escaped the hand of the relentless despoiler. All is gone—and that it was ever there seems to the eye of sense but a dream of the imagination and a flight of fancy."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**FEB. 13.—"ORATOR" HUNT DIED 1835.**

A great many poor wretches who found themselves prisoners in Ilchester gaol 100 years ago had good reason to thank "Orator" Hunt for his efforts on their behalf. Henry Hunt was a Wiltshire farmer, and at one time lord of the manor of Glastonbury. In 1801, when the Buonaparte scare prevailed in Somerset, he offered to put at the service of the country the whole of his farm stock, valued at £20,000, and to equip at his own expense himself and three servants to join a volunteer cavalry regiment. He afterwards became a violent Radical, and engaged in the agitation for the reform and repeal of the Corn Laws. On August 16th, 1819, he

took part in the reform meeting at Peterloo, near Manchester, where about 90,000 people were present. The meeting was broken up by the military: 10 persons were killed and hundreds wounded. Hunt was arrested on a charge of unlawful assembling and imprisoned for three years in Hechester gaol. The way in which the gaol was managed and the prisoners treated at that time was disgraceful, and the exposures which were made by "Orator" Hunt were instrumental in bringing about many badly-needed reforms. He died at Aylesford, on February 13th, 1835, at the age of 62.

### FEB. 14.—ST. VALENTINE'S-DAY.

We are indebted to Mr. W. C. Baker for the following couplet, which connects with Valentine's day an item of weather lore more generally associated with Candlemas:—

If Valentine's day be bright and fine,  
Half the winter is left behind.

\* \* \*

A note in the *Observer* recently stated that nearly all the diseases of old standing have their special saints, either to cure or to protect. St. Valentine is said to be effectual in cases of leprosy.

\* \* \*

It is generally believed in the West country that the bird's pair on Valentine's-day. This belief is commemorated in the couplet:—

"This is the day birds choose their mate,  
And I choose you if I'm not too late."

or another version:—

"This is the day birds choose their mates,  
And I choose you for my sweetheart.

—W.S.P.

\* \* \*

St. Valentine's-day, the 14th, is of course a great day for young and sentimental folk, but the looking out for the postman with his missives of the two-pierced-hearts-and-paper-embroidery pattern is now altogether out of date, as happily is the vogue of caricature and vulgar cartoon which succeeded the sentimental type. Now almost the only survival of the former keeping up of the day is the jocular declaration that the first person of the other sex that you meet on Valentine's morning is to be your sweetheart. It is even whispered that girls have been known that morning before going to fetch the milk to look out of the window, and either to find some trifling duty indoors or to step gaily forth, accord-

ing, not to the state of the weather, but as to the personality of the passer-by.

In the neighbouring county of Devon, on the day before St. Valentine, village girls up to quite recent years plucked yarrow from a man's grave in the Churchyard, and put it under their pillow, believing, and hoping, that their future husband would appear to them in dreams.

In Dorset, on the Day, maids suspend in the kitchen a nosegay of early flowers tied with a true-lovers' knot of blue ribbon, and put that under the pillow at night.

—E. W. MATHEWS.

\* \* \*

What a host of memories the 14th February brings to the minds of the older natives of our county. The glories of St. Valentine's-day may have departed, but, like Tom Moore's vase and the roses the scent of the Valentine hangs round us still, and awakens in the minds of many an old couple the excitements, the tremors, the anticipations they experienced in their boyhood and girlhood. The Christmas card—up to the time of the war—had completely killed the Valentine. Whether the former will regain its hold upon the people is a doubtful question. But for years the Valentine held the sway. Every youth and maid sent Valentines, the post bags were packed to bursting point; the postmen were as heavily laden on the morning of the 14th as later on Christmas days. And the Valentine, though beaten from the field, died a sweet death—amid flowers, rare silks and satins, and delicate perfume. There were two classes of Valentine—commonly known as the "pretty" and the "ugly." The "pretty" was very very pretty, not to say charming; the "ugly" was very very ugly. The former were affected by nice people—lovers, and would be lovers; the latter by disappointed swains, by rejected Colins, and deserted Phyllises.

Many of the Valentines were positive works of art. The better ones were enclosed in a box covered with white moire paper. The Valentine was a cushion of white satin or silk filled with delicately perfumed material. Around the edges was an elaborate design of embroidered paper, and, at frequent intervals, silver Cupids, with bows and arrows, silver pierced hearts, doves, billing and cooing, orange blossom, lilies of the valley, roses, and true lovers' knots. Each and every Valentine—whether a "pretty" one or an "ugly" one—contained some poetry, in the first case of the amatory description; in the second of a satirical personal character. Here is the verse from a beautiful Valentine received by a sweet little miss some 40 years ago. The



lines are now being repeated to me by her, for she has never forgotten them although the sender of the Valentine was never identified :—

Shall I tell thee, dearest one  
 What most in thee I prize ?  
 It is not that sweet rosy mouth  
 Nor brightly beaming eyes.  
 It is no grace of form or face,  
 Though matchless every part ;  
 Thou hast a charm excelling all,  
 Thy gentle, truthful, heart.

The following lines were frequently met with :—

The rose is red, the violet blue,  
 Carnation sweet and so are you ;  
 And so is she who sends you this,  
 And when we meet we'll have a kiss.

The excitement of receiving Christmas cards was nothing compared to that shown by the recipients of valentines. They did not trouble as to who St. Valentine was. He might have miraculously healed the blind daughter of Asterius, who, accordingly, believed and was baptised with all his house ; or he might have been the St. Valentine who miraculously healed Chæremou, the deformed son of Craton, a Greek rhetorician living in Rome ; he might have been the Apostle of Rhetra and the first Bishop of Passau. One of the St. Valentines—there were several—although he never posed as a person who especially watched over lovers—was chosen as Cupid's representative, and for certainly 400 years had his devotees in this country. We in Somerset accepted it with considerable faith that the first maid met by a man on St. Valentine's-day was to be his valentine or lover, and the lore was equally applicable to a maid meeting a man. Of course we thoroughly believed that it was on that date that the birds choose their mates. This idea is expressed by Chaucer. So it is by Shakespeare who says in his "Midsummer Night's Dream :"

" Saint Valentine is past ;

Begin these wood-birds but to couple now."

The Somerset maids used to look out of the windows for their Valentines as did Ophelia who sang :—

Good morrow ! 'tis St. Valentine's-day  
 All in the morning betime,  
 And I a maid at your window  
 To be your Valentine.

No young people lay abed of their own choice on the morning of St. Valentine's-day in Somerset. They were up betimes to welcome the postman's knock. And if the bearer of the love messages were late misgivings of the heart were

caused, and many would, in thought, express the words on an old Valentine:—

“Where can the postman be, I say,  
He ought to fly on such a day;  
Of all days in the year, you know  
It’s monstrous rude to be so slow;  
The fellow’s so exceeding stupid—  
Hark!—There he is—Oh! the dear Cupid.”

It was Elia who declared that not many sounds in life, and he included all urban and all rural sounds, exceed in interest a knock at the door. . . . “But of all the clamorous visitations the welcomest in expectation is the sound that ushers in, or seems to usher in a Valentine. As the raven himself was hoarse that announced the fatal entrance of Duncan, so the knock of the postman on this day is light, airy, confident, and befitting one, that bringeth good the tidings.”

A Somerset custom was to always call a male child born on the 14th February “Valentine.” The blossoming of the yellow crocus was looked for about this time, the flower being dedicatory to this Saint. St. Valentine’s-day, too, was generally thought to “break the back of winter.” Hone states that formerly in the West of England young men used to go out together before day-light on St. Valentine’s-day with a clapnet to catch an old owl and two sparrows in a barn. If they brought them to the hostess of the inn before the ladies of the house had risen they were rewarded by her with three pints of purl in honour of St. Valentine, and enjoyed the privilege of demanding a similar boon at any other house in the neighbourhood.

The Valentine has disappeared. No longer are the hearts of pretty little maidens in Somerset fluttered by the arrival of the postman on the morning of the 14th February. No longer does the persistent swain look to St. Valentine to assist him in his task of winning a fair girl’s love, and no longer does the man who has played a lass false cower beneath a hail of “ugly” valentines, each one caricaturing him in picture or in verse—and some of them could administer very severe chastisement. The times have changed. We have become more prosaic. The lads and lasses tell their love to-day in a less romantic manner than through the medium of valentines. But some of us who are not so wise as to despise old legends and customs, are not ashamed to rank ourselves humble diocesans with old Bishop Valentine.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

On St. Valentine,  
All the birds of the air in couples do join.

On Valentine's-day,  
 A good goose will lay ;  
 If she be a good goose,  
 Her dame well to pay,  
 She will lay two eggs  
 Before Valentine's-day.

\* \* \*

On Candlemas-day,  
 A good goose will lay ;  
 On Valentine's-day,  
 Yours and mine may.

\* \* \*

#### ST. VALENTINE AND THE PIGEONS.

Although it has no direct reference to the county of Somerset, we think the following paragraph, which appeared under the above heading in the *Daily Chronicle* of February 4th, is of sufficient general interest to merit a place in our Calendar :—

There is, or was, a strange story which connects the London pigeon with St. Valentine's-day. As every believer knows, one never sees a dead donkey, so, too, every believer knows, or may be convinced, that one never sees a dead London pigeon—outside a police-court or a poulterer's shop. Yet the porters of the Middle Temple were accustomed to say, in the days of our youth, and may still do so, that they pick up dead cock pigeons sometimes on St. Valentine's morning in the gardens. Is there any tradition behind this which is not generally known ? ”

\* \* \*

A correspondent has kindly sent us the following notes on St. Valentine's day, which appeared in the *Daily Express* on the 14th. She informs us that she remembers the “posies” described in the notes, and that the lace-work had flowers woven in it :—

To-day is St. Valentine's-day. If it were not for the calendar few would know it. The approach of the day is now unheralded. In pre-war days it had degenerated into a shop-window display of ridiculous coloured caricatures with burlesque verses. These parodies of tender passions were interchanged between the humbler classes, and the postmen delivered so many hundred thousand more letters on that day than they did on ordinary days. But even this custom has almost disappeared to-day.

It is not so many years ago that St. Valentine's-day was kept with true and proper ceremony. An equal number of maids and bachelors got together and wrote their true or feigned names on separate billets, which were drawn by way of lots. The maids took the men's and *vice versa*, and so each drew a “valentine.” Festivities fol-

owed, and the little sport often ended in love.

Another custom was to cut curious patterns out of paper, very much like lace-work, inscribe it with a "posie," a rhyme of true love which had to be written round and round inwards until it centred finally in a bleeding heart transfixed by Cupid's arrow.

There are many old-world superstitions associated with St. Valentine's-day. In parts of Devonshire and Norfolk young people would perform queer ceremonies in order to find out who was their true love. In Devonshire peasants would go to the porch of the church on the eve of St. Valentine's-day and wait till half-past twelve, when they would scatter hempseed, repeating these lines:—

"Hempseed I sow, hempseed I mow,  
She (or he) that will my true love be;  
Come rake the hempseed after me,"

believing that his or her true love would appear behind in the act of raking up the seed in a winding sheet.

\* \* \*

But little is known of the saint who gives his name to this day, which Hone describes as "the first pleasant day in the year, whether its season be regarded or the mode of its celebration." Valentine was a priest of Rome, who assisted the Christians during the persecution under Claudius II., for which in the year 270 A.D. he was put to death, being first beaten with clubs and afterwards beheaded. There is nothing in the recorded history of this saint to connect him with the practices associated with this day.

A rural tradition, commonly believed in, says that the birds choose their mates on this day, and in consequence of this belief there sprang up a custom—centuries ago—of young persons choosing companions of the opposite sex on this day by way of amusement. It is more probable, however, that this custom really owes its origin to the pagan festival of the Lupercalia.

In olden times Valentine's-day was a great popular festival. On the previous evening companies of young unmarried folk—an equal number of young men and maidens—would get together, and each would write his or her true, or some assumed, name upon separate billets, which would be rolled up and drawn by way of lots, the men taking the girl's billets and the girls taking the men's, so that each of the young men lighted upon a girl whom he called his Valentine and each of the girls upon a young man whom he called hers. By this means each had two Valentines; but the man stuck faster to the Valentine that had fallen to him than to

the Valentine to whom he had fallen. It was customary to exchange presents between the parties thus connected by chance, but latterly the ladies were exempted from the obligation.

At a later period it became the custom for young unmarried persons to send anonymous poetical epistles to those whom they had chosen for their Valentines; whilst for those who could not write poetry, suitable missives bearing sentimental verses and appropriate illustrations (in which one or two hearts usually figured) were prepared and sold. Many of these Valentines were very elaborate and artistic, and perfumed with scent sachets. After a time these went out of fashion, and the "Valentines" exhibited in the shop windows for several weeks prior to February 14th would be hideous caricatures, with satirical verses printed upon single sheets 18 inches or two feet in length. Valentine's-day was always a busy day for the Post Office, and Hone, writing in 1826 (14 years before the introduction of the penny postage), said "Two hundred thousand letters beyond the usual daily average annually pass through the two-penny Post Office in London on St. Valentine's-day."

### FEB. 16.—COLLOP MONDAY.

A new charter was granted to the town of Bridgwater on February 16th, 1613, by King James I., allowing the right to hold St. Matthew's Fair for a period of three days and confirming all previous charters.

\* \* \*

Formerly on the Monday before Shrove Tuesday in the hill district of West Somerset (Withypool), the custom of "Drowin' o' Cloam" (crocking) obtained, the thrower departing secretly after the act. At Hawkridge the throwers said some rhyme and decamped. The residents followed to catch them, blackened their faces, and gave pancakes. At Wellington stones were thrown at doors. Do these customs still exist in Somersetshire?

—R.

\* \* \*

The day before Shrove Tuesday was formerly known as Collop Monday, from the practice of eating collops of salted meat and eggs on that day. A writer in the "Gentleman's Magazine" in 1790 says:—"Most places in England have eggs and collops (slices of bacon) on Shrove Monday, pancakes on Tuesday, and fritters on the Wednesday in the same week, for dinner." A correspondent, writing in these columns in 1898, said that in many places at that time it was

still the custom to have eggs and collops for dinner on Collop Monday. A collop was a slice of meat salted or cured, as a steak was a slice of fresh meat.

\* \* \*

Mr. A. L. Humphreys, in his "History of Wellington," says a curious custom is that of throwing a handful of stones against a neighbour's door on the night before Shrove Tuesday.

\* \* \*

The following interesting extracts are taken from the late Mr. F. T. Elworthy's "Dialect of West Somerset" (pub. 1875):—"A very curious old custom, of the nature of a practical joke, is observed in the Hill district. On the night before Shrove Tuesday (last night but one of the Carnival), if the back door or any outer door of the Parsonage or a farm-house be left unfastened, it is quietly opened, and before anyone can stir to prevent it, a whole sackfull of broken bits of crockery is shot in the middle of the kitchen, or wherever the bearer can penetrate before he is observed. He then decamps and disappears in the darkness, generally unrecognised. People are, of course, apt to forget the custom at the right moment, and so have their houses half filled with rubbish, which it must have taken much pains to collect and prepare secretly, beforehand. I have failed to discover either the origin or meaning of this custom, called *drowin o' cloam*; but it is evidently allied to one practised in this neighbourhood on the same night—that of throwing a handful of stones at the door.

I am indebted to my friend, the Rev. Rowland Newman, Rector of Hawkridge, for the following:—The custom of throwing old *clome* on the Monday night before Shrove Tuesday is still continued in our village. Why it is done I cannot find out. The words they say when it is thrown at the door or inside the house are:—

Tipety, Tipety Tin, give me a pancake,  
And I will come in;  
Tipety, Tipety Toe, give me a pancake,  
And I will go.

The young men that are in the house (if there are any) rush out and try to collar the invaders, and if they are successful in their catch, they bring the prey inside and black his face with soot. After that they give him a pancake.

## FEB. 17.—SHROVE TUESDAY.

Shrove Tuesday was known as Panshord-day. Cock-fighting took place at Yeovil. "Threading-the-needle," combined with "clipping the church,"

took place at South Petherton. Do any of these customs still remain? Were any other dishes partaken of—other than pancakes on this day?

—R.

\* \* \*

The "Shepherd's Almanack" of 1676 stated "Some say thunder on Shrove Tuesday foretelleth wind, store of fruit and plenty. Others affirm that so much as the sun shineth on that day, the like will shine every day in Lent."

\* \* \*

Shrove Tuesday (this year the 17th of February) is the occasion of curious observances in some parts of Somerset. In the West of the county parties of children go around singing :

"Tippity tippity toe,  
Give me a pancake, then I'll go :  
Give me some, or give me none,

Up against your door I'll throw a great stone."

A stone or a shard is kept ready to carry out the threat, but is rarely used, for usually a pancake is given to the singers. Sometimes, in the case of a known niggard, the dole is not waited for, the stone is thrown, and a scutter of scampering feet denotes the hurried decamping of the serenaders.

In some places the parties go round on the night before Shrove Tuesday, and throw a handful of old chloam at the doors at the conclusion of the chanty. The young men in the house, if there chance to be any there, rush out and try to capture one of the raiders. If they do so, they take him indoors, and black his face with soot from the chimney back. Then they give him a pancake and let him go, smutty but happy.

—F. W. MATHEWS.

\* \* \*

Shrove Tuesday was the last day of feasting before Lent. Originally the church bell was rung at 10 o'clock to call parishioners to confession, after which they partook of a meal of fritters and pancakes. After the Reformation the religious significance of the bell-ringing was lost, and it was popularly believed to be merely a signal for people to begin to make their pancakes. An old lady over 90 told me : "At 12 o'clock the bell did hit out 'Pan, pan, pan, pan,' and you could see the women running from streets and gardens to start making pancakes, rapping the bottoms of the frying pans with spoons as soon as they could get to them, so that they made a pretty (*i.e.*, considerable) noise." Children were released from school and work, clasping hands in the street they would dance and shout, sometimes with joined hands forming a

great ring round the church. This was called "Clipping the Church."

The children sang :

Shrove Tuesday, Shrove Tuesday, when Jack  
went to plough  
His mother made pancakes she did not know how,  
She tised them she tossed them, she made them  
so black,  
She put so much pepper she poisoned poor Jack.  
Hooray !

If snow could be procured to mix the pancakes it was considered the mark of a skilful housewife, and a happy augury for the year. Happy too was the cook who could turn her pancakes by tossing them in the air and catching them neatly in her pan. Children were turned out of doors to see the pancakes tossed up through the chimney top, and came running back incredulous, only to be unjustly accused of having defective vision. In many cases, however, the labourers and their families waited until evening for the general feast of pancakes. —EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

"Let glad Shrove Tuesday bring the pancake thin,

Or fritters rich with apples stored within."

Thus said an old writer of an ancient custom which, unlike many other old time observances, shows no sign of decline in Somerset or elsewhere in the country. True, it may be divested nowadays of some of its appurtenances, but the principal feature—the making and eating of pancakes—survives as strongly as ever. As a season of feasting and merriment, Shrovetide was formerly of great importance, in Somerset as elsewhere. To what extent it occupied the people's interest may be gathered from a 17th century writer, who speaks of Shrovetide in this alliterative strain :—

"Sole monarch of the mouth, high steward of the stomach, prime peer of the pullets, first favourite to the frying-pan, greatest bashaw to the batter-bowls, protector of the pancakes, baron of the bacon flitch, earl of the egg basket." From time immemorial the pancake has been associated with Shrove Tuesday. There is a passage in Shakespeare: "As fit as a pancake for Shrove Tuesday"; and old Taylor, the Water Poet, in 1630, gives us a curious account of the keeping of this day :—

"Shrove Tuesday, at whose entrance in the morning all the whole kingdom is in quiet; but by that time the clocke strikes eleven, which (by the help of a knavish sexton) is commonly before nine, then there is a bell rung called the



pancake bell—the sound whereof makes thousands of people distracted, and forgetful either of manners or humanitie; then there is a thing called wheaten floure, which the cookes do mingle with water, egges, spice, and other tragical magicall enchantments; and then they put it, by little and little, into a frying pan of boiling suet, where it makes a confused di-small hissing (like the hernean snakes in the reeds of Acheron, Stix, or Phlegeton), untill at last, by the skill of the cooke, it is transformed into the forme of a flip jack, cal'd a pancake—which ominous incantation the ignorant people doe devoure very greedily.”

It is considered probable that the orgie of feasting which in past times marked Shrovetide was a last indulgence before entering upon the lean days of Lent, and it has been suggested that there being strict abstinence from meat all through the forty days, pancakes may have originated in the housewives' desire to use up all the dripping, lard, and grease in the making of these delectables. Then, to consume them, it was usual to call in the apprentice boys and others, and they were summoned to the repast by a bell which was known as the Pancake Bell. Anent this bell, it is often stated in accounts of Shrovetide that it was a general practice to ring a church bell on the morning of Shrove Tuesday as a signal to housewives to commence frying their pancake. In pre-Reformation days a bell was rung at this time with the intention of calling together the people for the ceremony of confessing and being shriven or shrove, according to ancient practice in the Church of Rome, but, from the introduction of Protestantism, this bell, which still continued to be rung in many places, acquired the name of Pancake Bell, or in some cases the “fritter bell.” Mention of the ringing of a bell on this day is occasionally found in parish registers, such instances occurring in Somerset, if the writer recollects rightly.

Why the pancake in particular should have become so strongly associated with Shrove Tuesday is not easy to say, but there was a tradition held in the Sherwood Forest district that when the Danes invaded that region all the men of a certain village ran off into the forest, and the Danes took possession of the Saxon women to keep house for them. This happened just before Lent, and the Saxon women, encouraged by their fugitive husbands, resolved to exterminate the Danes on Ash Wednesday. Every woman who agreed to do her bit towards this was to bake pancakes for their next meal on Shrove Tuesday as a kind of pledge to fulfil her vow. This was accordingly done, and that a

massacre of the Danes did take place is a historical fact.

Apart from the pancake custom, there were many other Shrovetide observances which took different forms in different parts of the country. That known as "Lent Crocking" was not unknown in Somerset, having been practised well within the memory of old folk of to-day. A number of boys, armed with potsherds and stones, and headed by a leader, paraded the villages, and at each door the leader would knock, and the lads would pronounce a doggerel rhyme, of which one version is as follows:—

"I've come a-shroving,  
For a piece of pancake,  
Or a piece of bacon,  
Or a little truckle cheese  
Of your own making.  
Give me some or give me none,  
Or else your door shall have a stone."

Chambers' "Book of Days" gives what appears to be a West-country version of the rhyme:—

A-shrovin', a-shrovin',  
I be come a-shrovin' ;  
A piece of bread, a piece of cheese,  
A bit of your fat bacon ;  
Or a dish of dough-nuts,  
All of your own makin'.

A-shrovin', a-shrovin',  
I be come a-shrovin' !  
Nice meat in a pie,  
My mouth is very dry,  
I wish a waz zo well-a-wet,  
I'd zing the louder for a rut."

This effort presumably degenerated by degrees to that which was sung in the Catcott and Edington district a generation ago. This was short and to the point:—

"Tippity, tippity-toe,  
Gi' me a pancake and then I'll go."

There was another Shrovetide custom, having no association with pancakes beyond eggs, common in Mid-Somerset schools, not far from Taunton, not much more than ten years ago, and perhaps later. The price of eggs would prohibit it from being practised nowadays. The custom referred to took the form of an egg-shaking competition, the schoolmaster offering a prize for the winner. The contest required that each competitor should bring an egg to school; all the eggs were placed in a sieve and each competitor in turn gave the sieve a shake. The eggs that were cracked each time were taken out, and so the fun went on until the competitor

who left the last whole egg was awarded the prize. The schoolmaster usually did well out of the custom, for he took the eggs as his perquisite.

H. W. KILLE.

\* \* \*

We think the following facts as given by the meteorological correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* in the issue of that paper for February 18th are worth recording in this column:—

“Until yesterday the highest maximum temperature recorded at Greenwich on February 17th, during the last 70 years, was 55deg., in 1849. The absolute highest February maximum in the same period was 57 deg., on February 28th, 1843. Yesterday the minimum temperature was as high at 45deg., and in the afternoon a shaded maximum of 60deg. was registered at Kensington Palace and elsewhere in London.

\* \* \*

Shrove Tuesday, meaning Confession Tuesday, was the day all people in every parish throughout the kingdom, during the Romish times, were obliged to confess their sins, one by one, to their own parish priests in their own parish churches, and that this might be done the more regularly, the great bell in every parish was rung at ten o'clock, or, perhaps, sooner, that it might be heard by all. The custom of ringing the great bell in our ancient parish churches—at Ilminster, for example—was observed, and was known as the Pancake bell, because Shrove Tuesday and Pancake-day are synonymous. Shrovetide was formerly a season of extraordinary sport and feasting. In the Romish church there was anciently a feast immediately preceding Lent which lasted many days. Among the sports associated with Shrove Tuesday were cock-fighting and throwing at cocks. These have died out, but the Pancake custom still remains.

At Langport a curious Shrove Tuesday custom used to be observed. Each child carried an egg to school that morning. The name of the owner was written on the shell and the eggs were put in a sieve and well shaken. The boy or girl whose egg remained uncracked was called the victor and was entitled to wear “the victor’s cap.” This was made of pieces of silk of many colours, locally called “crazy patchwork,” and was conical in shape, like a fool’s cap. The victor headed a procession of school children, who marched about the parish collecting money from the inhabitants. The victor was also entitled to carry the collecting bag. The money gathered was afterwards spent on cakes, nuts, oranges, &c. The practice was discontinued a few years before the advent of Board Schools. The custom

was called "Shackle Egg," and was also in vogue at Martock.

It has been stated that the small boys of Somerset used to go from house to house throwing stones against other people's doors and shouting:—

I be come a-shrovin'  
 Vor a little pankiak;  
 A bid o' bread o' your bakin',  
 Or a little truckle cheese o' your meakin.  
 If you'll gi' a little I'll axe no more;  
 'f you don't gi' I nothin,' I'll rattle your door.

Cock fighting was practised in Somerset, in common with other counties, and men of a couple of generations ago can well remember many a battle among the birds. In Taunton the sport—a brutal one—was carried on until comparatively recent times. There was a cock-pit here—somewhere near the station—and birds were specially bred and trained in this locality. So they were at Wiveliscombe, and Palace Green was also the site of a cock-pit. Lackington records that a former parish clerk of Langford, near Wellington, was called "Red Cock" for many years before his death, for having, one Sunday, slept in church, and, dreaming that he was at a cock fight, he bawled out "A shilling upon the red cock." Cock fighting was popular at Ansford, and it may be said that there were few places in the county where it was not carried on. It was abolished in England in the reign of Queen Victoria. Cock fighting has been associated with Shrove Tuesday certainly since the 12th century. Kings supported it as well as the people.

Pancake-day still survives, and the toothsome morsel is not likely to be easily supplanted. The youngsters revel in pancakes; so do the adults.

Crewkerne has a very special association with Pancake-day, because it was on that particular day of grace it earned a soubriquet which will attach to it for all time. What an honour! Several of the Wessex counties have secured the distinction—Somerset "Cuckoo-penners;" Devonshire "Dumplings;" Wiltshire "Moon-rakers." But in regard to individual towns, soubriquets are rare, and, therefore, the more to be esteemed. On a particular Pancake-day in the 'sixties the people of Crewkerne indulged in the delicacy peculiar to the season. Probably they did not realise they were perpetuating the old Roman Carnival for

"It was the day whereon both rich and poore  
 Are chiefly feasted with the self same dish;  
 When every paunch, till it can hold no more  
 Is fritter fill'd as well as heart can wish."

Upon this day the inhabitants allowed themselves one reckless form of amusement, and that was to assemble at various points to see the "parish squirt" manipulated. Water was obtained from the town pumps, and the Fire-master, from his perch on top of the engine, and with the aid of a branch-pipe, about five feet long, proceeded to wash the streets, and, incidentally, by accident, of course, well soused some of the youngsters who dared him to turn the jet upon them.

Well, in this particular year of grace, Pancake-day had been celebrated in the usual manner, the fire engine had been tested, and the Brigade had adjourned to a hostelry to refresh themselves after their wet and arduous duties. The Fire-master was in the chair with a glass of gin and water before him; his men were hiding their faces behind quarts of the well-known product of the local brewery. The gin and water disappeared, and the glass was replenished. The quart cups went backwards and forwards to and from the cellar where the barrels were jibbed—the new-fangled engines were not believed in in those days, the beer must come from the wood—the churchwardens were emitting clouds of smoke, when, with startling suddenness, a cry of "Vi-er, vi-er, vi-er" broke upon the ears of the convivial party. The well-ordered room was soon in a state of commotion. The fire bell "hot out," the Fire-master and his men rushed pell-mell into the street, to learn that a huge conflagration was taking place up "t'other zide o' Ten Acres." Off they ran for the fire engine, and while they were getting it from its resting place, information was brought that the "Vier ez worser and worser—tiz vlaren all up sky-high!" And so it seemed, for a bright light could be seen in the heavens and everyone decided " 'twur zummet turble happenen'." "Now, m'lads, be sprack," said the old Fire-master, and with a rush the fire engine was drawn forth from its quarters.

Soon a goodly number of men and youths were lending a hand to push it towards "Ten Acres." But the way was steep. Before they got to Town's End they were "a puffen an' a blowen like a broken-winded hoss." So they had to take the hill steady-like. By the time they reached the top they were in a state of something like collapse. "Dall thee, come on, will 'ee, cassen thee zee what a vier 'tis?" Another push and pull, and the engine tops the hill. Then they at once proceeded to locate the fire.

"Sup-me-Bob if 'tidden the moon," said the Fire-master, and there, sure enough, before the perspiring firemen and the exhausted assistants,

staring them in the face, was the "parish lantern" in full majesty, spreading its silvery rays over the whole landscape. The cry of "Vi-er" had originated as a result of someone in the "dimmet" seeing the reflection in the sky of the full moon rising behind the hill!

Slowly and sorrowfully the old engine was brought back to its quarters, and the brigade feared their reception on this night of Pancake-day. As soon as possible they found their way to the hostelry once more, and under the soothing influence of the prime October, merry laughter dominated the place. But the Fire-master and his men were not allowed to forget the incident. Impudent little boys, standing at a safe distance, would enquire of a fireman "Who douted the moon?" and very soon—much quicker than the King, the Parliament, or a public department could confer an honour upon a town or a community—the term "Moon-douters" attached to the natives, and the honour survives to this day. The true Crewkernian is proud to be a "moon-douter," because the incident reminds him that in the old days the inhabitants were every bit as ready as they were during the war to respond to a cry of distress, be it the person, property, or the nation in danger. The "moon-douters" did splendidly from 1914 to 1918, and brought honours to the old town, and it is fitting that in the order of things Crewkernians should sleep their long sleep at Ten Acres, the scene of the incident which gave to them the well-known—and honoured—soubriquet.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

#### PANCAKES.

The following paragraph appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* of February 17th:—

"How the custom of eating pancakes became so inextricably connected with Shrove Tuesday has never been properly settled, but it is as ancient as English literature, for the very earliest of our writers refer to the practice.

It is believed to have had its origin in the desire to use up all tasty food before the beginning of Lent, strict observance of which was much more common in ancient times. The day before was known as Collop Monday, on which day all meat was consumed, and the orgies were continued on the Tuesday with the finishing of any surplus milk, butter, and eggs.

\* \* \*

To eat pancakes and fritters on Shrove Tuesday is a custom from time immemorial, and the great bell which used to be rung on Shrove Tuesday, to call the people together for the purpose of

confessing their sins, was called "Pancake Bell," a name which it still retains in the few places where the custom is still kept up. We believe the "Pancake Bell" is still rung at Ilminster, Bruton, and Beckington.

The Rev. James Street in his "Mynster of the Ile" says:—"The pancake bell is rung on the afternoon of Shrove Tuesday; anciently it was not the joy of pancake eating, but the call to confession—the shriving, hence 'Shrove Tuesday.' Of old the bell rang at six each morning, and as ten shillings a year was allowed therefor by the Grammar School the waking up of its school-boys was doubtless in mind."

It was formerly the custom to present the first pancake to the greatest slut or lie-abed of the party. It was almost invariably refused, for no-one would admit being entitled to it, and it usually fell to the dog's share at last.

\* \* \*

Seven or eight years ago a correspondent informed us that around Chilton Polden the children go to all the houses on Shrove Tuesday singing for pancakes in the following words:—

Shrove Tuesday, Shrove Tuesday,

Poor Jack went to plough,

His mother made pancakes,

She didn't know how;

She turned them, she tossed them,

She made them so black;

She put too much pepper,

And poisoned poor Jack.

When they have sung this they shout:

Tippity, tippity, toe,

Please give me a pancake, then I'll go.

The last two lines were formerly sung in other parts of the county, and in many cases, if the request was not acceded to, a large stone was fastened to the handle of the door.

\* \* \*

It is perhaps worth recording that Mr. Edward Hutton, in his "Highways and Byways in Somerset," complains that "In the present decayed state of religion people are not sure of their saints; thus in Wells they call St. Eustace 'the pancake man' because they have never been taught his true name."

#### COCK SQUAILING AND FIGHTING.

Until within the last 150 years, or less, the inhumane sport of throwing at cocks was practised on this day, and nowhere was it more certain to be seen than at the Grammar schools. The poor bird was tied to a stake by a short cord, and the unthinking men and boys who were

to throw at it took their station at the distance of about 20 yards. Where the cock belonged to someone disposed to make it a matter of business, twopence was paid for three shies at it, the missile used being a broomstick. The sport was continued until the poor creature was killed outright by the blows. Many protests against this barbarous custom were made in the newspapers of about 150 years ago, and the following extract from the *Western Flying Post* of February 23rd, 1784, may be taken as a specimen of the several protests made in that paper extending over a number of years:—"It is with pleasure we learn that the inhuman practice of cock-squailing is now generally discountenanced and decreases every year. Indeed, none but persons of no education, or who are of an unfeeling disposition, will indulge themselves in so unmanly and unchristian a practice. Should any persons be found disgracing themselves by such barbarity it is to be hoped that the law, in its utmost severity, will be put in execution against them."

Although the practice became less fashionable it was many years later before it finally died out. Hone, writing in 1826, said "This brutal practice on Shrove Tuesday is still conspicuous in several parts of the kingdom," but he also claimed that whilst country gentlemen had formerly been in the habit of throwing at the poor cock there was not a country gentleman at that time who would not discourage the shocking usage.

Another cruel custom that was formerly practised on Shrove Tuesday, and that had not entirely died out even in Hone's day, was known as "Threshing the hen." It was customary to take a hen that had not laid eggs before Shrove Tuesday and lay her on the barn floor to be threshed to death. A man would hit at her with a flail, and if he succeeded in killing her there-with he got her for his pains. This custom is referred to by Tusser in his "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry" (1620) in the following words:—

At Shrovetide go shroving, go thresh the fat hen,  
If blindfold can kill her, then give it thy men,  
Maids, fritters, and pancakes inough see you make,  
Let slut have one pancake, for company sake.

A kindred sport was that of cock-fighting which was by no means confined to Shrove Tuesday, but which was very largely practised on that day. Old inhabitants of Castle Cary say there used always to be cock-fighting at Ansford Inn on Shrove Tuesday. The landlords gave away grey pea-soup and bacon on that day. Ansford Inn seems to have been in those days a favourite meeting place for the gentlemen of Somerset, Dorset, and Wilts, who often fought



matches extending over three days, with as many as 41 cocks on each side, and the stakes would sometimes amount to as much as five guineas for each battle and a hundred guineas for the main. The local newspapers of 150 years ago contain many advertisements of such matches.

#### SHACKLE EGG.

Egg "Shackling" on Shrove Tuesday was regularly observed at Stoke St. Gregory National Schools until quite recently, when the scarcity and high price of eggs made its continuance impossible.

On Shrove Tuesday nearly every child brought an egg to school, with the owner's name written on it, and generally a little tag as well, "Hard old dog" being a great favourite.

During the morning recess the eggs were divided into convenient lots, and each lot was gently "shackled" in a wire sieve, those that remained uncracked longest being the winners of small money prizes. The first cracked egg to be taken out of the sieve won for its owner a booby prize of a farthing.

—NATIVE.

\* \* \*

The following paragraph appeared in the *Western Gazette* for Friday, February 20th, 1920, under the heading of Shepton Beauchamp:—Shrove Tuesday was kept up at the school in the usual way, and "shackle eggs," was carried out as it has been for many years. Each child brought an egg with its name written on. These were collected, and at the end of the lessons padded sieves were forthcoming, into which the eggs were placed, those belonging to the girls in one and the boys in another. Then the sieves were pulled to and fro, every now and then the eggs were inspected, and the cracked ones taken out. The last three in had prizes awarded to the owners by the Correspondent (Miss Coles).

\* \* \*

In the year 1907 one of our readers contributed to our Notes and Queries column the following interesting reminiscences of the custom of Shackle Egg as practised at Langport half a century ago:—

"I remember when I went to Langport in the year of the King's marriage (1863), seeing the school children on Shrove Tuesday (Pancake-day), each carrying an egg to school. On enquiring what they did with the eggs, I was told that, after the name of the owner had been written upon each egg, they were put into a sieve and well shaken. The boy or girl whose egg remained uncracked was called 'the victor,' and was

entitled to wear 'the victor's cap.' This was made of pieces of silk of many colours, locally called 'crazy patchwork,' and was conical in shape, like a fool's cap. The victor headed a procession of school children, who marched about the parish collecting money from the inhabitants. The victor was also entitled to carry the collecting-bag. The money collected was afterwards spent on cakes, nuts, oranges, &c. The practice of contributing eggs gradually got into disuse, the children bringing fewer and fewer, while the money subscribed by the inhabitants also became steadily less. So, a few years before the advent of the Board Schools, the practice was discontinued. The manner of 'shackling' the eggs appears to have been somewhat different 60 or 70 years ago. Then, also, the children drew lots from a bag, in order to decide who was to be 'victor.' I learn from a neighbour that 'Shackle-Egg' was in vogue at Martock also within the last 40 or 50 years."

The following paragraph, which appeared in a local paper printed in 1864, under the heading of Langport, also gives an interesting account of this old custom:—"Shrove Tuesday, or pancake-day, was kept here as usual. The youngsters of the various schools were abroad earlier than they are wont to be, each carrying an egg as a kind of teacher's fee, for the privilege of drawing lots for the victorship. The old custom of 'shackle-egg' having given place to this humdrum and innocent lottery, the teachers thus become the possessors of hundreds of eggs. As soon as the lots had been drawn, and the various victors proclaimed and crowned, processions were formed, calico flags unfurled, and visits paid to several mansions near the town, in order to collect money towards the distribution of confectionery and fruit, which took place in the afternoon on the following day."

#### LENT CROCKING.

I believe it was in February, 1858, that Crewkerne was "erected" into a Magisterial Division, which included Crewkerne and ten of the neighbouring parishes; and that it was at the first Court held under what the local newspaper called "This inestimable boon" that two little boys were charged with having done malicious injury to the door of the National Schoolrooms by throwing dirt against it on the evening of Shrove Tuesday. Mr. Jolliffe, for the plaintiffs, said that the offence arose out of a curious custom existing at Crewkerne of throwing stones against people's doors on what the boys called "Sharp Tuesday." P.S. Sperring stated that he had received complaints from several parties of their having experienced a similar annoyance on the same evening from boys going about in com-

panies. The Bench discharged the youngsters on their parents promising to pay the amount of the damage to the door (4s). In commenting on the case the Editor of the paper gave the following information with regard to the custom:—Throwing at the cock was one of the many cruel pastimes in general vogue at Shrovetide in the olden time. That a relic of the custom should still linger here is only another proof of the pertinacity, so to speak, with which old customs keep their hold upon the people, and it is the more curious inasmuch as we are not aware of its existence in any of the neighbouring rural parishes, which as a general rule are the most favourable for the retention of ancient customs. Heath in his "Account of the Scilly Islands," p. 120, has the following passage:—"On a Shrove Tuesday after the throwing at cocks is over the boys in this island have a custom of throwing stones *in the evening against the doors of the dwellers' houses*—a privilege they claim from time immemorial, and put in practice without control for finishing the day's sport. I could never learn from whence this custom took its rise, but am informed that the same custom is now used in several provinces in Spain, as well as in some parts of Cornwall. The terms demanded by the boys are pancakes or money to capitulate." "In Dorsetshire," says Brand, "boys go round begging for pancakes singing:—

I be come a-shrovin'  
 Vor a little pankiak,  
 A bit o' bread o' your baikin'  
 Or a little truckle cheese o' your maikin'  
 If you'll gi' me a little I'll ax no more,  
 If you don't gi' me nothin', I'll rattle your door.

\* \* \*

A very similar custom formerly obtained in South Petherton. In the first volume of "Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries" Mr. Hugh Norris wrote:—"Another custom in this place (South Petherton) was for the young of both sexes to assemble in the 'dumps' of the evening and run through the streets throwing pot-sherds, previously collected for the purpose, against the doors of the principal inhabitants, at the same time singing out lustily some doggrel lines in which the word 'pancake' figures with much prominence; having done this they made their escape as fast as possible."

This custom is known in Dorset and Wilts as "Lent Crocking."

#### CLIPPING THE TOWER.

Mr. Norris goes on to say "After thus noisily enjoying themselves the same young parties used to meet in the market-place, join hands,

and after 'threading the needle' adjourn to the Churchyard close by, and endeavour to encircle the church, still holding hands. This over, whether they succeeded or not, their day was ended, and in the words of my aged informant 'they maäde haäste whoam an tackled inta bed, quite atired out!'"

A writer in the "Church Family Newspaper" for February 27th, 1903, stated that not many years before it was a custom at Beckington, Somersetshire, for the children on Shrove Tuesday to meet in the Churchyard and blow trumpets. Then all joined hands, and formed a ring round the outside of the church and the trumpets were again blown. We believe, however, that this custom had gone entirely out of use at Beckington for many years prior to 1903, if it ever existed there. One of our correspondents made enquiries in that year from the Vicar of Beckington, who stated that he had, at that time, resided in the parish over 30 years, and had never even heard of such a custom having been practised there.

### FEB. 18.—ASH WEDNESDAY.

On this day occurs one of the most curious conceivable corruptions of custom. Originally the name indicated that penitents on that day in Romish times clothed in sackcloth and put ashes on their heads. After the Reformation this became obscured, especially in some towns and villages. So completely was it forgotten that it was called Hash Wednesday. The previous day being connected with an edible Hash was confounded with one, and I have actually known, among the ignorant, Hashed Meat to be ceremonially served up and eaten on that day.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

Lent this year is in February, and every one knows the old saying :

"Marry in Lent  
You'll live to repent."

This probably dates from pre-Reformation days, when no priest would perform the ceremony during Lent. But indeed, in those old times, it seemed almost a case of "Thou shalt not" at many seasons, for Advent, Septuagesima, and Ascension-tide were also under the ban of the church for those who would essay the adventure of matrimony.

—F. W. MATHEWS.

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### LENT AND MARRIAGE.

Somerset people are very superstitious as regards Lent marriages, and it is notable that

few marriages take place during Lent, though there are numerous marriages during Easter week. An old couplet relating to the superstition runs :—

“ If you marry in Lent,  
You live to repent.”

There is also another superstition relating to marriage which runs as follows :—

“ Change the name and not the letter,  
You change for worse and not for better.”

\* \* \*

Chambers’ “ Book of Days ” says “ The popular observances on Ash Wednesday are not of much account. The cocks being now dispatched, a thin scarecrow-like figure or puppet was set up, and shied at with sticks, in imitation of one of the sports of the preceding day. The figure was called a *Jack a lent*, a term which is often met with in old literature as expressive of a small and insignificant person: ge.”

\* \* \*

This is the first day of Lent. Hone says “ It is called *Ash Wednesday*, because in the Roman Catholic Church the priest blesses ashes on this day, and puts them on the heads of the people. These ashes are made of the branches of brush-wood or palms, consecrated the year before. . . . Prayers ended, the priest sprinkles the ashes with holy water, and perfumes them thrice with incense, and the people coming to him and kneeling, he puts ashes on their heads in the form of a cross, with other ceremonies.”

\* \* \*

One of our readers informs us that in some parts of the county Ash Wednesday is sometimes called “ Cussin’ Day,” and asks “ Why ? ” We think the following extract from Hone’s “ Every Day Book ” will give the reason :—“ Ash Wednesday is observed in the Church of England by reading publicly the curses denounced against impenitent sinners, to each malediction the people being directed to utter, Amen. Many who consider this as cursing their neighbours, keep away from church on the occasion. . . . ”

#### MEAT IN LENT.

Three hundred years ago the regulations with regard to eating no meat in Lent were very strict. The law distinctly said that “ All constables may enter into any house in Lent time, and if they shall find any flesh dressed they may seize the same as forfeited and give it to the poor.” But those who were willing and able to put a few shillings a year into the poor box could sometimes obtain a letter like this :—“ George, Archbishop of Canterbury, sends grace to our beloved Charles Berkley of Brewton in co. Somerset,

**Knicht.** We permit and indulge thee that together with the lady thy wife and eight others to be chosen at thy will and invited to thy table thou mayst eat flesh with due giving of thanks on days when it is publicly forbidden during thy life, provided always that thou pay 13s 6d into the poor box each year in the parish within which thou shalt inhabit. Dated, December 13th, 1632."

Probably not many people would be disposed to find fault with the Rev. John Gibbes for granting the following license to eat meat in Lent as recorded in the North Curry register for 1632 :—  
 "Mo that I John Gibbes, vicar of North Curry, have given licence (as much as in me lieth) to Mrs. Johan Conock of North Curry aforesaid, a gentlewoman of about 90 years of age, of muhc weaknesse and great infirmitie, continually keeping her bed, to eat flesh this Lente such as the laws doe permit, to sustain and nourish nature in her. For witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand this 6th day of March. 1632, By me John Gibbes."

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**FEB. 19.—**

Plant broad beans on the first day of the new moon in February to prevent black, or dolphin fly. The first new moon in the present month is at 9.35 p.m. to-day.

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**FEB. 20.—ST. ULRICK.**

**ELIZABETH ROWE DIED, 1737.**

One of the saints to whom this day is dedicated is our Somerset saint Ulrick or Wulfric, of whom it is recorded that "His pillow was ropes of hay, his clothing poor, and lined next the skin with a rough shirt of hair-cloth, till his flesh having overcome its uneasiness, he wore next his skin an iron coat of mail. In the sharpest of cold winter, having first put off his iron shirt, he was wont to get into a vessel of cold water and reciet Psalms." He was known in his day as "England's one miracle worker and prophet." He died on February 28th, 1151, and Mr. Willis Watson has sent us a brief account of his life, which will appear under the date of his death.

\* \* \*

Elizabeth Rowe was born at Ilchester on September 11th, 1674. Her father, Walter Singer, a dissenting minister, was imprisoned in Ilchester gaol for his nonconformity, and her mother, Elizabeth Portnell, visited the prisoners for pity's sake. They fell in love with each other, and were married as soon as they were free to do so. Elizabeth was the eldest of three daughters, and wrote verses from her childhood, and was

skilled in music and drawing. At 22 she published her first volume of poems, which were chiefly of a religious character. Her verses gained for her an introduction to Lord Weymouth's family and to Bishop Ken, and it was at his request that her famous paraphrase of the 38th chapter of Job was written. In 1710 she married Mr. Thos. Rowe, who also wrote poems and the lives of classic heroes. He died of consumption in the spring of 1715, and his widow never recovered from her grief, but retired to Ilchester and devoted herself to good work, to poetry, and to corresponding with famous men and women of her day. Dr. Watts called her poems "divine," and after her death he published the "Devout Exercises" of her heart. Many of her poems were published in German, and the German poets Klopstock and Wieland eiled her "a heavenly singer."

\* \* \*

This poetess of the early part of the 18th century did not retire to Ilchester after the death of her husband, as was mentioned in the Calendar of Customs under date February 20th; or if so, she did not remain there long, for she spent most of the later years of her life at Frome, and dying there, was buried at what is known now as Rook-lane Congregational Chapel. A short biography of Mrs. Rowe, prefixed to a volume of her works printed in 1805, does not say that her father, Mr. Walter Singer, was a minister. He left Ilchester on the death of his wife and went to the neighbourhood of Frome; and as he did not die until 1719, he outlived Mrs. Rowe's husband by four years, so that his presence there was a reason why she went back to Frome on becoming a widow. Dying early on the morning of Sunday, February 20th, 1736-7, "she was buried, according to her request, under the same stone with her father in the meeting place of Frome, on which occasion her funeral sermon was preached to a very crowded auditory by the reverend and worthy Mr. Bowden." A work of three thick octavo volumes, published in 1746, and bearing the title, "The Agreeable Historian, or the Compleat English Traveller," contains the following under its description of Frome:—"One of its hamlets, called Agford [now generally spelt Egford], a solitary village betwixt this town and the neighbouring parish of Whatley, deserves special mention for having been the residence of a celebrated muse, the glory of her sex in this county, viz., the late ingenious Mrs. Rowe. Ilchester, indeed, boasts of being the place of her birth; but this was her beloved retreat in the prime of her days, and here she composed most of those pieces, both in

prose and verse, which have immortalized her memory and which all tend to the advancement of that virtue whereof she was herself so bright an example.”  
—JOHN COLES.

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**FEB. 21.—LENTEN VEILS.**

On the Saturday before the 1st Sunday in Lent a great brown holland sheet was hung in front of the altar after every Sunday evening service. It was lifted for the Sunday services and again re-placed until Palm Sunday. Disallowed 1545.

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**FEB. 22.—Rev. SYDNEY SMITH DIED, 1845.**

This celebrated wit was Rector of Combe Florey from 1829 until his death on February 22nd, 1845. He built the rectory and made it one of the most delightful of residences. He described Combe Florey as “the prettiest place in the finest county in England—in truth a Paradise; only there is no serpent, and we wear clothes.” He deserves to be remembered as much for his writings in the cause of social and political reform as for his inimitable humour, and his sterling excellence of character.

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**FEB. 23.—ASHBRITTLE FAIR.**

**ST. MATTHIAS'-EVE.**

Notice was given in the *Western Flying Post* of January 26th, 1824, that the fair which had hitherto been held at Ashbrittle on the 25th day of February would in future be held on the Monday before the last Tuesday in the same month, being the day before Wiveliscombe great market.

\* \* \*

On the eve of St. Matthias, 1642, a rabble from Batcombe attacked the town of Bruton, and the event is thus described in the Bruton registers:—

All Praise and thanks to God still give  
For our deliverance Mathias eve.  
By his great power wee put to flight  
Our raging foes the Batcombmites,  
Who came to Plunder, Burne, & Slay  
And quite Consume us ere the day.  
Thus he our feeble force supplide  
In weaknes, most he's magnifide.  
Serve God with fear, on him depend,  
As then, soe ever he will defende.



The fourth line was originally written :—

Our raging foes that Thursday night,  
but it was subsequently altered in another hand  
to the form given above.

### FEB. 24.—ST. MATTHIAS'-DAY.

If it freezes on St. Matthias'-day it will freeze  
for a month together.

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### FEB. 26.—

On this day the rooks are said to begin searching  
for materials for their nests. The day corresponds  
to the 12th day after Candlemas under the Old  
Style, which was supposed to be the day on which  
the rooks commenced their building operations.

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### FEB. 28.—ST. WULFRIC DIED, 1154.

Haselbury Plucknett, close to Crewkerne, has  
some important historical incidents associated  
with it. At least two English kings have visited  
the parish, King Henry I. and King Stephen,  
but it will always be notorious as the place where  
St. Wulfrie ended his days as a hermit. The  
Saint is believed to have been born at Compton  
Martin—some people say Litton, near Bristol—  
leading a wandering life. At first he became a  
priest, and it is suggested served at Deverell, in  
Wiltshire. Whether he adopted the habit of a  
recluse at once is not recorded, but there can be  
no doubt on his coming to Haselbury he took  
up his abode in a cell near the church. He  
mortified the flesh to a very considerable extent,  
but all the while his fame as a miracle worker  
spread throughout the country or King Henry  
and King Stephen would scarcely have taken the  
trouble to come into Somerset to see the Saint.  
Wulfrie prophesied that Stephen would  
become King of England, and as this came to  
pass there can be no doubt the hermit received  
at least the grateful recollections of his royal  
master. The devil seems to have had a special  
feeling of antagonism towards the Saint. On  
one occasion it is recorded an infernal spirit  
dragged St. Wulfrie into the church and ran  
him round the pavement till the apparition of a  
virgin stopped this rude behaviour. The devil  
is said to have tormented the Saint in many  
ways, including subjecting him alternately to  
intolerable heat and intolerable cold. At the  
ford outside the village the devil seized a man  
and said he would drown him. St. Wulfrie  
learned of this in a vision and sent his priest,  
Brithric, to rescue the man, whom he found on

horseback in the river and unable to move from the place. Brithric sprinkled the traveller with Holy water and released him and took him and the devil into the presence of the man of God, with what result is not recorded. St. Wulfrie was more than 90 years old when he died. He was buried in his cell in Hasebury Church by Robert, Bi-hop of Wells. Pilgrimages were afterwards made to the holy ground.

\* \* \*

Romanus bright and clear  
Indicates a goodly year.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### FEB 29.—

It is interesting to note that February *this year* being leap year, consists of 29 days, and contains five Sundays, a circumstance which cannot again occur till another leap year, wherein the first of February shall fall on a Sunday.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

The *Observer* for February 29th contained an interesting article on the 29th day of February—which this year fell on a Sunday—which concluded as follows:—"Thus it comes about that of the ninety-seven leap-year days occurring in four centuries, fifteen will always be Wednesdays, fifteen Mondays, fourteen Saturdays, and fourteen Fridays, while there will be only thirteen 29ths of February on Sunday, and the same number on Tuesday and Thursday."

\* \* \*

A Leap Year  
Is never a good sheep year.

\* \* \*

The following paragraph appeared in a recent issue of the *Daily News* :—

The New Year is not likely to be welcomed very heartily by sheep farmers and shepherds, for they hold a belief that leap year is always a bad year for lambs. Like every other superstition, it can be supported by facts, for observation has shown that in recent leap years fewer twin lambs than usual were born and triplets are almost unknown. The figures for both 1912 and 1916 bore out the old belief. The superstition is not confined to England either, although very firmly held by shepherds on the Hampshire and Wiltshire downs. In Scotland there is a similar belief, and an old Scottish proverb says "Leap year was ne'er a good sheep year." It will be interesting to note whether the present year upholds the old tradition.

## MARCH.

Then March, the prophetess by storms inspired,

Gazes in rapture on the troubled sky ;

And now in headlong fury madly fired,

She bids the hailstorm boil and hurry by.

Yet 'neath the blackest cloud the sunbeams fling  
Their cheering promise of returning Spring.

JOHN CLARE.

A quaint old writer says :—"The moneth of March was called by our Saxon ancestors, Lenet-Moneth, that is, according to our new orthography, Length-Moneth, because the days did then first begin in length to exceed the nights. And this moneth being by our ancestors so called, when they received Christianity, and, consequently, therewith the annual Christian custome of fasting, they called their chief season of fasting the fast of Lenet, because of the Lenet-Moneth, whereon most part of this fasting always fell, and hereof it cometh that we now call it Lent." According to other etymologists, Lenet, or Lent, means Spring ; hence March was literally the Spring-month.

The most delightful of seasons is upon us. Winter may linger in the lap of Spring, but "the splendid raiment of the spring"—her universal green—will be donned, the birds will sing from their lofty perches, and nature will, on every hand, show evidence of renewed life. After February has filled the ditches, we anticipate the March dust, which is said in Somerset, as elsewhere, to be worth a King's ransom per peck. And down here, in our favoured county, where the flowers are well nigh ever blooming, we look to this month for the violet, the primrose, the

### Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty.

We look for many fine days in March in "dear old Down Along," for we know that "Dust in March brings grass and foliage," and that "a dry and cold March never begs its bread." We have heard our grannies say :

A peck of March dust and a shower in May,  
Make the corn green and the fields gay.

On the contrary, we used to be told that  
 "March rain spoils more than clothes," and  
 equally that a wet month is bad for the harvest.  
 And we don't want mists because

So many mists in March, you see,  
 So many frosts in May will be.

Of course, we all know about March coming  
 in like a lamb and going out like a lion—or *vice-*  
*versa*—but we know how true is the rhyme,

March winds and April showers  
 Bring forth May flowers.

Even the children who attended the old  
 dames' schools years ago were taught this as  
 part of their lessons, and those who are now old  
 never forget it. And there are many of us who  
 derive hope and comfort, when entering upon the  
 month of March, from a recollection of the lines :—

And in the reign of blast and storm,  
 Smiles many a long bright sunny day ;  
 When the changed winds are soft and warm,  
 And heaven puts on the blue of May.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

"A peck of March dust is worth a King's  
 ransom."

This saying belongs to a time when kings  
 were considerably higher rated than at the  
 present day, and the pound sterling of con-  
 siderably higher value ; it would be modernised  
 by saying that same peck was of fabulous worth,  
 or was worth a pugilist's fee. Anyway, it points  
 to the great necessity of having a dry season  
 at this, the great sowing time of the year, when a  
 water-logged land could not be worked, nor could  
 the seeds properly germinate without their due  
 amount of warmth, which an overcast sky and  
 chilly rain would deny them.

Pessimists (prophets of the Old Moore type,  
 and weather prophets, too, are usually of that  
 kind) say that this month foretells dreadful  
 disasters, personal, local, or national, according  
 to the taste of the particular prophet-pessimist.  
 There is a "Saturday moon" in it! and

"A Saturday moon,  
 If it comes once in seven years,  
 Comes once too soon."

I remember some years ago an old friend of  
 mine told me of a series of misfortunes that had  
 happened to her after such an untoward happen-  
 ing. Her little pigs died, her donkey strayed  
 away, and her cow went dry, and all because  
 'twas a "Saturday noo mune."

It is curious how much to the countryman  
 the moon means ; you mustn't see the new  
 moon for the first time through glass, and you

mustn't point at the moon.

Its appearance on the first night it is visible after becoming "new" indicates the weather that is likely to ensue during the coming "moon"; if it is "on its back," that is with the points of the crescent nearly level, a "lappery" month is sure to follow.

(The February new moon of this year presented this appearance, so according to this current belief, the early part of March is not likely to see much dust. "Besides," said a friend talking to me of it, "she quartered in the north-west, and that is a stormy part, too!")

If you can see a three-days-old moon very clear *that* denotes fine weather.

We are told by Aubrey that the Scotch women of his day made a curtsy to the new moon to propitiate it, and that English women were accustomed to utter these lines to the luminary:—

"All haile to thee moone, all haile to thee,

I prithee good moone, declare to me

This night, who my husband must be."

"This they doe," Aubrey adds, "sitting astride on a gate or stile, the first evening the new moon appears."

March was the great month for brewing in the old times, before tea and coffee were known, and when beer and ale were almost the only drinks.

Holinshed, in his "England of the 16th Century," says:—"The beer that is used at noble-men's tables in their fixed and standing houses is commonly of a year old, or peradventure of two years running or more, but this is not general. It is also brewed in March, and therefore called March beer."

It was pretty strong stuff, apparently; the names given to it were "mad-dog, buff-cap, angel's food, dragon's milk, stride-wide, and lift-leg, so called because of its mightinesse."

This is the season of hedge-making, and with many it is a cardinal point of belief, and practice, that the hedge should be made "in the growing of the moon." Besides this, it should be laid, if possible, with the points of the laid sticks pointing "towards the sun, as they will grow better and spread more that way."

As to the sowing of seeds, there does not appear to be a fixity of belief as to whether this should be done "at the growing" or the waning of the moon; some say one way, some the other; but all, foreseeing the many mishaps that attend the young plant, sow seed in abundance.

"Sow thickly, thin quickly" is the saying thereon, and

"Four seeds sow,  
Two for slug and crow,  
One for the hoe,  
And one to grow."

In the sowing of seeds the Somerset gardener is always careful as to parsley, that it is sown just where it is needed to stay, for to transplant it would be equivalent to deliberate manslaughter! "You must never transplant parsley," I have frequently been told, "for if you do, there'll be a death in the family within the year."

If a broad bean comes up white-leaved it foretells a death in the household. "Dig 'en out to wance, and that'll take away the bad luck," one will be told, but occasionally one comes across a fatalist who will aver that such a proceeding makes no difference, "'Tis the comin' up that da do the merstie" (mischief).

Nobody forgets the useful onion, useful in early summer as salad, in swarming days a cure for bee stings, a cure for colds and sore throats in winter, and a relish always. The seed of this savoury vegetable must, with us, be sown in March "in the shrinking of the moon." The onions still in store have another use, that of divination. In Folkard's "Plant Lore and Legends" he quotes a verse common in his time in the countryside, of a custom which in a modified form may still be met with:—

"In those same days young wanton gyrles that  
mete for marriage be,  
Do seiche to know the names of those that shall  
their husbandis be,  
Four onyons, five or eight they take, and make  
to every one  
Such names as they doe fancie most and best to  
think upon,  
Then near the chimney them they set, and that  
same onyon then,  
That first doe sprout doth surely bear the name  
of their good man."

—F. W. MATHEWS.

\* \* \*

Save some March dust to put over your seed potatoes when you plant them.

Quite a common practice amongst cottagers is to keep their seed potatoes under their beds to make sure of their being safe from frost. I knew a man at Goar Knap, Yeovil, who did this; and was told quite recently of another at Merriott.

\* \* \*

It is unlucky to bring the flowers of the Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) into the house as a death in the family is certain to follow. The flowers open in March before the foliage. The petals fall very quickly after the flower-bearing branch has been picked, and this is the probable origin of the superstition. The fruit of the blackthorn is the well-known sloe.

—W.S.P.

The old saying that "If March comes in like a lion, he'll go out like a lamb" (and its converse) is, I believe, not confined to West Somerset, but at all events is regularly accepted there and quoted as an article of faith. That it is not always borne out by the facts does not matter, so much the worse for the facts. This year 1920 will give an opportunity of testing its truth, for March "came in" in the most peaceful manner imaginable.

—W.S.P.

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#### WEATHER (AND OTHER) LORE.

In the weather lore of this month, the following sayings are or have been in use in Somerset:—

"March dust is worth a guinea an ounce."

"For every foggy day in March,  
A night of frost in May."

"March will search, April will try,  
May will show whether you'll live or die."

"March winds and April showers  
Bring forth May flowers."

—H.W.K.

\* \* \*

As it rains in March, so it rains in June.

February makes a bridge and March breaks it.

Zoo many vogs in March zoo many vrost (or vloods) in May.

A dry March fills barn and cellar and brings much hay.

When March is like April, April will be like March.

A peck of March dust is worth a King's ransom (or a Jew's eye).

A March without water  
Dowers the hind's daughter.

March dust to be sold,  
Worth a ransom of gold.

March many-weathers rained, and blowed;  
But March grass never did good.

On St. David's-day  
Put oats and barley in the clay,  
Blackthorn out white,  
Sow day and night.

(Meaning it is high time all corn was in the ground.)

March borrowed of April  
Three days and they were ill.

The late Mr. Geo. Sweetman, amongst his Folklore of the Wincanton district, gave the following couplet :—

Let the weather be ever zoo,  
The gookoo will come before March do goo.

If they would drink nettles in March  
And eat mugwort in May,  
So many fine maidens  
Wouldn't go to the clay.

An old Wedmore saying is :—

Eat leeks in March and ramesans (garlic) in May,  
And then the Doctor can go and play.

First comes David, next comes Chad,  
And then comes Winneral as though he was mad.

(St. Winwaloe's-day is March 3rd, and was generally believed to be rough and windy; hence the allusion to "madness.")

It is an ill omen to see an owl flying by daylight during March.

### MARCH 1.—ST. DAVID'S-DAY.

Sow peas and beans on David (March 1) and  
Chad (March 2),

Be the weather good or bad.

\* \* \*

The only church in Somerset which is dedicated to St. David is that of Barton St. David, four miles north-east from Somerton. In the Churchyard are the remains of a cross, on the west side of which is the effigy of a Bishop, which is supposed to represent St. David, Archbishop of Menevia in the sixth century.

\* \* \*

We have before us a poem on the Beauty Spring at Crewkerne, commencing with the words :—

"At early dawn, on the first of March,  
She stood by the Beauty Well."

We have reason to believe that the "first of March" is a misprint for the "first of May," and we shall hope to quote the poem under the latter date.

\* \* \*

### FLEAS ARRIVE!

There seems to be a general belief that fleas arrive on the first of March. We have heard it said in Crewkerne that on this date fleas come marching down Cemetery Hill, and in Yeovil that they come down Hendford Hill, on March 1st.

A correspondent kindly writes us :—Housewives who desire to keep their house free from the



“inquisitive flea” should be careful to sweep their front door-step early on the morning of March 1st, for it is on that day that the invasion of the “Black Army” takes place. If the front door-step is swept the invaders are repelled and swept away.

And we are indebted to another correspondent for the information that with the idea that fleas invade houses on the first of March,

Keep your windows closed tight,  
Else the fleas will come in and bite.

\* \* \*

#### ST. TAVY'S DAY.

In the Church calendar March 1st is the day of St. David, Archbishop of Menevia—a saint who is associated with Somerset in so far as his relics were translated in A.D. 962 from St. Andrew's, Menevy, to Glastonbury. St. David is said to have been the son of a prince of Cardigan and uncle of King Arthur, and was one of the three canonised saints of Great Britain. On the anniversary of his death Welshmen made it a point of conscience to wear a leek in their hats.

—H.W.K.

\* \* \*

#### ST. DAVID'S-DAY.

Leeks were the seasonal food of this day, either because they were favoured by St. David, or maybe because they were honoured in a Druidic festival. At any rate the following rhyme was current:—

Eat leeks in March and ransoms in May,  
All the year after the doctors shall play.

\* \* \*

This is a day interesting to the natives of Somerset because St. David is a name which has been known to the dwellers in the “Land of Summer” from the earliest times. This holy man was born some time in the 5th Century, at least we may assume this, because in the year 519 he was sufficiently advanced in years and learning to preside over a notable Synod at Brey, in Cardiganshire, called in order to suppress the heresy of Pelagius. St David was a son of Xantius, Prince of Cardiganshire, and being a Welshman—we do not claim him as a Somerset man—was naturally gifted with eloquence. We are not surprised at being told that this consumer of bread and vegetables “confuted and silenced the infernal monster (Pelagius) by his learning, eloquence, and miracles.” David's drink was milk and water, but his flow of language was apparently anything but weak. Of course he ate leeks, and without doubt he

would have been heartily in accord with the following lines from a Harleian MS. in the British Museum:—

I like the leeke above all herbes and flowers,  
 When first we wore the same the field was ours.  
 The leeke is white and greene, whereby is ment  
 That Britaines are both stout and eminent;  
 Next to the lion and the unicorn,  
 The leeke's the fairest emblym that is worne.

We are interested in St David more particularly on account of his associations with Glastonbury. Legendary lore plays a leading part in the early history of Somerset, and although the legends may not be actual records of facts, the existence of those legends is—as Freeman says—a very great fact. We are proud to know Glastonbury is the one great religious foundation which lived through the storm of English conquest. Nowhere is there the same unbroken continuity of religious life that we find here. St. David is credited with having had a considerable love and veneration for Glastonbury. Legend says he built a church there, and legend further states that after the Synod of Brevy—others say after the Victory Synod in 530—the holy man journeyed to Somerset determined to repair and to solemnly re-consecrate the chapel of the Virgin which he had previously built there. There are variations in this story, but substantially the legend is that on the night previous to re-consecration Our Lord appeared to him and bade him desist, saying that He had Himself performed the holy rite. To make the vision possess proofs of His reality He, with His fingers, pieced the hands of the Archbishop, promising that on the morrow, when, during the Mass, the words “*Per Ipsum, et cum ipso, et in ipso*” were said, his hands should be healed. And the miracle was performed accordingly.

There are other legends attached to St. David. One is that he was uncle to the famous Knight, Prince Arthur, and that the relics of this holy and excellent man, together with those of St. Patrick, were deposited at Glastonbury in 962. It was St. David—so legend says—who presented the sapphire altar to the chapel at Glastonbury. Marson informs us that Henry VIII. looted the altar, and suggests that the sapphire may even now be among the crown jewels of England! St. David also built another church to the east of the old church which was commemorated by the Galilee of later times. The story of the sapphire is very pretty. It is unquestionably an interpolation of a later copyist in the Malmesbury Treatise made, probably, soon after the fire in 1184. But still it represents the belief of the 12th Century, and there may

have been some foundation for the story that the stone was found by Henry, Bishop of Winchester, Abbot of Glastonbury, in a certain doorway of the church of St. Mary, and that he adorned it exquisitely with gold and silver and precious stones.

St. David is credited with "many thousands of miracles." It is said that on his way from Glastonbury on one occasion he went to Bath, cured an infection of the waters, and, by his prayers and benediction, gave them the perpetual heat they still retain. He is said to have been 140 years old when he died in 544, but it does not do to place too much reliance on the figures handed down from the early historians. However, they seem fairly well agreed that "his soul was borne by angels to heaven," and that "his body was placed in the church of St. Andrew."

Don't forget that on St. David's-day you should put oats and barley in the clay.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### MARCH 2.—ST. CHAD'S DAY.

#### BRIDGWATER CASTLE ORDERED TO BE DISMANTLED, 1646.

David and Chad :

Sow peas, good or bad.

\* \* \*

Before St. Chad

Every goose lays, both good and bad.

\* \* \*

At the close of 1645 an order was received in Bridgwater for the dismantlement of the Castle, which caused much indignation. Petitions were prepared and forwarded to the two Houses of Parliament, praying that the order might not be carried into effect. The House of Lords passed over their petition to the Lower Chamber, and in the House of Commons on March 2nd, 1646, it was "Resolved that this House do adhere to the former order, for the disgarriouning, slighting, and dismantling the works of Bridgwater."—From S. G. Jarman's "History of Bridgwater."

### MARCH 3.—MONMOUTH'S TREE, WHITE- LACKINGTON, BLOWN DOWN, 1897.

This fact deserves a place in a Somerset Calendar, because the tree was an historical landmark in the history of our county. It was under the grateful shade of its leaves that the ill-starred Duke of Monmouth met a large

assemblage of his supporters as a preliminary to the opening of his campaign in Somerset. Whitelackington House was then the seat of Mr. George Speke, whose family, in after years, paid the penalty for their hospitality to Monmouth and their sympathy for his cause. His arrival at Whitelackington was a picturesque and impressive scene. Pulman writes:—"The people came in crowds from miles around to greet him on the road and to welcome his arrival. It is particularly recorded that at Ilchester and South Petherton the streets and roads along which he passed were strewed with herbs and flowers, and that the people handed him bottles of wine, with which, I suppose, to drink his health. When even ten miles from Whitelackington, 2,000 men on horse-back met him, and their numbers were so augmented as they went that the escort, on reaching their destination, numbered 20,000. It was here the park pailings were taken down in order to admit the multitude, and here the party were hospitably entertained under the spreading branches of the old Spanish chestnut tree—the almost last relic of the ancient park. The trunk of this tree measured about 25 feet in circumference breast high." Its fall was brought about in a great gale of wind.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### MARCH 8.—OLD ST. MATTHEW'S DAY. WEMBDON CHURCH BURNT, 1867.

The weather on Old St. Matthew's day was believed to indicate, and even to influence, the weather for the rest of the month.

\* \* \*

Sunday, March 8th, 1867, is memorable on account of the burning of Wembdon Church. The Vicar (Rev. C. W. Alston) had just given out the text at the morning service, when a man named Thomas Lynham rushed in, crying "Fire! fire!" Great consternation at once prevailed, although no smoke or fire could be seen, and it was at first surmised that Lynham was a madman. Some of the congregation left the building, when it was at once seen that the roof was on fire at the western end. The church was speedily cleared, and a messenger despatched to Bridgwater for the fire engine. Some buckets of water were also got, but it was soon seen that the sacred building was doomed. An attempt was made to save the fine old carved oak pulpit (of the same character as that in St. Mary's Church, Bridgwater), but a portion of the roof fell whilst it was being removed, and led to a wild stampede from the church. Successful attempts

were then made to save the tower, but of the church itself very soon nothing remained but the walls. The cause of the fire was supposed to be an over heated flue. It was very unfortunate that the insurance policy on the fabric had, through an error on the part of the churchwarden, been allowed to lapse. The Church was afterwards thoroughly restored, and was re-opened in 1870.—From S. G. Jarman's "History of Bridgewater."

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### MARCH 12.—ST. GREGORY.

There is only one church in Somerset dedicated to this Saint—Stoke St. Gregory. Pope Gregory I. had no direct association with our county, but he will be remembered in connection with the historical incident of the Anglo-Saxon slaves in the market-place of Rome. Gregory, then a monk, obtained permission from the Pope to become a missionary to Britain, and had actually started when the people of Rome insisted that he should be re-called. All his patrimony he spent in founding monasteries. He was very energetic in the propagation of Christianity, and in 596, in pursuance of his former desire, sent Augustine Mellitus, and a band of monks to England to convert the Anglo-Saxons. His skill in music led him to re-model the whole system of sacred music, and that which he adopted was named after him, "Gregorian." St. Gregory was the patron of scholars, and on his day boys were called to school with certain songs, substituting one in the place of St. Gregory to act as Bishop on the occasion, with his companions of the Sacred Order. Presents were added to induce boys to love their schools. On the night of St. Gregory's-day parents used to ask their children when they were asleep whether they had mind to book or no, and if they said "Yes" they considered it good presage, but if they said "No" it is recorded "they put them over to the plough."

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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### MARCH 13.—HERSCHEL, THEN LIVING AT BATH, DISCOVERED THE PLANET URANUS, 1781.

While engaged in the telescopic comparison of a large number of stars on this date, Sir William Herschel, examining some small stars in Gemini, saw one which appeared to have a more sensible amount of diameter than the others, and this was found to be a planet, now known as Uranus. Its six satellites were discovered between 1787 and 1797, also by Herschel. The name originally given to the new planet was

Georgium Sidus, in honour of the reigning King, George III. Uranus is distant from the sun upwards of 1,800,000,000 miles. Its diameter is about 35,000 miles, or nearly four and a-half times that of the earth; its bulk about 80 times that of our planet.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### MARCH 14.—MOTHERING SUNDAY, 1920. ROSE SUNDAY.

The late Mr. F. T. Elworthy wrote:—  
“Mothering Sunday, Mid-Lent Sunday; doubtless so-called from pre-Reformation days, when the Mother Churches were visited in turn by the faithful. Now it is customary for servant girls to visit their mothers on that day, and generally to visit parents. Most likely the name of the day has given rise to the modern custom.”

\* \* \*

To-day is Mid-Lent Sunday, Mothering Sunday, or Refreshment Sunday. It was the day when our forefathers went a-mothering—that is, all who could journeyed “down hwome” to see their parents, and, incidentally, to take mother a present—very often a cake. It was a pretty custom, and I am sorry it is not now observed. “Mothering Sunday” should be the holiest saints’ day in a man or woman’s private calendar. What did the King say some time ago? “The foundations of national glory are set in the homes of the people, and they will only remain unshaken while the family life of our nation is strong, simple, and pure.” In days long a-gone, all parishioners attended the Parish or Mother Church on Mid-Lent Sunday. But the practice ceased at the Reformation. Children, however, made it a day on which to go down home to see mother, take her a simnel cake, be rewarded with a basin of firmity, and to realise the truth of the old saying: “Who goes a-mothering finds violets in the lane.” What a pretty custom! How the hearts of the “wold volks” were gladdened and life sweetened and glorified. It is a custom which still lingers in some parts of the country, and it can be met with in the beautiful “Land of Summer,” although I am afraid many observances of the maternal visit on Mid-Lent Sunday would now be difficult to discover. And firmity is fast disappearing as a wholesome dish; in fact, I wonder if “down hwome” anyone makes it like the old lady who used to regale us once a year. It was then sold in the street—not on Mid-Lent Sunday, but on Whitsun Friday—Club-day. It used to be retailed on Good Friday in some parts, which shows it was

not a dish wholly associated with Mothering Sunday, but that was the "real day" for its consumption in the good old times which are past.

Herrick refers to Mothering Sunday when he sings :

I'll to thee a simnel bring,  
'Gainst thou go'st a-mothering,  
So that when she blesseth thee,  
Half that blessing thou'lt give m .

Lent was a time of rigid fasting then, and furnity provided "a square meal." On the 8th March, in the 16th year of the reign of James I., William Priest, of Wiveliscombe, smith, and Thomas Darch, of the same place, joiner, gave security for John Crosse, of Liddeard Episcopi (Bishop's Lydeard), victualler, under a penalty of £30, and John himself under £100. The condition of this recognizance was that if Crosse or his assignés should not kill or dress, nor suffer to be killed, dressed, nor eaten any kind of flesh in his house for any respect from the date hereof during this time of Lent : then the recognizance to be void. A similar recognizance was entered into by others of Bishop's Lydeard, Wollington, Ashbrittle, &c. Here is an instance of people binding themselves, under penalty, to abstain from meat eating during Lent. But there are instances where others in Somerset—on payment—sought indulgence, because the rigors of abstinence proved too much for their health, or some other reason. We read that William Francis, of Combe Florey, and Margaret his wife, obtained leave for themselves and four other persons to eat meat in Lent on giving 6s 8d to the poor.

The furnity can has disappeared from the home of my youth. The youngsters then who revelled in the possession of a ha'penny to purchase the old woman's delectable concoction would probably not be satisfied, had they lived in the present year of grace, with any coin so small. I can see the dear old soul now. Her paraphernalia consisted of a low stool, a milking pail, a ladle—one of the old-fashioned sort with a brass handle—and, of course, the furnity. The stool was placed "aneast" the front entrance to the hotel, and the old dame looked as if "her wur tryin' to hidy away in a cubby-hole" formed by green oak trees, which had sprung into existence during the early morning by magic. She was the wife of a Crimean veteran, short and stout, wore a black bonnet tied with black strings, a gown of subdued hue, and a snow-white apron. The youngsters crowded around her, and ha'porths and penn'orths of furnity trickled down "red lanes." "Please, a ha'porth, missus, and gie I a vig in mine" was frequently heard, and the youngster

who was able to "land" a raisin—they are "vigs" in this part of the world—felt that he had been specially fortunate.

And what is furnmity? The question is not so easy to answer. One authority says it is composed of wheat, corn, currants, and spices boiled in milk. But our furnmity was better than that because it had "vigs" in it in profusion. Did the kindly heart of this old vendor prompt her to make this handsome addition to the "mess of pottage?" I know not. I never saw the ancient dame prepare her choice morsel, but I have not the least doubt it was of excellent quality. The rapidity with which it disappeared afforded proof of this. It was looked upon as a luxury, perhaps, because it was only obtainable this one day of the year.

Furmity (variously spelt) is referred to in Leviticus, for a copy of the Bible, dated 1531, says, "And ye shall eate neither bread, nor parched corne, nor furmenty of newe corne, vntill the selfe same daye that ye haue broughte an offeringe vnto your God." Thus it seems a dish of furnmity was so appraised as to be worthy of constituting a reward for performing a holy duty. Pliny, who lived shortly after the commencement of the Christian era, knew something about furnmity, for he mentions it in his writings. Evidently in the 16th century it was much the same as regards consistency as when the little boys and girls in a corner of "The Land of Summer" used to buy it from the old lady on Club-day, for in "Bonduca," a play by Beaumont & Fletcher, are the lines:—

"He'll find you out a food  
That needs no teeth nor stomach;  
A strange furnmity."

Furmity was not even despised by Kings, for Fabian, the English chronicler, writing in 1530, says: "An honourable feest in the great halle of Westmynster was kepte, where the Kyng syttyng in his astate, was seruyd with iii coursys, as herevnder ensuyth. Frument with venyson, etc." I doubt whether the King in Westminster Hall enjoyed the furnmity as well as the youngster holding a cup inscribed: "A present for a good boy," standing under the canopy of heaven on a Club-day with music and jollity around him, and a dear old lady as his host, looking out of her bower of greenery, sitting with queenly grace, her ladle representing her sceptre. Life in the country districts is more up-to-date than at the time of which I have been writing. But is it more honest, more thoroughly enjoyable? I leave others to answer the question. I have my own opinion. If these country scenes cannot



be perpetuated, they deserve to be recorded. In this "hurry-push" age, can one imagine a more delightful way of supporting the foundation of national glory than by a strict observance of "Mothering Sunday?" What a fount of happiness would be opened. In a period of gross selfishness such as we are witnessing to-day, would it not be a corrective for each one to take mother on Mid-Lent Sunday some token of affection, let it be only a cake, and receive a cup of firmity in return. But these things must be done in the true spirit and not as a mere incident in a display of vulgar wealth, which one sees so often at present. Some people are very fond of calling the "good old times" the "bad old times," but associated with those times were manners and customs the due observance of which has done a good deal towards moulding the character of Englishmen, and, in the main, making them brave, chivalrous, determined, kind, and generous.

A singer, some few years ago, referred to "Going Mothering" in the following lines, and I cannot, I think, do better than conclude by reproducing them:—

'Mongst the hills o' Somerset,  
 Wisht I was a-roaming yet!  
 Wisht I could go back there, and  
 Stroke the long grass with my hand.  
 There's the dear old home once more,  
 And there's mother at the door—  
 Dead, I know, for thirty year;  
 Yet she's singin', and I hear.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

#### SIMNEL SUNDAY.

A correspondent kindly sends us the following cutting from the *St. Anne's Express* (Lancs.). It is interesting to see our county quoted in a Lancashire paper:—Simnel Sunday will be restored to something of its pre-war importance as a mid-Lent festival on Sunday next. The eating of Simnel cakes is in commemoration of the banquet given by Joseph to his brethren, which forms the First Lesson of mid-Lent Sunday, and the feeding of the multitude of five thousand, which forms the Gospel of the day. The name is derived from the German "Semmel," a manchet or roll, and in Somerset a tea cake is known as a simlin.

\* \* \*

#### ROSE SUNDAY.

The fourth Sunday in Lent, which this year falls on the 14th, was at one time often known as Rose Sunday. It was so called from the Pope

presenting a golden rose, previously exhibited by him on his road to and from High Mass, to some distinguished personage, as a token of friendship and esteem. One such rose, half a yard high, was given to Henry VIII., with congratulations on a book written by that defender of the faith, and an occasion of particular interest to Somerset historians on which this gift was bestowed is recorded in an old French history of the family of Mohun, once lords of Dunster. The recipient in this case was that Sir Reginald de Mohun, who founded about 1254 the Cistercian Abbey of Newenham, on the borders of Devon and Somerset, as a lasting memorial of his piety and munificence. He not only built the Abbey, but endowed it and left it a handsome legacy. The unknown writer of Sir Reginald's biography records that he journeyed "to the Court of Rome, which was then at Lyons, to confirm and ratify his new Abbey to his great honour for ever, and he was at the Court in Lent when they sing the office of the Mass *Lactare Jerusalem*, on which day the custom of the Court is that the Apostle (*i.e.*, the Pope) gives to the most valiant and most honourable man who can be found at the said Court a rose or a flower of fine gold. They therefore searched the whole Court and found this Reginald to be the most noble of the whole Court, and to him Pope Innocent gave this rose or flower of gold, and the Pope asked him what manner of man he was in his own country. He answered 'a plain knight bachelor.' 'Fair son,' said the Pope, 'this rose or flower has never been given save to Kings, or to Dukes, or to Earls; therefore we will that you shall be Earl of Este,' that is of Somerset. Reginald answered and said 'O Holy Father, I have not wherewithal to maintain the title.' The Apostle therefore gave him two hundred marks a year to be received at the Choir of St. Paul's in London, out of the (Peter's) pence of England, to maintain his position; of which donation he brought back with him bulls which still have the lead attached, etc., together with ten other bulls of confirmation of his new Abbey of Newenham. After this day he bore the rose or flower in his arms." In his book on "Dunster and its Lords," Maxwell Lyte states that the said Reginald de Mohun sometimes styled himself "Earl of Somerset and Lord of Dunster," and that he bore for his arms a dexter arm habited in a maunch, the hand holding a fleur-de-lys, so there might be a modicum of truth in the old historian's pretty story.

—H.W.K.

**MARCH 15.—ARISTOBULUS, BISHOP OF  
GLASTONBURY, DIED A.D. 99.  
Dr. JOHN BULL DIED, 1628.**

An old historian tells us that Aristobulus was the first Bishop of Glastonbury, that he died A.D. 99, and that his death was commemorated on March 15th for many years afterwards.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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On this day Dr. John Bull, the reputed composer of the National Anthem, who, it is said, was born near Yeovil, died at Antwerp, and was buried on this day. He was organist of Hereford Cathedral from 1582 to 1585, after which he served in a similar capacity at the Chapel Royal (1591), eventually becoming organist of Antwerp Cathedral, in 1617. In 1620 he lived in the house adjoining the church on the site of the Place Verte, and his body was interred in the Cathedral.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**MARCH 17.—ST. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA.  
ST. PATRICK'S-DAY.**

If St. Joseph's-day is clear,  
We shall get a fertile year.

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Ireland is not the only place which commemorates the Seventeenth of March. England can claim to do so, and nowhere in England more so than the Isle of Avalon. Glastonbury and its neighbourhood is steeped in legend and story, and there are no more interesting legends than those which attach to St. Joseph and St. Patrick. A peculiar picturesqueness surrounds St. Joseph of Arimathea, the stories of the Holy Grail, the Holy Thorn, his journey from the coast to Glastonbury, where

From our old books I know  
That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,  
That there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,  
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to build :  
And there he built, with wattles from the marsh,  
A little lonely church in days of yore.

There is some doubt—as there must be—as to the place where St. Joseph first set foot in Britain. Marson says that St. Joseph, who was sent by St. Philip from Gaul (possibly Galatia and France, too), landed with his companions at Bridgwater in A.D. 63, and came up the new Roman road, halting outside the half deserted town of Glastonbury on Wirral Hill. He

brought his son with him. He carried two silver cruets with the precious Blood and Water washed from our Saviour's wounds, which cruets were buried with him in the sacred cemetery, and "are some day to be discovered." Arviragus welcomed the new settlers, and finding them neither Celtic nor of the Druid faith, gave them land and leave to settle. And, in his graphic way, Marson repeats the legend that St. Joseph and his friends built of mud and wattle the first Christian church, not only in England, but in the world. He thatched it with reed in the style of the land, and made it 60 feet long by 25 feet wide. There, in the Eastern fashion, with Greek rites, a Greek Easter, and Greek ordinations, the disciples lived in their separate huts and worshipped in this lowly dwelling.

There is another delightful story of the journey of Joseph told by E. J. Watson in his "Legend of Crewkerne." It is worth repeating.

"When Philip sent the Arimathean Joseph and his 12 companions west they bore with them that awful vase used by Our Lord at the Last Supper, and in which the good St. Joseph caught the drops of blood which trickled from the side of Christ. Out from the east they sailed, and fair winds drove their keel along the inland sea atween the Herculean pillars, and away past foreign lands, until, upon a winter's afternoon, they made the borde of Albion, which they beat to where they reached a deep blue bay flanked by dark yellow cliffs, and anchorage found beside a river's mouth. The sea was rippling into little waves before the shore wind, borne from neighbouring high lands. A thin grey mist had formed on Lewsdon's head to roll adowne the valley of the Brit. Green crofts and tillage stretched athwart the glenne, which ended in a combe. Smoke rose from timbern houses built in little clearings on the forest lands. Eggardon towered three hundred feet aloft, and on it herd-groomes watched. The stars peeped out and pierced the fog which swiftly forewent as the land breeze freshened. High in her glory rose the moon, and sheared the bay with silvern strakes of dancing light. Far forth a beacon gleaned, and over all was clear, cold beauty. The bordering cleeves confined the light within the bay and vale, and formed a lustering comet-tail, with Lewsdon for its nucleus. Above the keel a dazzling star stood still and poured its light upon the grail which rested by St. Joseph. Foreby his comrades lay asleep. Next day the party took the land, and having drave a cross into the strand passed up the western river marge with muchell joyaunce, and as they strode they bore along the rood, and

sang. Eft soches they clombe a bank, and struck a path which had been worn by traders journeying coastward with their metals for Phœnician merchants, and their lime-hounds for the Grecians of Massilia and Narbo. Another path ran overthwart. On either hand the lands outstrained some two miles flatwise, then sloped up to swell into great hills embossed with woods at places marked by rhines. And o'er the mounts to right and left a cutting showed with wagon way, where tin was overhauled to foreign keels. The high end of the vale was rich, and at the throat were grassy mounds, which smoothed themselves into a fine and fertile plain. Along the farther edge a line of huts were built, and these were peopled by strange folk, who, as St. Joseph and his companie approached, ran from the housen with their javelins, and at a sign prest ready. But Joseph swift upreared the vase, and great light shone around, astonying the plainsmen, and they dropped their aims. Then did the little band advance with roods aloft and offer signs of friendship. And when the natives saw the wanderers were weaponless, they made them welcome in their homes, and gave them hospitage. And Joseph and his fellows stayed that night with them, and found that they had paced five miles of track, and in the morning, as they made to go, one of the pilgrims stuck his rood into the ground to mark their halting place. And now the way they coursed ran through the woodland, which began to form to northward of the plain. At first the trees were thin, but as the band went deeper in the wood it thickened with a growth of many trunks of oak and ash, and bramble, holm, and eglantine together clung in thickets; and oft the pilgrims fought the undergrowth of small wood. When darkness waxed, they found that they did wend their way amiss, and on the moon's uprising had not reached the other side. And so they lay together in an arborette, and waited for the morrow. At sunrise, having fixed another rood, they toiled along the forest till the trees began to thin, and presently a clearing struck which held an earthwork, yclept Cunnygar. And down the slope were huts of wood and reeds, and kine and sheep and asses grazed around. And right and left, and far ahead, a fertile stretch of gentle lands spread out; and here and there were winding dales of little depth, and scattered copses and rich plough-lands, and combes, and cowlears, crofts, and stubble. And on the right, as far as eye could reach, the beacon hills and the forests of the Belgæ reared, and all before the land rose softly. A stream flowed slowly through the vale, about a mile below the fastnesse, and

scattered in the deane were herdsmen's cabinets. Beneath the slope from Cunnegar the pilgrims stopped, and soon the shepherds came around and questioned them, and proved right debonaire. And curds and whey and wheaten bread, with biggins of new milk, were brought the wanderers. And eftsoones Joseph lessoned hem of Him whose blood embrewed the sacred vase, and wonder held them bound, and they were holpen, and were feyne that more be told them. And it had woxen late when Joseph placed the chalice on a stone, and bright light shone around which caused much fear and stonement. And next day when they gan to go, there was a great dole. And once again a rood was fixed to mark the halting-place, and as a sign of Christ, and of the sacred vessel. For still nine days they went, and other nine roods fixed to mark their halts. And when they started on their thirteenth day, except St. Joseph, they were roodless. And broken were they all by penurie, when from a hill top they descried a glassy isle. But no more could they pace that night so toworne were they; and upon the crest they rested till the morning. And to this day the hill is known as Weary All and here St. Joseph struck his rood, and it took root and blossomed. Then with much joyance they pursued their way; and in that Isle of Appletrees St. Joseph died, and from the gaze of man the chalice vanished, nathemore to be seen until the Knight appears who shall achieve its Quest. And thus St. Joseph's journey, and the marking of the halts."

The Arthurian legends have made us familiar with a tradition which in mediæval times, and, indeed, till a recent date, was considered to be unimpeachable, as indicating the true source of British Christianity—how St. Joseph, with others, was banished and came to Britain, how they landed on the South West coast and made their way to Avalon bearing with them the Holy Grail, how they preached to the people, how King Arviragus gave them land and allowed them to settle, and how they built their little wattle church. Perhaps, no one really believes this mythical story, but this much is certain, that no place in England has ever attempted to rival Glastonbury as the site of the first British Christian settlement, and it is because of that we natives of Somerset are so proud of Glastonbury, and are so proud of our county. We have something attaching to it which rivals anything else in the kingdom. Professor Freeman wrote: "The ancient church of wood or wicker which legend spoke of as the first temple reared on British soil to the honour of Christ was preserved as a hallowed relic, even after the greater church

of stone was built by Dunstan to the east of it. And though not a fragment of either of these buildings still remains, yet each alike is represented in the peculiar arrangement of that mighty and now fallen minster. The wooden church of the Briton is represented by the famous Lady Chapel, better known as the Chapel of St. Joseph; the stone church of the West Saxons is represented by the vast Abbey Church itself. Nowhere else among all the churches of England can we find one which can thus trace up its uninterrupted being to days before the Teuton had set foot on British soil.

The story of the Holy Thorn has been told under date, January 5th, but it will, perhaps, be of interest if I give a rhymed version of the legend which was printed nearly a century ago. The writer tried to use the vernacular, but although he does not appear to have altogether succeeded, yet his lines have some attraction.

Who hath not hir'd of Avalon ?  
 'Twar talk'd o' much and long agon,  
 The wonders o' the holy thorn,  
 The which zoon ater Christ war born,  
 Here a planted war by Arimathe,  
 Thie Joseph that com'd over sea,  
 And planted Christianity.  
 Tha za that whun a landed vust  
 (Zich plazen war in God's own trust),  
 A stuck his staff into the groun  
 And over his shoulder lookin' roun,  
 Whativer mid his lot bevall,  
 He cried aloud now, " Weary all !"  
 The staff het budded and het grew,  
 And at Xmas bloom'd the wud da droo  
 And still het blooms at Xmas bright,  
 But best tha za at dork midnight,  
 A pruf o' this, if pruf you will,  
 Is voun in the name o' Weary-all Hill  
 Let tell Pumparles or lazy Brue,  
 That what is told is vor sertain true !

Pumparles is generally supposed to be a corruption of *pons periculosus*, that is, a dangerous bridge—a bridge over the river Brue, near Weary All Hill.

The old Somerset people believed that  
 Is't on St. Joseph's-day clear  
 So follows a fertile year.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### ST. PATRICK.

St. Patrick is also an interesting character, with peculiarly close associations with Somerset. He, too, is surrounded by legendary lore. Some writers aver that he was buried at Glastonbury. William of Malmesbury, who has written a good

deal of fiction, says the body of the saint was placed in a stone pyramid near the altar towards the East, which "for veneration of the Saint, the diligence of servants has covered with gold and silver." Others state Ireland's patron saint was born at Glastonbury, but as St. Patrick himself says he was born at Bovana of Tabernize, a locality which is probably to be identified with Kilpatrick in Scotland, then, perhaps, the greater reliability is to be placed on the latter statement.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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## MARCH 18.—EDWARD, KING & MARTYR, DIED 979.

### EDWARD, KING AND MARTYR.

A correspondent writes :—"As Somerset was a part of the kingdom of the West Saxons, it naturally claims its share of King Edward, the translation of whose body from Wareham to Shaftesbury, three years after his death, is commemorated on June 20th, while his cruel murder at Corfe Castle, by his mother-in-law, Elfrida, is commemorated on March 18th."

\* \* \*

This Edward, who succeeded to the throne A.D. 975, was the eldest son of Edgar, whom he followed as King of the West Saxons at the age of 13 years. He is principally interesting to Somerset people because he was baptised by our St. Dunstan, when Archbishop of Canterbury. His step-mother, Elfrida, the late King's widow, opposed his succession and formed a party in favour of her own son, Ethelred. Edward was, however, crowned, and under the guidance of Dunstan ruled well, but only for about three years. He was treacherously stabbed, it is said, by orders of Elfrida, and was buried, without any royal honours, at Wareham. It is asserted that many miracles were performed at his grave, and two years later his body was removed, with much pomp, to King Alfred's minster at Shaftesbury. The name Martyr has been given to him more on account of his unjust and cruel murder than for anything which he specially achieved in defence of the Christian faith, but he was held in high estimation for the favour which he showed to Monasticism.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.



### MARCH 19.—BISHOP KEN DIED 1711.

Thomas Ken, by general consent the most saintly of the Bishops of Bath and Wells, died at Longleat, the residence of his friend, Lord Weymouth, between five and six o'clock on the morning of March 19th, 1711. In compliance with his wishes the Bishop was buried in the Parish Churchyard of Frome Selwood, the nearest parish of his former diocese to Longleat, at sunrise on the morning of March 21st. The coffin was borne by twelve poor men, who carried it in turn in relays of six. The grave is under the east window of the chancel. Over the grave was placed an iron grating, coffin-shaped, surmounted by a mitre and pastoral staff. There is now a stone canopy above this iron work. Perhaps some of the readers of this note are familiar with those verses by Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton, which contain the lines:—

“ Let other thoughts, where'er I roam,  
 Ne'er from my memory cancel  
 The coffin-fashion'd tomb at Frome,  
 That lies behind the chancel :  
 A basket-work where bars are bent,  
 Iron instead of osier,  
 And shapes above that represent  
 A mitre and a crosier.”

(The rhyme of lines one and three is faulty, as Frome is pronounced Froom.) Frome Church has among its greatest treasures the “little patin and chalice gilt,” which Bishop Ken bequeathed to the parish where he was buried “for the use of sick persons who desire the Holy Sacrament.”

—JOHN COLES.

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### JOHN WESLEY AT PENSFORD.

The following brief extract from the Bath and Wells Diocesan History by the Rev. Wm. Hunt, is perhaps worth quoting under this date:—“On March 19th, 1742, Wesley was invited by several godly people to preach at Pensford, on the green outside the village. A crowd of people had been engaged in baiting a bull, and they tried to drive the worried and tortured beast against the table on which the preacher stood. After an hour spent in disgusting cruelty, they finally upset the table by pushing the dying bull by main force against it, and so broke up the congregation.”

**MARCH 20.—ST. CUTHBERT'S DAY.**  
**DEATH OF HENRY NORRIS,**  
**F.R.C.S., 1870.**  
**TAUNTON FIRST INCORPOR-**  
**ATED, 1627.**  
**MONTACUTE PRIORY SUR-**  
**RENDERED, 1539.**

The Priory of Montacute was founded in 1102 and was one of the few Cistercian Monasteries in England. In 1407 the Priory renounced its allegiance to Cluny and acknowledged as the Head of the Order in England the Prior of Lewes. The last Prior of Montacute was Robert Shirborne, and he surrendered the house to the King's Commissioner Petre on March 20th, 1539.

\* \* \*

On this day Henry Norris, F.R.C.S., the father of Hugh Norris, one who loved archaeology and local history, and the author of "South Petherton in the Olden Time," was born at Taunton on September 17th, 1789, and after practising as a surgeon at South Petherton for a long period, died at Charmouth, Dorset, on March 20th, 1870, in his 81st year. He was one of the early students of the Somerset dialect, and it is to him that we are largely indebted for the material contained in the Glossary published by the Somerset Archaeological Society in 1872. He was a Fellow of the Royal Archaeological Institute, and an Associate of the British Archaeological Association.

**INCORPORATION OF TAUNTON.**

Taunton was first incorporated on the 20th March, 1627, but lost its charter because it defended its liberties against the King, who thought he had a right to govern wrong—another writer describes it as disloyalty of the inhabitants during the Civil War. The grant of incorporation began with the words:—"The King to all those to whom these presents shall come, Greeting: Whereas our borough of Taunton, situated in the parish of St. Mary Magdalene, in our county of Somerset, is a very ancient and populous borough, and the burgesses and inhabitants of the same borough have humbly supplicated us that for the government and amelioration of the same borough, we will graciously exhibit and extend our grace and munificence and deign to create the same Burgesses into a corporate body by the name of the Mayor and Burgesses of the Burgh of Taunton."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## ST. CUTHBERT.

According to the "New Curiosities of Literature" by Geo. Soane, B.A. (pub. 1847), "The most important saint of this month is St. Cuthbert," but this north-country saint has no direct connection with Somerset. Only one church in the county is dedicated to him, viz., St. Cuthbert's at Wells. But the following interesting legend is told of the saint's appearance to King Alfred in the fort which he had built at Athelney. We quote from Mrs. Boger's "Myths, Scenes, and Worthies of Somerset":—

Now it happened one day that all his followers had scattered themselves in search of necessary supplies, and he and his mother were in the fort alone, when a poor man came to the door begging an alms. They wondered much how he could have found his way to this secluded and jealously-guarded spot. Osburga told him that they were as poor as he was; but the King, who was reading, desired his mother to give him bread. She answered that they had but one loaf left to them, which would not suffice them for provision for the day, yet he prayed her to give half of it to the man, bidding her trust in Him who had fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes.

As they were awaiting the return of their companions, both Alfred and his mother lay down to rest, and as they slept the same vision appeared to each of them. Cuthbert, former Bishop of Lindisfarne, appeared, and thus addressed the King: "I am Cuthbert, if ever you heard of me; God hath sent me to announce good fortune to you; and since England has nearly paid the penalty of her crimes, God now, through the merits of her native saints, looks upon her with an eye of mercy. You, too, so pitifully banished from your native kingdom, shall shortly be again seated with honour on your throne, of which I give you this extraordinary token: Your fishers shall this day bring home a great quantity of fish in baskets, which will be so much the more extraordinary because the river, at this time hard-bound with ice, could warrant no such expectation, especially as the air, now dripping with cold rain, mocks the art of the fisher. But when your fortune shall succeed to your wishes, you will act as becomes a King if you conciliate God, your helper, and me, His messenger, with suitable devotion." Saying this the saint divested the sleeping King of his anxiety, and comforted his mother also with the same joyful intelligence. When they awoke, they repeatedly declared that each had had the self-same dream, when the fishermen,

entering, displayed such a multitude of fishes as would have been sufficient to satisfy the appetite of a numerous army.

A foot note adds :—" It is remarked as a sort of confirmation of this legend that a church in Wells is dedicated to St. Cuthbert, a north-country saint (*Vide* Freeman's " Old English History.")"

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## MARCH 21.—ST. BENEDICT'S-DAY. CARE SUNDAY.

Chambers' " Book of Days " says " The history of St. Benedict is chiefly interesting to us from the circumstance that he was in a manner the father of Western monachism, and especially of that portion of it which exercised so great and durable an influence on the social history of this part of Europe." The only monasteries existing in England at the time of the Conquest were of the Benedictine order, and a number of famous houses of this order stood in Somerset. The rule of the earlier Anglo-Saxon monks had been very loose, and their monasteries partook more of the character of secular than of religious establishments. In the 10th century St. Dunstan, with the aid of some other ecclesiastics of his time, forced the Benedictine order upon the Anglo-Saxons, and it was still more completely established in this island by the Normans.

\* \* \*

An old couplet says :—

Care Sunday, care away ;  
Palm Sunday and Easter Day.

According to Hone " Care Sunday is the fifth Sunday from Shrove Tuesday, consequently it is the next Sunday before Palm Sunday and the second Sunday before Easter. Why it is denominated *Care* Sunday is very uncertain. . . . It is noted in an old calendar that on this day a dole is made of soft *beans*, which was also a rite in the funeral ceremonies of heathen Rome. This dole of soft beans on Care Sunday accounts for the present custom of eating fried peas on the same day. . . . This is said by an old author to have taken its rise from the disciples plucking the ears of corn and rubbing them in their hands. Hence it is clear that the custom of eating peas or beans upon this day is only a continuation of the unrecollected 'dole' of the Romish Church."

**MARCH 23.—CASTLE CARY FAIR.  
“LITTLE WEAVING TUES-  
DAY.”**

The first charter of which we have any record for Castle Cary markets or fairs was granted in 1468 by Edward IV. to John de Zouche for holding a market on Thursday in each week and fairs on the eve and morrow of St. Philip and St. James (May 1st) and of St. Margaret (July 20th). In 1614 James I. granted to Edward, Earl of Hertford, a second charter in which no reference was made to the foregoing. It granted a market every Tuesday, and a fair on the Thursday before Palm Sunday. We cannot say when the day of this fair was changed to the present Tuesday. The Earl of Hertford did not long retain his privileges, for in 1616 Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, the celebrated and unhappy favourite of Queen Elizabeth, bought (amongst other properties) the fairs and markets of Castle Cary. An old inhabitant informed us more than 20 years ago that this first fair in the year, held on the Tuesday before Palm Sunday, was called by the old tick and dowlais weavers “Little Weaving Tuesday,” and he assured us that very little weaving was formerly done on that day. He also said that this fair was called “Weaving Tuesday” in order to keep in mind the starting of the weaving industry in Castle Cary.

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**MARCH 24.—LORD CHIEF JUSTICE DYER  
DIED.**

Sir James Dyer, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, was an eminent lawyer whose home was Roundhill, near Wincanton. He studied at Oxford, and entering the law became Serjeant-at-Law, M.P. for Cambridge, and Speaker of the Parliament which met on the 1st March, 1552. He was a firm and staunch adherent to the principles of the reformed religion. In that year he was appointed Recorder of Cambridge, a Puisne Justice of the Common Pleas in 1558, whilst he held the high office of Lord Chief Justice for 20 years. George Whetstone, the poet, “moeved with the passion of a common sorrow,” celebrated in verse the “pretious vertues which governed the good Lord Dyer.” One of his sisters married William Rowsell, Solicitor General to Queen Elizabeth, who resided at Forde Abbey, which he had purchased from Sir Amyas Poulet. Another sister, Dorothy, married Simon Farewell, of Hill's Bishop, near Taunton. Dyer's volume of re-

ports is valuable and curious. An old portrait of the Lord Chief Justice hangs in the Wincanton Town Hall.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## MARCH 25.—LADY-DAY.

### AXBRIDGE FAIR.

### BRIDGWATER DOCKS OPENED 1841.

Lady-day, or the Festival of the Annunciation, commemorates the visit of Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary when he announced to her the coming birth of Our Lord. In the consultudinary of Sarum it is called the Festival of "Our Lord's" Annunciation. In the calendar of the Prayer Book the title is the "Annunciation of Mary;" in the Table of Proper Lessons the "Annunciation of Our Lady." The popular designation is "Lady-day." The festival can be traced back beyond the middle of the 5th Century, collects for it being extant in the Sacramentaries of St. Gregory (A.D.590), and St. Gelasius (A.D.492), and a homily on the day existing which was preached by Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople, who died A.D.446. It is also mentioned by St. Athanasius, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and other writers of equally early date. It is one of five days on which the Virgin Mary is commemorated in the Church of England. The flower, cardamine, or lady's smock, with its milk white flowers, is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and appears about Lady-day. In Somerset we call the flowers of the wild convolulus lady's smocks, but meadow-cress, cuckoo flower, has, no doubt, the rightful claim to the name. All the children know the cuckoo flower with its pretty clusters of pale lilac cross-shaped flowers, veined with darker lines, growing on a stem about a foot high, the leaves consisting of several leaflets on each side stalk. This is "The lady's smock all silver white" of Shakespeare. There is a curious similarity between the local weather lore for St. Joseph's-day (the 17th) and for Lady-day (the 25th). Both declare that if the day be bright and clear, we shall have a fertile year. It is sometimes better to have two strings to one's bow than one.

\* \* \*

An old institution associated with the town of Axbridge is the Lady-day Fair. It is an ancient institution. The holding of the Fair seems to have been altered from its origina

date. A charter was granted by Henry III. to William Longsword, grandson of Henry II., and afterwards by Edward I. to the Bishop of Bath and Wells, by a deed still preserved. The Fair was to be opened on the eve of the feast of St. Barnabas (June 11th), and held for three days following. The burghers of Axbridge had not only this opportunity of trading with strangers within their own walls, but by a Charter, granted by Edward III., they, in common with all tenants of the churches of Bath and Wells, were made free of all toll throughout the Kingdom.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

We quote the following from "Jarman's History of Bridgwater" :—On March 25th, 1841, the docks were opened for traffic, and was made the occasion of a public holiday. At dawn a salute was fired from a battery on the eminence by the basin; and at half-past six the tide came up, entering the outer dock with great rapidity, amid the cheering of the numerous spectators. The tug *Endeavour* steamed down the river with a party of ladies and gentlemen, and a band of music to meet the first vessel to enter the dock, which happened to be the *Henry*, of Bridgwater. The latter vessel was beautifully decorated, and sailed into the dock amid the acclamations of several thousand spectators, the roaring of cannon, the ringing of bells, and the strains of the National Anthem from the band.

\* \* \*

An east wind on Lady-day  
Will keep in till the end of May.

\* \* \*

I remember an old man telling me that in his young days both indoor and outdoor servants used to make a year's agreement with their employers on March 25th that they would not change their situations during the following year.

—W. C. BAKER

\* \* \*

Miss Masey writes :—This was the recognised "Notice Day" between domestic servants and their mistresses. I can well remember when, if notice to leave at Lady-day was not given, it was assumed that, barring accidents, the girl would remain for at least another year!

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Prior to September, 1752, the civil or legal year commenced on March 25th, but the so-called "Historical" year had for a long time begun on

January 1st. In 1752 it was enacted that the civil year should in future commence on January 1st. This change removed a cause of some confusion in the calendar. Formerly, in describing the year between the 1st of January and the 25th of March, civilians called each day within that period one year earlier than historians: while

The former wrote—Jan. 7th, 1658.

The latter wrote—Jan. 7th, 1659.

Most of our old newspapers, of which we have copies in our own offices, gave both years, thus Feb. 14th, 1740—1741.

### MARCH 28.—PALM SUNDAY.

A correspondent writes:—I remember when a lad hearing an old saying by my grandfather that "He who hath not a palm in his hand on Palm Sunday must have his hand cut off." I imagine this was a play upon the word "palm," and that what the saying really meant was that any man who had not a *palm* in his hand must have lost his hand and the palm with it.

\* \* \*

Palm Sunday is the day on which is commemorated our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, five days before His Passion. Throughout a great part of Christendom it is marked by a procession of palms. Some authors affirm that this ceremony is as old as the 4th Century, and claim St. Cyril, of Jerusalem, as alluding to it. It is certain, however, that the ceremony was practised in the 5th Century. Palm Sunday still retains its name in the calendar of the Church of England, but the procession of palms was abolished in the reign of Edward VI. The willow blossom, called palm, is used as a substitute for the genuine article, and it was said in olden days in Somerset that he that hath not a palm in his hand on Palm Sunday must have his hand cut off. There is another old saying in our county, that if the sun shines clear on Palm Sunday there will be a great store of fair weather, plenty of corn, and other fruits of the earth.

### MARCH 28.—BORROWED DAYS.

The last three days of March (old style) are called the borrowing days; for as they are remarked to be unusually stormy, it is feigned that March had borrowed them from April to extend the sphere of his rougher sway.

March borrows of April

Three days, and they are ill;

April borrows of March again

Three days of wind and rain.



It was an old saying that "The worst blast comes in the borrowing days." In the "Country Almanack" for 1676, among the "remarques upon April" are the following:—

No blustering blasts from March need April borrow :

His own oft proves enow to breed us sorrow ;  
Yet if he weep (with us to sympathise),  
His trickling tears will make us wipe our eyes.

The Spanish story about the borrowing days is that a shepherd promised March a lamb if he would temper the winds to suit his flocks ; but after gaining his point the shepherd refused to pay over the lamb. In revēge March borrowed three days from April in which fiercer winds than ever blew and punished the deceiver.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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### MARCH 29.—KING EDWARD I. AT COKER, 1297.

Edward I. probably saw more of Somerset than any other English King except John. It is recorded he was in the county in 1276, 1278, 1285, 1292, and 1297 ; while he was at Bristol on New Year's-day, 1285.

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### MARCH 30.—BATH PROPHECY UNFULFILLED, 1809. SOMERTON FAIR.

On the 30th March, 1809, the destruction of the city of Bath was to have been effected by a convulsion of the earth, which should cause "Beacon-hill to meet Beechen Cliff." This inauspicious junction was said to have been foretold by an old woman, who had derived her information from an angel ! This reported prophecy rendered many of the inhabitants truly unhappy, and instigated crowds of visitors to quit the city. The portentous hour, twelve o'clock, passed, and the believers were ashamed of their former fears. The alarm is said to have originated with two noted cock-feeders who lived near the before-mentioned hills. They made a match to fight their favourite cocks on Good Friday, which fell on this day ; but fearing the magistrate might interfere, if it became public, they named the cocks after their respective walks, and in the agreement it was specified that "Mount Beacon would meet Beechen Cliff precisely at twelve o'clock on Good Friday." Some credulous beings took the words in their

plain sense, and as stories seldom lose by being repeated, the report became a marvellous prophecy!

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

The Cottonian MS. Julius F vi f 404, referring to Somerton, says:—

The markt there on Mondaye. the Fayre begynnythe on palme Mondaye & so every Mowndaye & every thyrd Mowndaye a very grett & famous Fayer. the weche indurythe. 10 wekes. togythers. tyll the harveste comme in.

Formerly it was the custom to hang out a bough over the doors or windows of houses at Somerton on fair day (Palm Tuesday) to signify that cider was sold within, and a big trade was done in that line in days gone by.



# APRIL.

Hail April, true Medea of the year,  
That makest all things young and fresh appear.

\* \* \* \* \*

When we despair, thy seasonable showers  
Comfort the corn, and cheer the drooping flowers.

We have entered upon the fourth month of the year—April, which greens the ground, “making it all one emerald.” We are being treated to an elaborate show of spring blooms, and the hedgerows are putting on their new dresses. Soon we shall be anticipating the cuckoo’s note, The trees are showing their fresh green leaves, and in every direction nature is busy. It is a charming month of sunshine and showers, and, be it said, it is a month which is continually spoken well of by the poets and rhymesters. Apparently a cold April is most propitious, for the old adage runs :—

A cold April  
The barn will fill.

Again :—

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

We know, of course, that

April showers bring forth May flowers.

April, says the author of the “Mirror of Months,” is spring—the only spring month that we possess—at once the most juvenile of the months, and the most feminine—never knowing her own mind for a day together. Fickle as a fond maiden with her first lover ; toying it with the young sun till he withdraws his beams from her, and then weeping till she gets them back again.

April generally begins with raw, unpleasant weather, the influence of the equinoctial storms still in some degree prevailing. This accounts for the well-known rhyme : “Till April’s dead, change not a thread ;” and “April’s snow breeds grass.”

In the ancient Alban calendar, in which the year was represented as consisting of 10 months of irregular length, April stood first with 36 days to its credit. In the Calendar of Romulus, it had the second place, and was composed of

30 days. Numa's twelve-month calendar assigned it the fourth place with 29 days; and so it remained till the reformation of the year by Julius Cæsar, when it recovered its former 30 days, which it has since retained. It is commonly supposed that the name was derived from the Latin *Aperio*, I open, as marking the time when the buds of the trees and flowers open. If this were the case (says Chambers) it would make April singular among the months, for the names of none of the rest, as designated in Latin, have any reference to natural conditions or circumstances. There is not the least probability in the idea. April was considered among the Romans as Venus's month, obviously because of the reproductive powers of nature now set agoing in several of her departments. Our Anglo-Saxon forefathers called the month Oster-month, and for this appellation the most plausible origin assigned is that it was the month during which east winds prevailed.

It is apparently believed all the world over that April should be cold, and thus prevailing east winds should not be unwelcome.

The French say: "Cold April gives bread and wine;" the Spaniards vary this by: "A cold April, much bread and little wine;" while the Portuguese aver that "A cold and moist April fills the cellar and fattens the cow." But April introduces a lovely season; poets sing of it as a jubilee of life, love, and liberty to nature, and, of course, we believe the poets.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### WEATHER (AND OTHER) LORE FOR APRIL.

A dry April, not the farmer's will.

April wet, is what he would get.

A cold April the barn will fill.

Till April's dead change not a thread.

Plant your 'taters when you will,  
They won't come up before April.

Betwixt April and May if there be rain,  
'Tis worth more than oxen and wain.

April rains for men, May for beasts.

(*i. e.*, a rainy April is good for corn, and a wet May for grass).

Marry in April when you can,  
Joy for maiden and for man.

A wet Good Friday and a wet Easter-day,  
Make plenty of grass, but very little hay.

If it rains on Easter Sunday it will rain on every  
Sunday till Whitsuntide.

An April flood,  
Carries away the frog and her brood.

April and May are the keys of all the year.  
April cling, good for nothing.

April weather,  
Rain and sunshine both together.  
If cherries blow in April,  
You'll have your fill ;  
But if in May,  
They'll go away.

When April blows his horn,  
It's good for hay and corn.  
(*i e*, when it thunders in April, for thunder  
is usually accompanied with rain).

Ash before oak, a regular soak ;  
Oak before ask, only a splash.

This last couplet is used in many different  
forms—often contradictory.

The following version is quoted in "Lorna :  
A Romance," which, we believe, was written by  
Mr. R. W. Gregory and Dr. John Read :—

If the oak come out before the ash,  
We'll have a summer of wet and splash ;  
If the ash come out before the oak,  
The summer'll be all dust and smoke.

\* \* \*

At Wellington it has for many years been the  
custom to hold a pleasure fair on Good Friday  
on the grounds of the Waterloo Monument on  
the summit of Wellington Hill, large numbers  
of young people taking the three mile walk from  
the town through the fields and woods.

Good Friday was formerly called "Long  
Friday." An extract from the Anglo-Saxon  
Chronicle : "Now we will relate what happened  
in King Stephen's time. In his reign the Jews  
of Norwich bought a Christian child before  
Easter, and tortured him after the same manner  
as our Lord was tortured ; and on Long Friday  
hanged him on a rood, in mockery of our Lord,  
and afterwards buried him. They supposed that  
it would be concealed, but our Lord showed  
that he was a holy martyr. And the monks  
took him and buried him with high honour in  
the minster. And through our Lord he worketh  
wonderful and manifold miracles, and is called  
St. William."

The Somerset dish of furmity, mentioned  
previously, has its counterpart in use on Good  
Friday at Upwey, in Dorset. It is sold at a  
penny a cup, and is made of wheat, milk, sugar,  
carrots, honey, and spice, so a resident of Upwey  
tells me.

In 1106 (King Henry I's reign), "on the  
night preceding the Lord's Supper, that is the  
Thursday before Easter, were seen two moons  
in the heavens before day, the one in the east,

and the other in the west, both full, and it was the fourteenth day of the moon. At Easter was the King at Bath."

In the Easter of 878 it was that King Alfred with his little force raised a work at Athelney, from which he assailed the Danes, and the seventh week after Easter he sallied forth to the East of Selwood, and there collected a large army, with which he commenced the re-conquest of his land.

It was also just after Easter, in 871, that he became King by the death of his brother Ethered.

In Alfred's reign it was enacted that traders who carried on their usual avocations on the Lord's Day should be fined 30 shillings (a Dane for the same offence should be mulcted in 12 pence and forfeit the article taxed).

For the feasts of Christmas and Easter Sunday the fines were to be doubled.

"When you hear the cuckoo for the first time you must run up and down the road as hard as you can go, or you'll be lazy all the year."

"And you mustn't take robins' eggs or tear out their nest, or you will be sure to have crooked fingers."

April is the month in which the greater number of our migrants arrive. Appended is a list in the order in which they usually arrive, but the date of their coming varies considerably, even in adjoining parts of our own county. For instance, the cuckoo is frequently heard in the sequestered combs near Wiveliscombe quite early in April or the end of March, nearly a fortnight before he is calling in the more open Vale of Taunton Deane.

The "cuckoo's mate," as the wryneck is called, comes usually about five days before the more noted traveller.

It is very lucky to have swallows building in your premises, and martins to make their nests under the eaves of your house. (These come about the middle of the month.)

Some of the other migrants are:—Wheatear, chiff-chaff, nightingale, willow warbler, sand-martin, tree pipit, yellow wagtail, blackcap, redstart (locally the "fire-tail"), whitethroat, reed warbler, corncrake, pied flycatcher, turtle dove, swift, nightjar, red-backed shrike (this latter appears to be rather rare in our county).

F. W. MATHEWS.

**APRIL 1.—ALL FOOLS' DAY.**

**MAUNDY THURSDAY, 1920.**

**SKIRMISH at WINCANTON, 1645**

**GLASTONBURY ABBEY PURCHASED BY THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, 1909.**

If it thunders on All Fool's-day,  
It brings good crops of corn and hay.

\* \* \*

If All Fool's-day were not recorded in the Calendar, I do not think many people would recollect that the First of April was associated with anything beyond, perhaps, say, the birth of the late Prince Bismarck. The custom of "making fools" on the 1st of April has died out like the Valentine. Naturally, a few jokers are to be found, but the silly practice once in vogue is nearly forgotten. England was not the only country which observed All Fool's-day. France, Sweden, and probably other countries "made fools." The custom is believed to be connected with an immemorial celebration by the Hindoos, near the same period, in India, towards the end of March, called the Huli festival, when mirth and festivity reign among the Hindoos of every class, and people are sent upon errands and expeditions which end in disappointment and raise a laugh at the expense of the person sent. We used to follow this custom in Somerset. Lads were sent to the chemist for "pigeon's milk," to the saddler for "strap oil," they were told their mothers wanted them just when they were off to enjoy themselves. One manner of making "an April Fool" was to send a youngster to someone with a note bearing the instruction "Send the fool farther." The note was re-addressed, and the "fool" continued his journey, only to find himself, if he were fool enough not to discover he was being made "a fool," at the other end of the parish with nothing to do but return home and contemplate his sleeveless errand. There were hundreds of ways in which people were made "fools." It is still a common expression to hear one who has been deceived in some manner exclaim "You make me look like a Tom Fool." Some people believe we borrowed the custom from the French, whose "Poisson d'Avril" is of very ancient origin. The literature of the 18th Century has many allusions to April fooling. Charles Lamb, too, has an essay on "All Fool's-day." He had "yearnings towards that simple architect who built his house upon the sand." He writes:—  
I have never made an acquaintance since that

lasted or a friendship that answered, with any that had not some tincture of the absurd in the characters . . . he that hath not a dram of folly in his mixture hath pounds of much worse matter is his composition." Nowadays April fooling, if it has any existence, is confined to the young. It is not supposed to fit the wisdom of maturity. Nevertheless, long ago in the youth of the world, men and women went with mirth and light hearts to greet the spring on the 1st of April. Who shall say whether folly does not some time haunt the confines of wisdom, or whether the unworldly dream of the fool is not nearer the truth than the toil of the self-seeker.

#### MAUNDY THURSDAY.

There is a certain amount of ambiguity about the origin of this word, some holding that it comes from the word "maund," a basket, which was used to hold the bread, or broken food, which, at one time, was bestowed on the poor by the Catholics on the day before their great fast. Others believe it to be directly derived from the Latin *dies mandati*, the command given by our Saviour after He had washed His Disciples' feet: "A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." Maundy Thursday was, at one time, known as Shere Thursday from the custom prevailing of men at that time (1511) shearing or cutting their hair and beard at the close of Lent. The first known to have observed Maundy Thursday was St. Augustine. It was customary to wash the feet of pilgrims of that day in imitation of the humility of the Saviour. Monarchs followed the custom of St. Augustine. The last English Sovereign who performed the quaint rite was James II. in the ancient Chapel of Whitehall. Cardinal Wolsey, who was a figure in Somerset history, in 1530, at Peterborough Abbey, made his maundy and washed the feet of 59 poor men. After he had wiped them, he gave each of the men 12 pence in money, three ells of good canvass to make them shirts, a pair of new shoes, a cast of red herrings, and three white herrings, and one of them received two shillings. King William IV. left the washing to his abmoner. That ceremony has long been discontinued, but alms giving is still associated with Maundy Thursday. The first English Monarch to commemorate the day in this manner was Edward III., in 1363. The Royal dole took the form of a money payment in 1838, and so it remains to the present day, the Royal bounty being dispensed at Whitehall in a special coinage of silver, which usually finds its way, eventually, into the hands of coin collectors.



## CIVIL WAR SKIRMISH AT WINCANTON, 1645.

After the self-denying ordinance was passed, and the Parliamentary army was remodelled, the fortune of war took a different turn in the West, as elsewhere. Sherborne Castle, which appears to have remained unmolested, was now threatened, as forces were collected at Wincanton to harass the garrison. Tradition says the camp was formed on a hill about a mile from the town on the Sherborne-road. Whilst the garrison remained in Sherborne Castle, skirmishes must have been frequent, and an attack, which was made on the enemy at Wincanton on the 1st April, 1645, is particularly mentioned, on which occasion Sir John Digby, with a brigade of horse and dragoons, made 200 prisoners, and took two colours and 300 horses, suffering but little loss. The Castle was taken by assault on the 15th August following by Sir Thomas Fairfax.

## GLASTONBURY ABBEY PURCHASED.

The purchase of Glastonbury Abbey by the Church of England was completed on this day, and the freehold vested in the Diocesan Trustees of Bath and Wells.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

Monday, April 1st, 1889, witnessed the official inauguration of the Somerset County Council.

\* \* \*

The following paragraph, written by one of our older Taunton readers, appeared in our Notes and Queries column 13 years ago:—Some years ago on the 1st of April, the men in workshops at Taunton used to have fun with apprentices on that day, especially if they were a bit "soft," as the workmen called them; but little is heard of the so-called sport nowadays, and a good thing, too, because I have seen weak-minded lads return crying after the shop assistants had boxed their ears or put a stick across their backs. They would be sent for "strap oil" at a barber's shop, "monkey's blubber" at an ironmonger's, and many other stupid errands.

An Over Stowey correspondent writes:—"The 1st of April and the custom known as 'making an April fool' of anyone is still observed here. It is always supposed to cease at twelve noon. Some of the boys and girls here use much ingenuity over it."

## APRIL 2.—GOOD FRIDAY, 1920.

Good Friday is the name given to the day of our Saviour's crucifixion. From the earliest ages of Christianity it has been held as a solemn fast. It is in England only that it is known by the appellation Good Friday; its ancient and appropriate title was Holy Friday. In the Roman Catholic Church the services of the day are very striking. Good Friday is also celebrated in the English Church with special solemnity, although at the present time it cannot be looked upon as a great Church-going day. In country districts, if the weather is propitious, it is generally set apart for gardening operations; in towns in the West the game of rounders is especially associated with the day. Hospinian tells us that the Kings of England had a custom of hallowing rings, with much ceremony, on Good Friday, the wearers of which will not be afflicted with cramp or falling sickness. The superstitious use of cramp rings or cramp balls is well known in Somerset. The blessing of cramp rings is believed to have taken its use in the efficacy of that disease supposed to reside in the ring of Edward the Confessor, which used to be kept in Westminster Abbey. There can be no doubt that a belief in the medical power of the cramping was once as faithfully held as any medical maxim whatever. But in Somerset, as we could not get the King to bless a ring, we would carry a double hedgenut in the pocket. Some folk in the days "back-along" swore to the efficacy of wearing a coffin-ring dug out of a grave!

Of course, the chief association of Good Friday is the hot-cross bun. It is an ancient institution—it is still with us. The morning rest is disturbed by the vendors of buns, an article which has long lost its religious significance, and few people who consume them probably attach to them any high antiquity. The cross has, as we all know, been used as a sacred symbol from the earliest times of the ancient Egyptians, and the word bun is derived from the early Greeks. Sacred cakes, marked with a cross, are depicted in Greek sculptures and paintings. Winckelmann relates the discovery of two perfect buns at Herculaneum; each was marked with a cross, within which were four other lines. Descending to the earlier Catholic times, we find that buns were the Eulogiæ, or consecrated loaves, made from the dough whence the Host itself was taken, and given by the priests to the people; they were marked with the Cross as our Good Friday buns are. In some Somerset parishes the parish clerk used to go round the parish with large buns for sale on Good Friday, but this custom is varied,

and also applies to Easter cakes. Numerous virtues were attached to the hot-cross buns. In some households it was usual to keep one bun until the following year, for it was said the presence of the toothsome morsel prevented the house from catching on fire! In other places the belief existed that a stale cross bun was a wonderful remedy for all stomach complaints, and the staler the bun the more rapid the action. There is not the same regard for hot-cross buns to-day as when some of us were young. Then the baker-boy came not a whit too early with his cry:—

One a penny, two a penny,  
Hot-cross buns;  
If you do not like them,  
Give them to your sons.  
One a penny, two a penny,  
Hot-cross buns.

We were on the look-out for them, and, as a great luxury—a reward perhaps for some good deed done—were allowed to trot back to bed with a bun each. Then buns for breakfast, always salt cod for dinner, buns for tea, buns for supper—and no indigestion! They were happy days. At Chard, 50 years ago, children used to go to a house near the Reservoir and for a ha'penny regaled themselves with finmity on Good Friday. This "finmity fair" lasted over Easter Monday. During the "festival" hot-cross buns, Easter cakes, and sweets were retailed to the youngsters. We do not forget that rain on Good Friday fore-shows a fruitful year. But the gardeners prefer the day to be fine—or they did when the cessation from work was valued. Now, with greatly shortened hours of industry, such leisure days will probably not be so much appreciated.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### GOOD FRIDAY CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS.

If seeds are sown at twelve o'clock on Good Friday the flowers will come up double.

\* \* \*

It is believed that bread made on Good Friday will keep good all the year.

\* \* \*

It is said that the best way to ensure parsley growing is to sow the seed on Good Friday out of a steel tibble.

\* \* \*

Until quite recently Good Friday was the almost universal day for workmen in Somerset to plant potatoes.

\* \* \*

To prevent quarter-oil in a weanling calf, slit

the ear of the calf on the milking side on Good Friday. In some places it is considered necessary that the farmer, or whoever is going to slit the ears, should first attend church on Good Friday, and perform the operation immediately after, and before eating his dinner. The operation would be useless if done without first going to church or it put off until after dinner.

\* \* \*

The following paragraph appeared in our Notes and Queries columns in 1897:—"On Good Friday in some Somerset parishes (Holton for instance) the parish clerk used to go round the parish with large buns for sale, and made a considerable perquisite by the custom. Probably this is still done in Holton and other places, but generally the custom of hot-cross buns is dying out. Thirty years ago there were ten hawkers of buns on Good Friday where there is one to-day."

\* \* \*

Many women refuse to do any washing on Good Friday. They affirm, and apparently believe, that anything washed on that day would turn blood red. It is also a common belief in Somerset and Dorset that soapy water should on no account be thrown away on Good Friday. It is said that soapy water thrown away on this day turns to blood, and also that such suds are thrown in the Saviour's face. Others simply say it is "unlucky" to throw away suds on Good Friday.

\* \* \*

The following lines from "Minson Narration" give some idea as to the way in which Good Friday was spent in Ilminster a century ago:—

When came Good Friday, chimes called forth  
to pray,  
Who, heeding not, went quite another way;  
The point to which they hastened, all so jolly,  
Was to a wayside inn baptised "The Folly."  
Here chanticleer, equipped in spurs of steel,  
In deadly contest danced his final reel;  
Wrestling and cudgels, bull and bull-dog too,  
All took their turns with cock-a-doodle-doo.

\* \* \*

The following note appeared in the *Daily Express* of Thursday, April 1st:—

Old tradition marks a number of things to be avoided on Good Friday. West Country folk hold that washing clothes on that day is a sin, and that those who do so lose their dearest within a year. To wean a child on Good Friday also is to doom it to evil fortune, and to turn a mattress is to ensure the death of the head of

the house. Bread baking on this day, however, will be blessed, and the many who look forward to a Good Friday in the garden may be glad to know that things planted in the earth at this time are supposed to grow "goodly" and yield abundant increase.

\* \* \*

One of our correspondents wrote as follows in our Notes and Queries column 23 years ago:— "The sale of hot-cross buns on Good Friday is very general, and is not even confined to England. I had my bun in France last Good Friday, but it was a miserable affair compared with that I was accustomed to have when I was a school-boy in Taunton, long years ago. The most famous maker of hot-cross buns in the town then was Mr. Betty, baker, who lived opposite Gray's Almshouses in East-street. Oh! those buns. They were truly delicious. I am getting on in years now, but I think of them still, year after year, as Good Friday comes round. Scores of men and boys carried them about the town early in the morning, shouting out a ditty that began thus:—One a penny, two a penny, hot-cross buns!" The principal bakers also sent them to their customers' houses, hot for breakfast, and there were grand displays in their shop windows, covered with powdered sugar. They were freely eaten at tea-time, also by the youngsters, who knew nothing practically of indigestion.

\* \* \*

Mr. F. J. Snell, in his "Book of Exmoor," speaks of a West Country Vicar who had been just long enough in his parish to form a favourable impression of the people and to hope that they had formed a favourable impression of him, when the following incident occurred, by which he was greatly mystified and disconcerted. Hitherto his ministrations had been well attended, but on entering his church on the first Good Friday he found almost all the pews empty, and nobody to listen to his discourse save a few old women, most of them deaf, or, at least, hard of hearing. He naturally concluded that he had unwittingly offended his flock, and that this was a pre-arranged demonstration. After the service he approached one of the old women, and asked her, rather nervously, what had caused the parishioners to absent themselves. The old lady first shared in astonishment, and then with a smile of pity at the parson's ignorance, informed him that, according to the usual custom, the villagers were planting their beans, that they (the beans) might appear above ground on the morning of Easter-day.

A writer on Somerset superstitions in "Cas-  
sell's Family Magazine" for November, 1890,  
says:—"The prophecies of Mother Shipton are  
nowhere more widely believed in than in the  
county of Somerset. Not long ago a report  
was in circulation that a great catastrophe  
had been predicted by this old sage. She had  
prophesied that Ham Hill, one of the great  
stone quarries of Somerset, would be swallowed  
up on Good Friday. This catastrophe was to  
be the consequence of a tremendous earthquake,  
which would be felt all over the county. Some  
of the inhabitants left the neighbourhood to  
escape the impending evil; others removed  
their crockery and breakable possessions to  
prevent their being thrown to the ground;  
others, again, ceased cultivating their gardens.  
Great alarm was felt, and Good Friday was looked  
forward to with universal anxiety. And yet  
when the day came and went without any  
disaster at all, even that did little to dispel the  
faith in Mother Shipton; the calculator had  
made a blunder about the date, and it was not  
her fault; and many Somersetshire folk are  
still waiting, expecting to suffer from the pro-  
phesied catastrophe.

\* \* \*

A correspondent writing in these columns  
13 years ago informed us that he removed from  
Taunton to Bath about 70 years before, and he  
went on to say:—"I well remember on my  
first Good Friday in Bath being aroused at six  
o'clock in the morning by the boys in the street  
crying 'One a penny, two for twopence, hot  
cross buns,' and this cry continued all day. The  
buns were of two kinds—one plain and the other  
with currants; and a plentiful supply was  
furnished with each meal. I noticed that  
immediately after breakfast the mistress of the  
house selected a plain bun, and then securely  
attached to it a label, indicating the year in  
which it was made. A cupboard in the room  
was then unlocked, and the bun carefully placed  
beside a number of others. Naturally I sought  
information for this procedure, and learnt it  
was a popular belief that a stale cross-bun was  
a wonderful remedy for all stomach complaints,  
and the staler the bun the more rapid its action.  
Consequently for the past thirty years one had  
been regularly added to the collection. I soon  
had an opportunity of seeing the remedy tested  
on one member of the family. A portion of a  
stale bun was grated into a tumbler, on this  
boiling water was poured, and, as soon as cool  
enough, stirred up and drunk. I tasted a piece  
of the bun that had broken off. The cupboard  
might have been safely left unlocked for me."

Nineteen years ago a correspondent wrote in these columns:—Among the Good Friday customs in West Somerset is the selling by the parish clerk of flat round cakes, known as Easter cakes, observed at Thurloxtan, Spaxton, Creech St. Michael, Crowcombe, &c. The cakes vary in size from that of an ordinary bun to a dinner plate, and even larger, the price of each being regulated by its size. There is, however, no cross stamped upon them. The custom has no doubt been kept up for centuries, the parish clerk alone taking upon himself to do this, no-one disputing his right, it being considered one of the privileges attached to his office, and a profitable privilege it no doubt turns out to be. A writer in the "Church Times" some years ago described the custom as it obtained at Thurloxtan as follows:—"Immediately after service on Good Friday morning the parish clerk (whose office has been hereditary for many generations) walks up to the rectory, carrying a large basket containing Easter cakes and buns, which are covered over with a fair linen cloth. He always comes up to the rectory first, although it is the last house on that side of the village. On arriving there the parish clerk presents the Rector with a large Easter cake about the size of a dinner plate, or rather larger perhaps. This cake seems specially made for this occasion, and is always a free gift to the Rector. The latter on his part always presents the clerk on that occasion with the sum of 5s, also a free gift, and I have no doubt that this mutual exchange of good-will has been one of the principal causes of this custom having been kept up so long. After this preliminary ceremony is over the clerk sells to the Rector first and then to the other parishioners as many Easter cakes as they require." One would much like to know the age of this interesting custom.

#### "EASTER SEPULCHRES."

A correspondent writes:—I understand that the "Easter Sepulchre" still remains in Milverton Church, and I should be glad if any of your learned readers could give me further information with regard to these Easter Sepulchres, and tell me whether other instances are to be found in Somerset. I have read that although the Easter Sepulchre was occasionally a permanent structure in stone, it was in the great majority of churches a temporary erection in wool, hung with the richest pall's of gold and silver cloth. Within it, on Good Friday, were laid a veiled crucifix and the pix; and a tall and thick wax-light, called the "paschal," and other tapers, burned about it continually, and it was watched each night. On

Easter morning the crucifix and pix were removed, with various circumstances symbolical of the Resurrection.

\* \* \*

There are many references to Milverton Church in the proceedings of the Somerset Archæological Society, but in no instance can I discover a reference to an Easter Sepulchre there, which seems strange if such a feature exists. Nor is there any mention of this in Wade's "Somerset," which deals fairly fully with the chief objects of interest in Somerset churches. But in Wade's "Rambles in Somerset" there is a reference to "The Easter Sepulchre" retaining its place in the Sanctuary. Hutton is silent, and I can find no allusion in other books I have searched. Someone at Milverton should be able to set the point definitely at rest in a moment. Cox, in his "English Parish Churches," tells us about Easter Sepulchres, with sculptured figures, in the churches of Heckington (Lincolnshire), Patrington (East Riding of Yorkshire), Hawton (Nottinghamshire), and Chaldon (Surrey). One was found, some years ago, during the restoration of Plympton Church (Devonshire). The subject of Easter Sepulchres was dealt with in a paper read by Major Heales, F.S.A., before the Society of Antiquaries, on March 12th, 1868, and reported in "Archæologia," Vol. 42. The custom pertained of "Watching the sepulchre at Easter. A crucifix, wrapped in linen, was placed in a recess formed on the north side of the altar. This was done on Easter-eve, and the watching was kept up until early on Easter Sunday, when the crucifix was removed, with various ceremonies, symbolical of the Resurrection. In 1548, John Pilkington, vicar of Rockwell, was buried at the "high altar end" where "the sepulchre was accustomed to stand." This implies that the custom of Easter watching had then (1548) been discontinued; indeed, Major Heales shows that it was one of the first of the various ceremonies which were abolished in England about the period of the Reformation. He says of the mediæval sepulchre: "The structure was a temporary wooden one, richly decorated with hangings, set on the north side of the chancel (sometimes having a tomb or recess as a nucleus), wherein was deposited, in England, the reserved host with a cross, from Good Friday to Easter morn, during which time a light burnt before it, and a watch was kept in remembrance of the guard of Roman soldiers." Important persons used to will that their bodies be buried at the holy sepulchres. Reference to Walcott's "Sacred Archæology" and Rock's "Church of our Fathers" would, probably, yield information as



to the churches in England in which there are still remains of the structure ; but, for the moment, I am not able to consult these authorities.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

In answer to a recent question as to Easter Sepulchres, may I call the attention of your correspondent to the tomb of Bishop Cornish—obt. 1513—in the Holy Cross Chapel of the north transept in Wells Cathedral. It is not only in a suitable place for such an erection, but at the head of the tomb is a carving of Christ rising from the grave, and it is fairly certain that it was used for the Easter Sepulchre. At Pilton Church, in the north chapel, is a curious tomb—the arch is carved with “ball flowers” of the 14th century ; below is a very plain tomb, on the top of which is incised a cross, the head forming a sunken panel, in which is a face with flowing hair. There is no inscription, and it is thought probable that this also was erected as an Easter Sepulchre, and that the face is that of Christ. At Porlock, on the north side of the chancel, is an altar tomb, carved with quartrefoils and emblems of the Passion, so that no doubt this is another instance. It is curious to note that in the porch is an almost similar one, possibly removed for one of better execution. These would date from the 15th century probably. It is extremely common to find a handsome monument on the north side of the chancel, or even in the nave wall, which may at once have been a tomb and used for the ceremonial purpose as well. At Great Leighs, Essex, is a most beautiful example, with a gabled canopy, the angle filled with exquisitely carved vine leaves and grapes entirely under-cut. Here, again, there is neither figure nor inscription, although it is possible that a wooden effigy, now perished, may have formerly existed, as still remains at the next parish of Little Leighs.

HENRY CORDER.

#### APRIL 4.—EASTER DAY, 1920.

A great deal could be written of Easter-day and the Easter season. It is one of the principal festivals of the Christian Church, and is called Easter in English, from the goddess Eostre, who was worshipped by the Saxons with peculiar ceremonies in the month of April. Easter is associated with lamb, cakes, eggs, and gingerbread—what a people we are for eating ! But, so far as gastronomy is concerned with religious festivals, we have, if necessary, to blame our very early forefathers for the introduction of these customs. The custom of giving eggs at

Easter is to be traced up to the theology and philosophy of the Egyptians, Persians, Gauls, Greeks, Romans, &c., among all of whom an egg was an emblem of the universe, the work of the supreme Deity. Cakes, too, seem intimately associated with Eastertide, for we are told there was an ancient custom at Twickenham to divide two great cakes in the church upon Easter-day among the young people. It being looked upon as a superstitious relic, however, it was ordered by Parliament in 1645 that the parishioners should forbear the custom, and, instead thereof, buy loaves of bread for the poor of the parish with the money which should have supplied the cakes. Gingerbreads are, perhaps, more associated with the fairs held about Easter than with any church observance. They formed a morsel for the Easter holidays. The latter have been in vogue for many years, and we do not forget that our own King Alfred made a law appointing the week after Easter should be kept holy. We do not also forget what a memorable time Easter was to this great King. It was at Easter, in the year 878, that he constructed a fort at Athelney, and "out of that fort was warring against the invading host, he and the men of Somerset, that portion of them which was highest." A few weeks after this he fought the great battle of Ethandune and scattered the Danes.

Poole tells us a beautiful custom was observed in Somerset of some rustics going to the summit of the nearest mound and waiting for the sun to rise on Easter morning. This was done to procure prosperity in their undertakings until the next Eastertide shall come again. Did they also expect to see the sun dance? Because our ancestors believed this tradition that it did so on this day. Sir John Suckling used this as a comparison in one of his verses eulogising a belle of the day:—

Her feet beneath her petticoat,  
Like little mice peep'd in and out,  
As if they feared the light;  
And oh! she dances such a way—  
No sun upon an Easter-day  
Were half so fine a sight.

The weather wise used to say that if the sun shines on Easter-day, it shines on Whit-Sunday likewise.

A good deal of rain upon Easter-day,  
Gives a good crop of grass, but little good hay.

Such weather as there is on Easter-day there will be at harvest. This superstition may have arisen from the pagan sacrifice to the goddess Eostre, a sacrifice made about the vernal equinox with a view to a good harvest.

A curious custom attaches to Easter-day at

Chard. During the morning service at the Parish Church, previous to the Communion office, the Police-Inspector walks up the centre aisle to the Communion rails and hands to the officiating clergyman a note which contains an official intimation to the Vicar of the appointment by the Town Council of the Borough Churchwarden. The clergyman then announces the selection.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### EASTER-DAY CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS.

If Easter falls in Lady-day's lap,  
Beware, O England, of a clap.

\* \* \*

A white Easter brings a green Christmas.

\* \* \*

Forty-three years ago Dr. C. H. Poole wrote in his "Customs, Superstitions, and Legends of Somerset":—"Even some of the Parish Churches are tastefully decorated on this day to teach us the solemn truth of the Resurrection by emblems."

\* \* \*

A West Somerset belief is that some new article of apparel (preferably a new hat) must be worn for the first time on Easter Sunday, otherwise a crow will mess on the top of your head before the day is over.

\* \* \*

The Rev. Preb. Hancock, in his "Wivela's Combe," wrote:—"There is a custom in this parish (Wiveli-combe) for the bakers to make on Easter-day saffron tinted cakes, something like the better known hot cross buns. The sale of these cakes was formerly a perquisite of the parish clerk."

\* \* \*

The following table of Easter dues is given in the Terrier of the Rectory of Oare, Somerset, A.D. 1634:—

At Easter every Communicant for offerings..	2d
For ancient gardens .. .. .	1d
For a winter cow .. .. .	1d
For a colt .. .. .	2d

### TAUNTON EASTER CAKES.

Thirteen years ago one of our oldest Taunton readers (J.D.C.) wrote as follows:—"The Taunton bakers did not forget to make Easter cakes. I well remember the competition between Betty, Matthews, Hitchcock, and the other bakers as to who should send out the best cake. I have been in many towns at Easter since the time of which I write, but have never tasted an Easter

cake to be compared with those made at Taunton. It was a rich plum bun, delicately spiced, and flavoured with saffron. They appear to have been utilised by the clergy. I remember on one occasion dining with a Taunton family, when during dinner the servant brought in an Easter cake about the size of a small cheese plate. She said 'I was to say the Clerk had brought this with the Rector's compliments.' I saw a half-crown take the place of the cake on the plate—making, I imagine, the change desired."

A correspondent wrote to our Notes and Queries column in 1897 as follows:—"A custom prevailed at St. Mary's Church up to within the last 12 or 14 years of taking round to the principal parishioners an Easter offering in the shape of a cake. This duty devolved on the clerk of the church, his remuneration being sums of money from the recipients, varying from half-a-crown upwards. This custom dropped on the death of Clerk Dyer about twelve years ago. Such offerings are given away even now to a few of the older parishioners of St. James'."

The following week another correspondent wrote:—"The parish clerks at Yeovil and Langport also presented Easter cakes when they called on the parishioners for their annual offerings. I expect the custom was widespread. The late Mr. Wm. Denham, of Bow-street, Langport, was famous for his Easter cakes."

#### ON THE HILL TOPS.

Mr. J. Ll. W. Page, in his "Exploration of Exmoor" (pub. 1895), wrote:—"One of the most beautiful of Easter customs still survives. Young men have not yet ceased, on the Resurrection morning, to climb the nearest hill top to see the sun flash over the dark ridge of Quantock, or the more distant line of Mendip. The sight of the newly arisen luminary on this particular morning is to them an augury of good luck, as it was to the white-robed Druid in the ages that are past. Early in the century, Dunkery, probably because it is the highest land in Somerset, was favoured above all surrounding hills, and its sides, says Miss King, were covered with young men, who seemed to come from every quarter of the compass, and to be pressing up towards the Beacon."

#### A LAMB IN THE SUN.

It was recorded in "Folk Lore" in 1894 that while living as a child at Dinder, in Somersetshire, between the years 1866 and 1867, I remember hearing it said by a woman servant that if you go up to Masboro Castle (the highest point of the Mendips) on Easter morning you will see a lamb in the sun.

In June, 1905, an esteemed correspondent,

who signed himself H.K., wrote as follows in our Notes and Queries column:—One of the old beliefs still surviving in parts of Somerset is that at sunrise on Easter morning a lamb may be seen in the sun. In connection with this superstition a very curious coincidence was told me by a farmer of Kingsbrompton this week. His two daughters were anxious to know whether a lamb might really be seen in the sun on Easter morning, and, being young ladies of an imaginative and, perhaps, rather romantic turn of mind, they asked him whether such a phenomenon was really to be seen. He told them to go the next morning to the top of Haddon Hill at about four o'clock and see for themselves. Accordingly, on Easter morning they started off. The weather, however, proved dull, and the sun was not to be seen, but what was their surprise, when they reached the top of the hill, to see come running towards them a little lamb, bleating pitifully, having lost its mother sheep. No other sheep were near or in sight, and the young ladies took charge of the lamb, and brought it home, and reared it, for, though every enquiry was made in the neighbourhood, no owner could be found for it, and the little "sun-lamb" still remains on the farm.

#### A LION IN THE SUN.

We are indebted to "W.S.P." for the following interesting note:—"There was a common belief in this neighbourhood that by going to the top of the Blackdown Hills to see the sun rise on Easter Sunday morning the spectators would be rewarded by seeing 'A lion in the sun.' This is evidently a variation of the Dartmoor superstition immortalised by Eden Philpotts, that the sun could be seen to dance at rising on Easter Sunday. Both appearances are no doubt due to the effect of light stratus or cirrus cloud between the spectator and the sun at sunrise. This cloud often appears dark against the bright disc, and assumes the most fanciful forms, and it would not require a great stretch of imagination to identify some resemblance to an animal. I have never heard if the above version is confined to Wellington or is current in the West."

We had long been familiar with the belief that a *lamb* might be seen in the sun on Easter morning, but did not remember having heard before that a *lion* might be seen, and we therefore wrote our correspondent asking him if he was sure that the animal to be seen was a lion, to which he kindly replied as follows:—"I have delayed replying to yours of the 6th as I hoped to have been able to obtain some further information with regard to the animal supposed to be

seen in the sun at rising on Easter Sunday. My own memory is perfectly clear that it was 'a lion,' but my information was derived solely from the talk amongst the boys at the school I attended over 50 years ago. I know that on one or two occasions expeditions to the 'Hill' were arranged at school amongst the boys, and the object was to see the lion in the sun. I did not join either of them, and, of course, it is possible the boys may have been mistaken, or may have thought the lion was a stronger inducement than the lamb for others to join their party. Possibly the insertion of the paragraph may bring some corroboration (or the reverse), for owing to illness I have not been able to make recent enquiry hereabout."

[We shall be glad to hear from any of our readers who can give further information.]

#### WAYFORD CHURCH.

Mr. John M. Crocker, writing in these columns in January last, said that Wayford was a chapel-of-ease to Crewkerne, and that he remembers when the clerk used to take the church key to Crewkerne on Easter-day and lay it on the altar, for which he was paid 5s.

\* \* \*

I note that Mr. John M. Crocker says that Wayford was a chapel of ease to Crewkerne, and that he remembers when the clerk used to take the church key to Crewkerne on Easter-day and lay it on the altar, for which he was paid 5s. Pulman, in the "Book of the Axe," says: "Wayford is not mentioned in Domesday Book, for at the time of the compilation of that volume it was included in the parish of Crewkerne. Ecclesiastically, in common with Seaborough and Misterton, it was also included with Crewkerne, to which, with them, it was a chapelry, for until within a few years—(this work in a re-constructed form appeared as a third edition in 1854)—it was the custom every Easter Sunday to place the keys of both Wayford and Seaborough Churches upon the Communion table of Crewkerne Church, and, at the same time, to pay sixpence for each parish—in token, I suppose, of fealty." This information was conveyed to the author of the "Book of the Axe" by the Rev. H. Caddle, late rector of Wayford, and Pulman adds that in the parish books there are several entries to that effect. Mr. Caddle was appointed rector in 1844, and remained in office until 1854. He it was who, at his own expense, re-built the chancel of the church in 1846, after it had fallen down.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**APRIL 5.—EASTER MONDAY, 1920.**

Easter Monday, the first Bank Holiday of the year, was a day when a good many Somerset people made their initiatory visit to the seaside for the season, if the weather was at all favourable. Weston-super-Mare and Minehead on the west coast, and Seaton were generally selected, the latter being the more convenient for those residing in the Southern part of the county. It was a real holiday, and, of course, the youngsters were regaled with Easter cakes.

A story is told of an excursion to Weston-super-Mare by Francis George Heath, the author of several works on trees and ferns, whom I knew well. Whether this excursion took place or not on an Easter Monday I do not know, but it was evidently on some holiday. It was in the days of early railway travel, before Weston-super-Mare could boast of a station in the town, and about the time when roofs were first put on third class carriages running on the Bristol and Exeter Railway. The excursion was from Taunton to Weston, a distance of thirty miles. The fare was a shilling. Tempted by the low fare, a huge number of people decided to patronise the excursion. By 8 a.m. the hour for starting from Taunton, the train was packed. It then made a pretence to move, but it pulled up in a few seconds. Then it backed, then started again, then backed once more. It is said to be an absolute fact that the poor travellers never left the parlous of Taunton Station till two p.m.—a wait of six hours! Then the train got away, and accomplished the 30 miles in the record time of four hours! It reached Weston Junction at six p.m. It was a mile and a-half to the sea, and the train was due to leave at seven o'clock. There was no time to walk to the sands and back, and to make matters worse it commenced to rain. So the excursionists shivered in and about the station premises until the time of departure. The train reached Taunton at two o'clock the following morning! Sixty miles in about 18 hours! What an excursion!

Easter cakes took various forms, but the native of Crewkerne could be depended upon for always declaring that the ones procured in that town were superior to any obtainable elsewhere in the "Land of Summer." They were thin, crisp, shiny, and a real delicacy, and exiles from the town were wont to send down home for Easter cakes long after they had left the "plucky little town." The Easter cakes at Langport and Taunton were also locally famous for their excellence. At Wiveliscombe it was the custom of the bakers of the town to make on Easter-day saffron-tinted cakes, something

like hot-cross buns. The sale of these cakes was formerly a perquisite of the parish clerk, who also in October brewed a certain kind of ale, called "clerk's ale," which he retailed on Easter Monday to the inhabitants when they resorted to his house to pay their Easter offering. In the forties the clerk lived in a house adjoining the churchyard, and which had a door opening thereon. Before the door there was a large open space of green-sward in the churchyard, with occasional oak benches, where the parishioners of respectability sat to drink their "clerk's ale" and eat his cakes. The church clerks in various places in Somerset were accustomed to bring round Easter cakes on Easter Monday and offer them to the residents. He made no charge for the delicacies, and it was usual to pay a good price for them, the money representing an Easter gift to this official. On one occasion at Crewkerne a worthy lady was somewhat "sold." She was a native of the "canny toon" of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and had but recently arrived at Crewkerne. By the way she was a staunch Nonconformist. On Easter Monday the sexton duly reached her house. She knew nothing of the custom, but liking the appearance of the cakes, accepted one or two and handed the official half-a-crown, which he duly pocketed. Naturally the good lady anticipated some change, but none was forthcoming. When the matter was subsequently explained to her she indulged in a hearty laugh, and many times afterwards told the story against herself. Not being a native, and not being a churchwoman, she was "taken in," but the old sexton and her were very good friends for many years afterwards. At Chard the old sexton used to come round also with his basket. He appreciated the dignity of his office by always wearing a box-hat. At Taunton, too, the custom survived many years, and a story is told that in the thirties during dinner the servant at one house brought in a fair-sized Easter cake on a plate saying the parish clerk had brought it with the Rector's compliments. The head of the family returned the plate with a handsome fee. As it happened he, too, was a Nonconformist. It was customary at Taunton to take a cake to each house where the Clerk called for his Easter offering. So at Milverton and Langport. The custom ceased at Taunton, I am told, about 35 years ago.

The "clerk's ale" reminds one that "church ales," called also Easter ales and Whitsun ales, for their being sometimes held on Easter Sunday and on Whit-Sunday, or on some of the holidays that followed them, certainly originated from



the wakes. This popular holiday was taken advantage of by the churchwardens and other chief parish officers for annually collecting from the people sums of money for the repairs of the church. By way of enticement to the populace they brewed strong ale, to be ready for the day appointed for the festival, which they sold to them, and most of the better sort, in addition to what they paid for their drink, contributed something towards the collection. It has been suggested that the church ale is derived from the Love Feasts mentioned in the New Testament.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### APRIL 6.—EASTER TUESDAY.

There was formerly a fair held at Milverton on this day, of which the charter was given by Queen Anne.

#### APRIL 8.—KING EDWARD AT BRUTON, 1278.

King Edward I. was at Bruton on this and the following day, returning on the 22nd of the same month, and departing the next day. The King, while at Bruton, ordered the Sheriff of Cornwall to allow a man out on bail who was in prison accused of murder.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### APRIL 9.—KING EDWARD AT CAMEL, 1278.

King Edward I. was a visitor to Camel from April 9th to April 12th, 1278. While here he had a letter written ordering one of his stewards to give 12 oaks for a building to Contisse, Countess of Loretto, wife of Roger de Clifford, who was a great judge at the time, a judge in cases concerning the Royal Forests, which covered no small part of the country. At Glastonbury he ordered the Sheriff of Devon to let out on bail a man imprisoned at Exeter, because he (the King) had learned that the man in question had slain his victim through madness, and that he was mad at the time. King Edward's clerk abridged the order as follows:—"Quia Rex accepit . . . quod Alexander de Tadeworth—(Tatworth is near Chard)—captus et detentus in prisona Exon pro morte Alicie de Gydecote per furiam inter fecit praedictam Aliciam et quod furiosus fuit tempore interfectionis illius et quod non interfecit eam per feloniam," and so on. His Lord Chamberlain, as we might now call him, entered on one of his rolls the following expenses, incurred at Camel, of course, in Latin:—"Camel, on Saturday, the eve of Palm Sunday, at Camel, steward's department 16 pence, butlery or bottery 3s 3d, kitchen 5 shillings, scullery 16d,

saucery 10d, hall nothing, chamber nothing, stable, £4 17s 2½d, alms 4s." Palm Sunday was spent at Camel, and, doubtless, the King, or, at least, his attendants, took part in the procession which bore branches of willow up the church. Very little was spent that day; nothing in the steward's department, the butlery, scullery, hall, and chamber, but 3s 10d in the kitchen department for cartage, whence we infer that the cooking utensils, &c., were not carried about the Somerset roads or through the Somerset mud on pack-horses but in carts. The stable cost £4 16s 8d for the day. Monday was also spent at Camel. Nothing was spent except £4 16s 10d for the stable, the enormous daily expenditure on which proves that a large number of men on horseback must have accompanied the King.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**APRIL 11.—LOW SUNDAY.**

**FOUNDATION STONE OF  
 TAUNTON HOSPITAL LAID,  
 1810.**

The Sunday after Easter Sunday was, in the year 1555, utilised for a curious purpose, for in Somerset churches, as in others, the Statute for the amending of Highe Wayes passed in that year, ordered that "The Constables and Churchwardens shall appoint foure dayes for the amending of the Waies, and shall openly in the Church the next Sondag after Easter give knowledge of the said four dayes and upon the sayd days the Parishioners shall endeavour to amend the said ways, that is to say every person for every ploughland in tillage or pasture that he shall occupy and every other person keeping there a plough shall send every day thus appointed one wain or cart furnished after the Custom of the Country with oxen, horses, or other cattle, and also two able men upon pain of paying 10s, and every other householder and every cottager and labourer of that parish able to labour, shall by themselves or one sufficient labourer for every of them work for the amendment of the said high ways upon pain of losing for every day 12d. And every person shall bring with them such shovels, spades, pikes, mattocks, and other tools and instruments as they do make their own ditches and fences with, and they shall work as they shall be appointed by the Surveyors eight hours per day." The fifth year of Queen Elizabeth's reign the four days were altered to six. In 1691 it was enacted that every Surveyor of the Highways should take a view of all the roads, &c., in his parish, and inform the

parishioners of any default or annoyance he might find in any of them after sermon in the church on Sunday morning; and if they were not repaired within 30 days he was to have the work done himself and the defaulter was to pay him the cost.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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#### TAUNTON AND SOMERSET HOSPITAL.

The Taunton and Somerset Hospital owes its existence to the celebration in Taunton of the Jubilee on the 25th October, 1809, being the day on which King George III. entered into the 50th year of his reign. It was Dr. Malachi Blake, of Taunton, who suggested that a meeting of the inhabitants of the town should be convened for the purpose of taking into consideration the best and most effective plan for establishing in Taunton a public medical institution for the use of the poorer inhabitants. A memorial was afterwards got up and signed, with the result that a meeting was held in the Guildhall on the 25th October, Mr. John Tyndale Warre, of Hestercombe, in the chair, when a liberal subscription was immediately entered into, and a Committee appointed to carry the plan into execution. The foundation stone of the Hospital was laid with Masonic honours on the 11th April, 1810, on ground given by Mr. George Sheppard, of Bishop's Hull. The stone was laid by the Provincial Grand Master, Mr. John Leigh, of Combhay, in regular Masonic form. The Hospital was opened for the reception of patients on the 25th March, 1812.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### APRIL 12.—KING EDWARD I. AT SOMERTON, 1278.

King Edward I. on his tour—probably a hunting tour—through Somerset, arrived at Somerton April 12th, 1278, and remained two days. The expenses of the King and his retinue were:—9d for the kitchen, 3s for the hall, 12d for the chamber, £5 8s 1½d for the stable, while 4s was given away in alms, and all the beggars in Somerton wished that the King lived there so that they could spend their days in the taverns at his expense. While here he pardoned Richard the Pilgrim for killing Simon, the son of the Reeve, in self-defence.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### APRIL 13.—KING EDWARD I. AT GLASTONBURY, 1278.

Glastonbury was visited by King Edward I. on this day, His Majesty remaining until the

21st inst. On the day of arrival (Wednesday) a large amount was spent on food, &c., 39s 4d by the steward, 39s by the butler, £9 3s 11d by the cook, 5s 9d for the scullery, 3s for the saucery or sauce-making department, 12d for the hall, 18d for the stable, £7 8s 9d for the stable, 4s was given away in alms, the total expenditure for the day being over £21. On Thursday £18 was spent. The next day was Good Friday—Dies boni veneris, it is called—and the expense of the kitchen for the day fell from £8 17s to £1 19s 3d, but the butlery cost the same as on Thursday. If the King ate salt fish he did not wash it down with water, and neither lemonade, tea, nor coffee were available in these days. A total abstainer had nothing but water to drink. The total expense on Good Friday was £11 9s, while on Saturday it was £33 17s 4½d, and on Easter Sunday £39 16s 10½d. The King remained at Glastonbury from the Wednesday before Easter until the Wednesday after. On Tuesday he had no expenses at all except for the stable, because of a gift from the Abbot of Glastonbury (quia de dono Abbatis Glaston). On April 15th the King wrote a letter of recommendation for the brethren of the Hospital of Saint Margaret outside Taunton to carry with them when they went about soliciting contributions, or, as he expressed it, "when the brethren or their messengers come to you to ask your goods for the support of their alms admit them lovingly, and impart to them of your alms." King Edward had falconers with him in Somerset, and, therefore, went a-hawking. While he was at Glastonbury 4s 8d was paid on Easter Monday for their wages and expenses to Gillet and Herlin, falconers, going to London with their gersfalcons, and taking four days doing so. Also 12d for food for four hounds for the same time, and 16d for the wages of two huntsmen. 26s 8d was paid to two men going to the Forest of Shote, and 8s 8d for five bearwards (?), four costing 1½d per day and the fifth 2d. The men had charge of 55 dogs, whose food cost 28s 8½d. At Glastonbury, too, were paid the expenses, 15½d, of a boy in seeking for two pups at Winchester, and 2s 3½d to a boy leading two dogs from Southampton to London. A chain for four of the King's hounds cost 12d. 2s 6d a day was paid at Glastonbury to William de Candovere and Robert le Mansur for going to the forest of Wichelwood for their wages and food for four beardogs (?). Similar payments brought up the total sum paid out for hunting while the King was at Glastonbury to £20 2s 5½d.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## THE LETTING OF STOWELL MEAD, TATWORTH.

On or about this date is observed a quaint custom connected with the letting of Stowell Mead at Tatworth, near Chard. The holding is a valuable one on account of the luxurious crop of watercress which is found there, and the letting proceeds during the burning of an inch of candle, the last bidder before the flame dies out being the tenant for the ensuing year. According to ancient usage the business is preceded by a supper of bread and cheese and pickles, washed down by beer. After supper the candle is lit and the bidding begins. As we write we have before us a brief account of the proceedings for the years 1907 and 1908. In the former year the sale took place on Saturday, April 13th, when Mr. C. E. Small (the steward) became the tenant for the ensuing year with a bid of £14 17s 6d just before the last flicker of the candle. In the latter year Mr. Small was again the successful candidate with a bid of £13.

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## APRIL 15.—CUCKOO DAY IN SOMERSET. EARTHQUAKE IN SOMERSET, 1185.

To-day is Cuckoo-day in "The Land of Summer." If the lads and lasses of Somerset are anything like what they were when I was a boy living in this best of all counties, they will this morning be listening for the cuckoo's notes. That is if the gay "harbinger of spring" has arrived in the county. Perhaps he may have been already heard. That is not so propitious, because while a late spring is bad for cattle, an early spring is bad for corn, because we were told that "A late spring is a great blessing," and "Better late spring and bear, than early blossom and blast."

When the cuckoo comes to the bare thorn,  
Sell your cow and buy your corn ;  
But when she comes to the full bit,  
Sell your corn and buy your sheep.

If the cuckoo is late in arrival corn will be so plentiful that there will be enough and to spare, and this accounts for a variant of the above :—

If the cuckoo sings when the hedge is green,  
Keep thy horse and sell thy corn.

Hesiod tells us that "If it should happen to rain three days together when the cuckoo sings among the oak trees, then late sowing will be as good as early sowing."

The anticipation of the late coming of the mystery bird will be some reward for the waiting. In my young days the boys and girls would, on hearing the welcome notes for the first time for

the season, turn the ha'penny or penny they had in their pockets, and wish for something they desired very much, and then the good fairies would probably bring them their heart's desire. The belief was that by turning the coin in the pocket, the owner would never be without money until the cuckoo was heard again. It was considered very unlucky if one had no money in one's pockets when the cuckoo came. And, when the lads and lassies who were growing up to the time when their fancies turned to thoughts of love, when the boys looked into the maidens' eyes and the maidens returned shy glances to the young swains, then, when they heard the cuckoo, they at once started running, and ran as fast as ever they could until they could go no further. Then, sitting down, they would take off their left-hand boots and on the bottom they would find a hair the exact shade of the one who loved them. "Nonsense," you say. "Romance," dear reader, and it is these little bits of romance which makes the world a brighter place to live in than some folks would have it if they could control things. There is another curious legend attaching to the arrival of the cuckoo. When a girl hears its first call she kisses her hands and repeats "Cuckoo, cuckoo, when shall I be married?" As many times as the bird calls "Cuckoo" in answer, so many years will the maiden be obliged to wait. The old folk, bent with infirmities, asked instead "Cuckoo, cuckoo, when shall I be released from this world's cares?" The answer comes in the same way. So occupied is the poor bird in answering these questions that she never has time to build her nest. Hence she is forced to lay her eggs in the nest of another bird. If the sound of the cuckoo's notes comes from the right it signifies you will be prosperous; if from the left ill-luck will dog your steps. For downright good luck one should hear the nightingale before the cuckoo. So early as the 14th century it was believed that a cuckoo roasted and powdered, and the powder blown in the patient's nostrils at the time of the paroxysm, would cure epilepsy. And the old chronicler responsible for this statement says he has tried this remedy with success. The reason is that the cuckoo suffers from epilepsy every month, and therefore, according to some, it has a peculiar property of attracting the epileptic "materia" to itself, just as rhubarb attracts the jaundice!

We in Somerset, however, are more associated with the cuckoo than the natives of any other county in England, for are we not "Cuckoo Penners?" The true son of Somerset is not ashamed to be known as a "Cuckoo Penner," any more than is a Wiltshire man to be

called a "Moonraker," a Hampshire "Hog," a Devonshire "Dumpling," an Essex "Calf," a Lincolnshire "Frog," or a Yorkshire "Tyke." It is said that West Pennard is the scene of the story about the "Cuckoo Penners," and I cannot do better than give the story in the vernacular as related by Dr. John Read in his "Farmer Wangle's Talk:"—

"Now Somerset folk wur always celebrated according to another wold tale for trying once upon a time to hedge the gookoo. To volly thik argyument you must know that Somerset always had the name—ever since the days of King Alfred—of being a wet, marshy country, especially in winter time. 'Bad for the rider, good for the abider,' according to the wold saying. So after a while Somerset folk began to think of some way of putting a stop to it; and a kind of County Council of the sprackest-witted folk that could be found met together to see what could be done. After a good deal of thought the only way they could see out of it wur to hold on to summer when he did turn up, and to get rid of winter altogether. Easier said than done! So they all sat round and thought hard again. Well, they wur just going to give it up as a bad job when a old-ancient man stood up and said that he'd a-got it. They crowdod round en, full o' hope. 'Souls,' he said, 'if you do want to hold on to summer, there's only one way—an' that is'—he stopped and looked round at 'em all—'and that is—to hedge the gookoo! When the gookoo do goo, zummer do soon volly a'der!' Of course, they all saw that he wur right, and that if they could but keep the gookoo, the summer wur sure to bide too! So they found out the gookoo and gathered round en with hurdles, and stakes, and spades, and a whole galley o' things, to fence en in with. Then they wired in. Well, the bird, he bode and watched 'em till he wur tired; and by that time the fence wur pretty high. Then suddenly the gookoo took wing and flew away, topping the fence by about a foot. At that they all dropped their tools and looked at one another open-mouthed wi' wonder. 'Co!' they said, 'What a pity! A voot higher an' we should ha' had en!' " One writer, commenting on the story, says such a tale of simplicity does not tally with the experience of those who have had dealings with the Zummerzet farmer or villager. But there it is—we natives of "The Land of Summer" are "Cuckoo Penners," and we are proud of it!

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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"W.S.P." writes:—"When the cuckoo is first heard in the spring the hearer must at once drop whatever he or she is doing and run for a

short distance. The reason I have heard given is that unless this is done the person will be lazy or good for nothing all the year. This is a much more reasonable superstition than some, for the runner gives good evidence that he or she has no wish to be an idler."

Mrs. Lansdowne informs us:—"The first time you hear the cuckoo you must run at once, no matter what you are doing, or you will be lazy all the year round. I have seen quite big boys and girls set off at a round pace on first hearing the cuckoo." Miss Masey tells us this practice is still kept up.

Mr. C. S. Whittaker says:—"If when hearing the cuckoo the first time you ask it how many years you have to live, it will repeat its note as many times as the number of years."

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#### EARTHQUAKE.

On this day in 1185 there was "a sore earthquake thro' all parts of this land, such as has not been heard of in England since the beginning of the world, for stones that lay fast couched in the earth were removed out of their places."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### APRIL 16.—EARTHQUAKE IN SOMERSET, 1752.

There was a violent earthquake in Somerset on this day.

#### APRIL 18.—DEATH OF JUDGE JEFFREYS, 1689.

##### FAIRFAX AT CHARD, 1646.

Judge Jeffreys—whose name will be ever recalled with horror by Somerset men and women—died in the Tower of London on the 18th April, 1689, in the 41st year of his age, and was buried in the Chapel of the Tower, in the next grave to Monmouth. In 1693 his body was removed by his family by royal warrant and re-interred in the Church of St. Mary, Aldermanbury, where, during some repairs, in 1810, the leaden coffin containing his remains was found in a vault close to the Communion table. A story was once prevalent in Somerset that Judge Jeffreys' coffin was removed to the family vault at Stocklinch, but there is no direct evidence that such a thing ever took place. Of the unfortunate men of Somerset, who followed the equally unfortunate Duke of Monmouth, and who came before this cruel judge, the following were executed:—Bruton, 3; Wincanton, 6; Wiveliscombe, 3; Chard, 12; Crewkerne, 10; Somerton, 7; Yeovil, 8; Nether Stowey, 3;



Dunster, 3; Dulverton, 3; Bridgwater, 12; Ilminster, 12; Stogursey, 2; Wellington, 3; South Petherton, 3; Glastonbury, 6; Taunton, 19; Langport, 3; Cutherston, 2; Minehead, 6; Ilchester, 12; Stogumber, 3; Castle Cary, 3; Milborne Port, 2. In all 251 were hanged, drawn, and quartered, besides those hanged and destroyed in cold blood. Many of the rebels were sent as slaves to the West Indies, and several died on the way.

#### FAIRFAX AT CHARD.

On this day Fairfax, after having caused Exeter to surrender, began his march to Oxford, and quartered that night at Chard, moving the next day to Dorchester.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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It was on the 18th of April, 1649, that Robert Blake—being then 50 years of age—set his foot for the first time on the deck of a ship as a Commander, and from that moment until the hour of his death no man in England thought of contending with him for the first place as a seaman.

#### APRIL 19.—ST. ALPHEGE.

##### INA BECAME KING, 688.

The 19th of April, in A.D. 688, was the day that Ina, the Saxon Monarch most closely connected with Taunton, became king by succession on the death of Cadwall.

—F. W. MATHEWS.

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Alphege was born at Weston, near Bath, and was known at first as the Monk of Deorhurst. Belonging to a good family, he gave up his paternal inheritance in order to devote himself to the service of God and his fellow creatures. Akin spiritually to Dunstan, and living within the immediate sphere of his influence, Alphege had a model for the entire course of his public life. Like the Glastonbury apostle, he built for himself a small house, where he lived as an anchorite, and whither a large number of persons, including the nobility of Somerset and the adjoining counties, resorted for spiritual advice. It was natural that such a man should be appointed abbot of the Monastery, which was to receive King Eadgar on his visit to Bath. Nay, what is more probable than that to his influence in bringing together "monks and wise men," the city was, to some extent, indebted for the honour of the Coronation, says Mr. Jerom Murch, president of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society in 1876. And he adds: "Dunstan must have been thankful to have had as

an ally one who gave all the offerings of his numerous visitors to the erection of a spacious dwelling for the brethren of his order, styled in the Golden Legend 'The fayr abbaey at Bath.' We can imagine also the additional pleasure Eadgar would feel in being crowned in a church presided over by a man of great ability and high character, intent on advancing all his ecclesiastical plans. What Alphege was in after life, how he quitted the Monastery he had founded near the springs to become Bishop of Wilton, how he rose to govern successively the Sees of Winchester and Canterbury, and how as primate of England he was massacred by the Danes at Greenwich—all this is told in the records of the period."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### APRIL 20.—HOCKTIDE.

There can be no doubt Hocktide was celebrated in Somerset. It was a holiday, and one associated with the invasion of the Danes, and as Somerset suffered severely at their hands then the people would naturally rejoice on some anniversary connected with the defeat of this warlike enemy. It has never been definitely decided what was the real origin of the Hocktide holiday, but the suggestion most generally accepted is that the festival was held in remembrance of the death of Hardicanute, which happened on the 8th June, 1041, by which event the English were delivered from the intolerant Government of the Danes. According to ancient writers the festival took place on the Tuesday after the second Sunday after Easter, but there is evidence that the Monday was also devoted to rejoicings, and some suggest that on one day the women had their amusements and on the other day the men. So far as one can discover, the rejoicings were of a simple character, in which ropes played a prominent part. The townspeople divided themselves into parties, and were accustomed to draw each other with ropes. Spelman says men and women bound each other, and especially the women the men, and hence it was called "Binding-Tuesday." The women, in merriment, stopped the ways with ropes and pulled the passengers to them, desiring something to be laid out in pious uses in order to obtain their freedom. The binding part of the ceremony might naturally refer to the abject state of slavery in which the wretched Saxons were held by their imperious lords; and the donations for "pious uses" may be considered as tacit acknowledgments of gratitude to heaven for freeing the nation from its bondage. In the

churchwardens' accounts for the parish of Lambeth for the years 1515 and 1516 are several entries of hock monies received from the men and the women for the church service. Hock-day was generally observed as lately as the 16th century. A representation of the story of the massacre of the Danes was exhibited for the entertainment of Queen Elizabeth during her stay at Kenilworth Castle, and she rewarded the actors with two bucks and five marks in money.

Every year at Hocktide the tenants of the Manor of Wells used to pay to the Lord of the Manor as part of their rent 250 hens and 12 geese. At Wiveliscombe the Hundred Court for the term of Hocktide was held on Tuesday, April 26th, 1379. In 1415 the Court took place on the 8th May, in 1465 on the last day of April. Hocktide is now a forgotten season.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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#### HOCK TUESDAY.

In 1646 certain differences seem to have arisen between the Lord of the Manor and his tenants of Minehead regarding the customs of the manor. With a view to acquainting him as to what constituted these customs, a statement was required to be drawn up descriptive of the rights and privileges of the tenants, and this document, which is peculiarly illustrative of the conditions then obtaining, is still preserved among the muniments at Dunster Castle. The statement, which is quoted in full in Prebendary Hancock's "History of Minehead," opens with the observation:—"Whereas there hath been earnestly requested at our hands the presentinge of the ancient customes used within the said Mannor. And the same to be put down in writinge beinge a thing contrarye to former use yet never the lesse the whole Tennants of the saide Mannor at the Commandment of George Luttrell, Esq., Lord of the saide Mannor, doe present and yelde up our ancient and laudable customes used in ye said Mannor duringe the tyme whereof the memory of man is not to the contrarie." For the most part the document relates to various rights and privileges claimed by the tenants, but there is one paragraph which tells of a unique and picturesque custom practised at Minehead during a time "whereof the memory of man is not to the contrarie." The paragraph reads:—"The custom is that the Tithingman of Staunton every yeare upon Hocke Tuesday being the third Tuesday after Easter in the morninge before Sunne risinge doe bringe into this Mannr a greene boughe and set the same in the place within the

said Mannr where the Lord's Courts have been kept most usually and after he hath so done he shall goe to the next tenants house within the said Mannr and call them and say ' Arise, sleepers of Mynehead, three times, and beare witness that the tithingman of Staunton hath done his duty." And he doe not the same he shall forfeit iij s. iiij d." In all the records of Minehead there is no other reference to this custom, which appears to have long since passed from the memory of the inhabitants. Staunton, now spelt Stanton, was a very ancient manor forming practically part of Alcombe, and at one time of some importance, but about two cottages and a number of ruins are all that remain now of the manor of Staunton.  
—H.W.K.

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Rents were formerly paid on Hockday. As long ago as A.D. 1260 the rent of houses at Glastonbury was paid at Hockday and at Michaelmas. Every year at Hocktide the tenants of the manor of Wells used to pay to the lord of the manor as part of their rent 250 hens and 12 geese. Many of our Somerset rents for lands and houses in by-gone days were very curious. Amongst others paid in the 13th century were :—One pair of white gloves or one half-penny, one silver penny, one red rose, one farthing on Hockeday, which is called worthing a bull (Ilchester), one clove gilly flower, two barbed arrows (Hatfield), 1 quarter each of wheat, barley, and beans, and 2 quarters of oats (Muchelney), a pound of cummin (Yeovilton), the mewing of 1 hawk yearly (Chinnock), 4 pounds of pepper (Watsete), a service of salmon and pepper (Charlcumbe), a pair of gilt spurs or 6d and 1 pound of pepper (Hambridge), 2 pounds of wax (Ilchester). It does not necessarily follow that the whole of these rents were paid at Hocktide, but probably many of them were. Some years ago, in reply to an enquiry for further information as to worthing the bull at Ilchester, a correspondent informed us that at Ilchester, after Mass, on Holy days, a bull would be tied to a post and half-a-dozen bull dogs let loose on him. As soon as one dog was disabled, he was re-placed by another, and the poor brute was soon as miserable as the chained blind bear whom six brave men were horse-whipping a few yards off, and the tied-up cocks whom another party of holiday-makers were stoning to death on the other side of the Market-place. . . . Such were the pleasures of Hockday; its business was for the women to catch the passers-by with ropes and make them ransom themselves with a coin, which was generally given to repair the church

**APRIL 21.—EDWARD I. AT WELLS, 1278.**

King Edward I., during his itinerary through Somerset, arrived at Wells this day, and spent the night in the city. He gave away 4s in alms during his stay.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**APRIL 22.—EDWARD I. AT BRUTON, 1278.****FALL OF DUNSTER CASTLE,  
1646.****FIELDING BORN AT SHARP-  
HAM, 1707.**

King Edward I. paid a return visit to Bruton while in Somerset in 1278, during the month of April, first arriving on the 8th and coming back on the 21st. While in the town his steward spent 33s 10d, the butler 17s 11d, the cook £6 4s 11d; 5s 1d was spent for the scullery, 3s 7d for the saucery, 3s 8d for the hall, 15d for the chamber, and £7 8s for the stable, while 4s was given in alms. The following day King Edward passed out of the county by riding to Gillingham.

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**FALL OF DUNSTER CASTLE.**

During the Civil War in the reign of Charles II. Blake attacked Dunster Castle, then occupied by the Royalists, although the head of the Luttrell family, its owner, had taken a neutral part in the war. The Royalist in command at Dunster was Francis Wyndham, brother of the Wyndham who held Bridgwater, but owing to the fall of Bridgwater and Taunton, he stood alone, and his was a hopeless cause. A tragic moment is related in connection with this siege. The Governor's mother was in the town when the Parliamentary Army began the siege of the Castle. Their leader, anxious to take the fortress without delay, is said to have sent the following message to Wyndham:—"If you will deliver up the Castle you shall have fair quarter; if not, expect no mercy; your mother shall be in front to receive the first fury of your fire." The reply was, "If you do what you threaten, you do the most barbarous and villainous act that ever was done. My mother I honour, but the cause I fight for and the masters I serve—God and the King—I honour more." Then to his mother he wrote: "Mother, do you forgive me, and give me your blessing, and let the rebels answer for spilling that blood of yours, which I will save with the loss of mine, if I have enough both for my masters and yourself." The mother replied: "Son, I forgive thee, and pray God to help thee for this

brave resolution. If I live, I shall love you the better for it; God's will be done." The story is told by Camden, but there is probably little truth in it; it is not in accord with the chivalrous methods of Robert Blake of Somerset. Wyndham held bravely on until at last all hope of relief failed, and he and his men were reduced to the greatest extremities for want of food and water. Even then, Wyndham only surrendered on condition of receiving most honourable terms, and his little garrison marched out, weak and worn, but armed and with their colours flying and their drums beating.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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After practically a six months' siege by Parliamentary forces, Dunster Castle and its loyalist garrison surrendered on April 22nd, 1646. The siege, which was the second and severest it sustained during the Civil War, was notable for at least one interesting incident related of the defender of the castle, Sir Francis Wyndham. To raise the siege the more quickly the Parliamentarians attacking resorted to a method by no means in keeping with English chivalry. They brought to the front of their lines around the castle Lady Wyndham, mother of the defender, and threatened that if the garrison did not surrender she should bear the first fury of the cannon. In dire conflict of emotions, Colonel Wyndham weighed his love for his mother against his duty to the King, and this was his heroic reply:— "If you do what you threaten you do the most barbarous and villaneous act was ever done. My mother I honour; but the cause I fight for and the masters I serve are God and the King." Then, he pleaded, "Mother, do you forgive me, and give me your blessing, and let the rebels answer for spilling that blood of yours which I would save with the loss of mine own, if I had enough for both my master and yourself." In the same heroic spirit that prompted her son's message, Lady Wyndham wrote in a note which was sent back to him, "Sonne, I forgive thee, and pray God to bless thee for this brave resolution. If I live I shall love thee the better for it. God's will be done." A surprise attack by another body of Roydist troops secured Lady Wyndham's release fortunately, and the surrender of the castle on April 22nd was forced by Robert Blake without recourse to such Hunnish methods.

H.W.K.

## HENRY FIELDING.

Henry Fielding, the Father of English novelists, was born at Sharpham Park, the seat of his father, General Edmund Fielding, on April 22nd, 1707. Fielding was educated first at Eton, and then at Leyden, but parental extravagance in Somerset led to his return home to work for his daily bread. His early efforts were in stage writing, but in them he found neither fame nor money. In 1735 he married Miss Craddock, and on the strength of her fortune of £1,500, went to live at Fielding Lodge, Twerton. Subsequently he found himself on the road to fame. His great novels were "Pamela," "Joseph Andrews," "Tom Jones," "Jonathan Wild," and "Amelia." A few years ago his writings were published at ten guineas, with an edition *de luxe* at £25. This great Somerset novelist has still a hold on the reading public, for he was a rare student of character. "Tom Jones," though rough and coarse, is vivid and true in its pictures of low life in the middle of the 18th century.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## APRIL 23.—ST. GEORGE'S DAY.

## ST. GEORGE.

The churches in Somerset dedicated to the Patron Saint of England are Beckington, Dunster, Easton-in-Gordano, Hinton St. George, Sandford Bret, Wembdon, and Whatley. In former times blue was worn on St. George's-day, whence it happened that the harebell, being in blossom, was dedicated to that Saint.

On St. George's-day, when blue is worn,  
The blue harebell the fields adorn.

St. George, besides being declared "Champion of Christendom," is interesting to we Somerset natives, because King Arthur adopted him as the patron and protector of the goodly fellowship of the Round Table, the first Order of British Chivalry. To him attaches the well-known legend of St. George and the Dragon. It would be well if every Englishman were to paste in his hat the rules and regulations to which the Knights of the Round Table had to subscribe, and if every man would do his best to observe them we should find a finer spirit of Imperialism dominating the people, and an end would be put to the wretched teachings of

certain sections of the community.

When on St. George's-day rye will hide a crow,  
a good harvest may be expected.

At St. George the meadows turn to hay.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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A fair was formerly held at Bruton on this day. The "Magna Britannica," published in 1727, says:—"Bruton . . . hath its market weekly on Saturday, and fair yearly on April 23rd, St. George's-day."

#### APRIL 24.—ST. MARK'S EVE.

##### GARIBALDI AT TAUNTON, 1864.

Garibaldi passed Taunton on this day on his way from London to Looe, where he was to pass the night at Colonel Peard's, and to sail the next day in the Duke of Sutherland's yacht *Ondine* for Caprera. The train arrived at 9.45 p.m. The station was illuminated, and an immense crowd had assembled so see the General, who was received with great cheering.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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One hundred and eighty-nine years ago, this day, there died Daniel Defoe, author of *Robinson Crusoe*, and a multitude of other literary works, including a book, published in 1761, entitled "A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain." In this book, which treats descriptively of the many places he passed through, is an account of his journey through Somerset among other counties, and to this account Somerset historians are indebted for interesting gleanings and observations on contemporary life.

H.W.K.

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The following paragraph appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* of April 24th, 1905:—The superstitious should have plenty to do to-day, or, at any rate, this evening, for it is St. Mark's-eve. If they wish to be historic, they have only to watch outside the church door from eleven at night till one in the morning, at which hour they will see pass into the church all the ghosts of those who are to die during the year. If they wish to be merely foolish, without the stamp of history upon their foolishness, they can follow the old wives' fable and sleep upon three tufts of grass plucked from the churchyard, and dream of their future by first repeating aloud:—

"Let me know my fate, whether weal or woe;  
Whether my rank's to be high or low;  
Whether to live single or as a bride,  
And the destiny my stars can provide."



### APRIL 25.—ST. MARK'S DAY.

No church in Somerset is dedicated to this saint. There is an old custom attaching to the eve of this day. Persons used to sit and watch in the church porch from eleven o'clock at night till one in the morning. The third year (for it must be done thrice) they were supposed to see the ghosts of all those who were to die the next year pass by into the church. When anyone sickened that was thought to have been seen in this manner, it was presently whispered about that he or she would not recover, for that such a one, who had watched, St. Mark's-eve, said so. On St. Mark's-day blessings on the corn used to be implored.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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Formerly a holiday of the Church of England, this day was sometimes known as St. Mark's Eve. It was once customary to bless the fruits of the earth on this day, and hence a notion prevailed among the peasantry that to plough or do any other work on St. Mark's Day would be apt to bring down Divine wrath. Many curious observances were connected at one time with St. Mark's Eve, and such was the nature of some of them that all church persons were solemnly warned against participating in such customs. On this day maidens met to make the dumb cake. This was done by a number not exceeding three, and was to be done in silence. At twelve o'clock, the cake being prepared, each broke off a piece and ate it; then walked backwards to her sleeping room. It was thought that those who were to be married would hear a noise as of a man approaching, while those who heard nothing were to remain unmarried. Another custom at this time was that of watching the church door. A man went fasting and took his station at the church porch before midnight. It was supposed 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. Sailors who were to lose their life at sea would pass in dripping wet, and mothers doomed to die in child-birth would be represented in the uncanny procession. The belief is aptly pictured in the lines by Montgomery, which tell

“ How, when the midnight signal tolls,  
 Along the churchyard green,  
 A mournful train of sentenced souls  
 In winding sheets are seen !

The ghosts of all whom death shall doom  
 Within the coming year,  
 In pale procession walk the gloom.  
 Amid the silence drear."

That such a superstition was held in this part of the country at one time there is little doubt; it may be that it lingers on now in out-of-the-way places, but if so it has not come to the writer's notice. H. W. KILLE.

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The following is an extract from the Terrier of Lovington, of the latter part of the 17th century:—

5ly [Wee are to pay Tythe] For lambs one of Ten, if not Ten one of seven, the owner is to take the Two first and the parson the Third and they are due St. Marks Day, and if not so maney for each lambe one halfe-penny, but if any person shall bring ewes and lambs and taken there St. Marks Day and not strained nor wintred there, then there is due one third part for the straine and one third part for wintring them and one third part for the parson.

The following custom with regard to Lambs appears in the Terrier of the Rectory of Oare, A.D. 1634:—

The parson taketh the third best; if the number is under 3 he may compound or accompt for it until the number amounteth to ten. If any fall after St. Mark's-day they are to be tithed by next year.

#### APRIL 27.—HINTON ST. GEORGE FAIR.

This old fair was remarkable for one circumstance—it was the day on which French beans were to be planted. No other day in the calendar was so auspicious of good luck, and so, as a consequence, people in the district planted their beans on that day, and on no other if they could help it. And where could finer kidney beans be found than in South Somerset?

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### APRIL 30.—THE CIVIL WAR, 1645.

It is on May-eve that the pixies are supposed to be most inclined for mischief and most to be feared. By way of propitiation they are frequently called the "Good People." The late Mr. F. T. Elworthy, writing in 1894, said "Here in Somerset the belief in Pixies, Brownies, Little Folks, Good People, is still very prevalent."

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On this day Fairfax set out from Windsor at the head of 11,000 men to relieve Taunton, besieged for the second time.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## MIRACULOUS WATERS AT GLASTONBURY.

According to "Chambers' Book of Days," one named Richard Gough entered in his diary under this date:—"At Glastonbury, Somerset, a man thirty years afflicted with an asthma, dreamed that a person told him if he drank of such particular waters, near the Chain-gate, seven Sunday mornings, he should be cured, which he accordingly did and was well, and attested it on oath. This being rumoured abroad, it brought numbers of people from all parts of the kingdom to drink of these miraculous waters for various distempers, and many were healed, and great numbers received benefit." Five days afterwards, the writer added, "Twas computed 10,000 people were now at Glastonbury, from different parts of the kingdom, to drink the waters there for various distempers."

There are numerous cases recorded of West Somerset people said to have been cured of ailments by these wonderful waters. One such was Elizabeth Moggridge, wife of a former vicar of Minehead, who in 1751 determined to try the efficacy of this spring, of which such marvellous stories were circulating. She took a course, and entirely lost her complaint. Apparently she recommended it to Minehead parishioners, for it is recorded in Preb. Hancock's "History of Minehead," that "Honor, wife of Charles Powel, of Minehead, weaver, with a bleeding cancer in her left hand, found relief within a week, and is now entirely healed." The same treatment was sufficient to root out a leprosy from which Mary Benet, of Street, suffered, and two glasses removed a cancer on the tongue in the case of Mistress Haeker, of Somerton. A clergyman who visited the well in April, 1751, stated that he could not get within thirty feet of the spring for the multitude of horse and foot surrounding it. These cures became so widely known that "a handsome Pump-house, or Spa, was built, and baths excavated; but before a decade had passed away the spring lost its repute, and the baths and pump-house were deserted." Tradition records of this spring that it issued from the spot at which Joseph of Arimathea buried the Holy Grail. Tinged, it was said, with the Saviour's blood, the spring was a very copious one, averaging about 22,000 gallons daily, and leaving near its source a deposit of iron (oxide), which covered any object placed in the water, and also the stones over which it passed for a distance of two hundred feet or more.

H. W. KILLE.

**APRIL 1.—ALL FOOLS' DAY.**

[Received too late for insertion in its proper position.]

I do not remember to have seen in your notes on "All Fools' Day," 1st April, the doggerel verse with which the intended victim retaliated if the attempt was made to put the old custom in practice after mid-day. This verse was in constant use years ago, and I happened to overhear it. I think it was last year used by one boy to another, so it is evidently not yet obsolete. The verse runs :—

Twelve o'clock is gone a-past,  
You're the biggest fool at last ;  
Twenty shillings make a pound,  
You're the biggest fool in the town ;  
Four farthings make a penny,  
You're the biggest fool of any. —W.S.P.



## MAY.

Oh come! and while the rosy-footed May  
Steals blushing on together, let us tread  
The morning dews, and gather in their prime  
Flesh blooming flowers.

THOMSON.

May is said to have derived its name from Maia, the mother of Mercury, to whom the ancients offered sacrifice on the first day of the month. Some authorities do not agree with this. But there is little doubt that at this time of year, at least, the Romans held their Floralia, or festival, in honour of Flora and our Queen of the May goddess. May is, without doubt, the favourite month of the year with the poets. But the praises so lavishly bestowed upon it took their rise from climates more southern than ours. The temperature in the earlier part of the month is too low for people to indulge in all the poets' fancies, and the May festivals, as carried on in Elizabethan days, seem to point to the fact that the seasons have changed a good deal since then. May-day is not generally sufficiently balmy for man and maiden to "walk into the sweet meadows and green woods, there to rejoice their spirits with the beauty and savour of sweet flowers, and with the harmonie of birds praising God in their kinde." A poetical chronicler of the seasons, singing of May, has said: "Once more spring is with us, pacing the earth in all the primal pomp of her beauty, with flowers and soft airs and the song of birds everywhere about her, and the blue sky and the bright clouds above. But there is one thing wanting to give that happy completeness to her advent which belonged to it in olden times, and without which it is like a beautiful melody without words, or a beautiful flower without scent, or a beautiful face without a soul. The voice of man is no longer heard, hailing her approach as she hastens to bless him; and his choral symphonies no longer must bless her in return—bless her by letting her behold and hear the happiness that she comes to create. The soft songs of women are no longer blended with her breath, as it whispers among the new leaves; their slender feet no

longer trace her footsteps in the fields and woods and wayside copses, or dance delighted measures round the flowery offerings that she prompted their lovers to place before them on the village green. Even the little children themselves that have an instinct for the Spring, and feel it to the very tips of their fingers, are permitted to let May come upon them without knowing from whence the impulse of happiness that they feel proceeds, or whither it tends. In short—

All the earth is gay ;  
Land and sea  
Give themselves up to jollity ;  
And with the heart of May  
Doth every beast keep holiday ;

while man—man alone—lets the season come without glorying in it ; and when it goes, he lets it go without regret ; as if all seasons and their change were alike to him ; or, rather, as if he were the lord of all seasons, and they were to do honour and homage to him, instead of he to them ! How is this ? Is it that we have ' sold our birthright for a mess of pottage ? '—that we have bartered ' our beings end and aim ' for a purse of gold ? Alas ! thus it is :—

The world is too much with us ; late and soon,  
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers ;  
Little we see in Nature that is ours ;  
We have given our hearts away—a sordid boon."

The month, however, on the whole, is, even in this country, sufficiently profuse of beauties ; inviting us to walk abroad in the fields and breathe the fresh atmosphere of nature. There are flowers on every side. Soon the Somerset orchards will display their highest beauty with the delicate blush of the apple-blossom. A cold and windy May is, however, accounted favourable to the corn ; which, if brought forward by early warm weather, is apt to run into stalk, while its ears remain thin and light.

A cold May is kindly,  
And fills the barn finely.

There are numerous rhymes, well known to we Somerset folk, which corroborates this. "A cold May is good for corn and hay," and, on the contrary, "A hot May makes a fat churchyard." A wet month is not desired, and we are told "For an east wind in May 'tis your duty to pray," meaning that dry weather is propitious. But a good deal of misfortune is associated with May. Babies born this month, we used to be told by our grandmothers, were always sickly and difficult to rear. And, of course, kittens born in May were always drowned, because they would never kill mice nor rats, they

would bring snakes and slow-worms into the house, and, dreadful to relate, suck the breath of the children. One old "Granfer" used to tell me "Cats born in May 'baint no good for nothen' 'cept catching snakes and bringen 'em whoam instead of biding up in tallet looken' ader th' mice. An' whoever do hear of a May baby thriven' ? Poor Peter-grieving things they be, an' if they do grow up they be gener'ly dough-beaked finicking mortals. And wusser than all be weddings in May. None o' em ever turn out vitty ; there be always something wrang wi'em, or the chiles baint 'xac'ly. 'Tis all very well for they book-larnen chaps what do write porety to zing about May, but there, poor northeren chaps, they don't know the rights o' things, that's th' middle and both ends o' it. I do tell 'ee, May's another name for bad luck, else why do 'ee stick up a green bough of a tree aneast th' house so that there shall be plenty o' milk all d'year ? Ah ! well, I s'pose th' young voke do fancy they do know better'n old ones." Still, May has its compensations. There are the cowslips turning the meadows into cloths of gold, the blue speedwell decks the hedgerows, the birds are singing their loudest, and the scent of the May-blossom fills the air. But granfer says "Don't 'ee bring that rummage into house or there'll be a death in family before d'year is out." He, however, is a believer in May-dew removing "summer-voys"—or freckles as the more educated folk call them. Then the old rhyme says in May the cuckoo sings all day. And very welcome is the call to the green meadows and budding woods.

Summer is come in,  
Loud sing cuckoo ;  
Grows the seeds and blooms the mead,  
And sprouts the woods now.

This is the month when we are told something about bees. There is a well-worn rhyme in Somerset :—

A swarm o' bees in May  
Be wurth a load o' hay ;  
A swarm o' bees in June  
Be wurth a zilver spune ;  
A swarm o' bees in July  
Bain't wurth a vli.

Tusser, under the heading of the month of May, in his "Five Hundred Points of Husbandry," says :—

Take heed to thy bees, they are ready to swarme,  
The loss thereof now is a crown's worth of harme.

There are many curious stories about bees in the dear old "Land of Summer." It was usual in country places, on the death of a member of a

family possessing bees, to go into the garden and tap the bee-butt three times, saying "Father's dead! Father's dead! Father's dead!" or any other member of the family as the case may be. In the event of this announcement to the bees being omitted, the fear, it is said, is that other members of the family household will die before the expiration of the year. Turning the bees at a funeral was a custom peculiar to the West, and I am not sure it has yet died out. Of course, there is some danger in carrying out the operation. The bees sometimes object to be disturbed, and the "turner" stands the chance of being stung in his desire to perpetuate the ancient custom. In the year 1790, the London "Argus" reported that the funeral of a farmer took place at Cullompton. Just as the corpse was being placed in the hearse and the mourners were arrayed in order of procession, someone called out "Turn the bees!" A servant, who had no knowledge of such a custom, instead of turning the hives round, lifted them up and laid them down on their sides! The bees, thus suddenly disturbed, instantly attacked and fastened on the horses and their riders who were to escort the corpse to the burying ground. It was in vain they galloped off. The bees followed them and left their stings as marks of their indignation. General confusion took place, attended with the loss of hats, wigs, &c. The corpse was left unattended, nor was it until after a considerable time that the funeral attendants could be rallied in order to proceed with the interment of their deceased friend. There is a tradition, too, that if the hives be draped with crape, the bees will take the turning quietly. But I would advise that the crape be so arranged that no opening is left for the bees to get out. We who love old customs are particularly struck whenever perusing the "Fourth Georgic," by Virgil, who deals at great length with bees. He refers to the swarming of the insects, and it is remarkable that the custom which is common to-day in Somerset—that of accompanying the swarming of the bees with the din of noisy instruments, frying pans, old tin pots, and such like—was practised before the Christian era. Virgil says:—

. . . When thou seest a swarming cloud arise  
 That sweeps aloft, and darkens all the skies,  
 The motions of their hasty flight attend;  
 And know, to floods or woods, their airy march  
     they bend,  
 Then meffoil beat and honeysuckles pound  
 With these alluring savours strew the ground;  
 And mix with tinkling brass the cymbal's droning  
     sound



Straight to their ancient cells, recall'd from air  
The reconcil'd deserters will repair.

Tusser Redivivus (1744) speaks about the custom of following a swarm of bees with "a warming pan, frying pan, or kettle," and adds, it "is of good use to let the neighbours know you have a swarm in the air, which you claim wherever it alights."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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Mr. H. W. Kille kindly sends us the following interesting notes :—

#### WEATHER LORE.

A tipping (*i.e.*, dripping) May  
Brings a plentiful crop of hay.

#### THISTLE LORE.

(Gleaned from a West Somerset farmer).

Cut them in May, they'll spring till next day.  
Cut them in June, a month too soon.  
Cut in July, they're sure to die.

#### MAY KITTENS.

Although the writer has not had any case come before his notice in late years, the belief that a May kitten was an undesirable visitor existed in West Somerset widely at one time, and no doubt does now. Many old people still assert that May cats bring all sorts of vermin into the house, such as snakes and slowworms and other disagreeable reptiles, while May cats are no good as mousers or ratters. For this reason it was customary not to keep kittens born in May. Thiselton Dyer, in "English Folk Lore," refers to this belief, and quotes a saying that "A May kitten makes a dirty cat." There is no doubt that this superstition has accounted for the sacrifice of many a poor kitten unlucky enough to see daylight in this month.

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We are indebted to Mr. F. W. Mathews for the following interesting notes relating to the month of May :—

On the 1st of May, 1655, the hills round the Vale of Taunton Deane, we are told, were white with snow.

Careful housewives know the value of caution in this month of romance, which is also the month of capricious weather :—

"Ne'er cast a clout till May is out," is as well known as the decalogue, and by some as faithfully obeyed.

The careful gardener of the West, however, fine the weather of the end of April, will defer

planting for some crops of the tender kind.

The third of May  
Is Kidney-bean Day” ;

and nothing will induce some Somerset folk of ripe age to plant them on any day before that.

“ May, or Hawthorn blossom, which with us comes often before May-day, though not in the Midlands till two or three weeks later, has romantic associations with the May-day festivals of the sixteenth century, and back as far as the fourteenth, when as Chaucer says, all went forth to the fields

“ To fetche the flowres freshe, and brouche  
and blome

Fresh garlands of the hawthorne,”

to deck the Maypole.

The old herbalists used occasionally to make a medicine from the blossom, which was counted a specific for all violent inward pains, and “ the distilled water of the flowers of hawthorne if applied by a sponge to a thorne or splinter in the flesh will draw them forth.”

In Suffolk it was an old custom in most of the farm-houses that any servant who could bring in a branch of hawthorn in full bloom on the 1st of May was entitled to a dish of cream for breakfast.

But in spite of historical associations and reputed curative beneficence, another old practice of other parts of the country, the “ May ” must not on any account be brought into the house, in Somerset, or indeed, any of the Western counties. It is, to us, the most malevolent of plants, and ill-luck, accident, and death are sure to follow its introduction.

Certainly to some the smell causes headaches, and the characteristic scent as of bitter almonds, show its affinity to the poisonous juice of the young laurel leaf and to the deadly prussic acid basis of that juice.

Hence, perhaps, the ban ; but again, it may be that to the Western mind, largely Puritan in outlook, the blossom was redolent of the Bacchanalian orgies of the olden times, and so was not fit to be admitted into staid and decent households.

Besides this item of domestic interest, there are others of more or less dire import connected with the month of May ; one certainly not of any great weight, namely, that “ cats born in May are sure to bring vermin, snakes, abbets (lizards), frogs, or toads into the house ” ; but another, a very important adage, deals with the “ Monarch of the Home,” the baby. You must

not put him in short clothes this month, for

“Tuck him in May,  
You’ll drive him away.”

Another sinister warning for the month:

“Marry in May, you’ll rue the day:”  
and few brides will test it.

The last week of May sees the most popular event connected with the oak, but the first week usually marks one of farther-reaching influence, the coming of the tree into leaf. The fact of its leafing before or after the ash is held to foretell the weather for the next three or four months.

“Ash before oak  
Summer a soak;  
Oak before ash,  
Only a splash.”

Observation of several pairs of contiguous oak and ash trees for many years has shown that sometimes one kind, sometimes the other, leafs first, and certainly the total result bears out the old saying, though it does not come true every individual time.

If there is anything in it holiday-makers should have a good time this year—the oak is already out, well before the ash.

Insect life is in its young vigour this month, and the fine hive of bees that is so forward and healthy as to swarm in May is a fortunate possession to its owner:—

“A swarm of bees in May is worth a load of hay”

The night-jar, or goatsucker, whose purring note can now be heard of evenings, has the reputation of being an evil bird, that gives sickness to weanling calves, and according to many, its nest and young deserve no pity, and should be destroyed. Hard lines! on a bird that frequents derelict and marshy land, and whose food is the host of beetles, cockchafers, and other undesirables that haunt such districts.

The 21st is Culmstock Fair, and promising though the apple trees may be in their glorious beauty of early May, until that day is past there is no knowing whether the promise will come to fruition and fruit.

“Till Culmstock Fair be come and gone,  
There mid be apples, or there mid’n be none.”

This is the Blackdown way of saying that till the end of the month draws near one can never be sure whether some sharp frost or keen biting wind may not spoil the apple crop; after that time one need not worry.

Another local saying bearing on the same subject, one of perennial interest in the cider county, is that “The little apples be gone away

vor sheep-shearing, and 'out be back till harvest," referring to the fact that it is very difficult to tell, after the blossom has fallen, whether the fruit has set—you cannot tell for weeks, until the said little apples seem almost suddenly to begin to plumpen.

The coming of five Sundays in the May of this year reminds one that besides Alfred, who was mentioned in last month's calendar so heavily fining those who worked on Easter Sunday, there were other Saxon kings equally severe on those who neglected strict observance of the Sabbath.

In the first English law on the subject (in the collection of Ina), A.D. 693, it is enacted that if a master compels his slave to work on the Lord's Day, he shall pay a fine of thirty shillings and the slave be set free. If the slave works of his own accord, he is also to be fined, or, if he has no money, to be flogged.

A freeman guilty of the offence was to lose his freedom, or pay sixty shillings.

Of Sunday lore and superstition we have our share :—

"It is unlucky to turn a feather bed on Sunday, for a death is sure to follow shortly."

"Sneeze on a Sunday morning fasting,

You'll enjoy your own true love to everlasting."

Another version :—

"Sneeze on Sunday before you break your fast,  
You'll see your true love before a week is past."

Variant :—

"If you sneeze on Saturday night after the candle is out, you will next day see some one you never saw before."

The child born on a Sunday is well favoured in that fact. "Sunday's child is full of grace," or "A Sunday's child is born a gentleman."

In the old church registers of Bradford the parish clerk of just 200 years ago took care to make a special record of such a case. One of his own children was born "on the 11th of November, Sunday, at 5 in the morning."

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#### MAY SAYINGS AND SUPERSTITIONS.

April and May are the key of all the year.

May showers bring milk and meat.

A lippen May means plenty of hay.

Rain in May is good for corn and bad for hay.

A dry May always brings a good crop of wheat.

A dry May brings nothing gay.

Who sows oats in May gets little that way.

Oats in May will make a farmer run away.

Oats in June will bring a farmer home.

A May flood never did good.  
 Cast not a clout till May is out.  
 May is half winter and half summer.  
 Marry in May and you'll rue the day.  
 Marry in May, repent alway.  
 To wed in May is to wed poverty.  
 A May chit is never any good.  
 A hot May makes a fat church lay.  
 It is said to be unlucky to touch the yellow  
 hammer in May.

A zunny May and a lippen June  
 Will put all things in good tune.  
 A dry May and a dripping June  
 Puts everything in tune.  
 If you would the doctor pay  
 Leave your flannels off in May.  
 Fogs in May and heat in June  
 Make the harvest come right soon.  
 For a warm May the parsons pray  
 (meaning more burial fees, a libellous proverb).  
 March do search and April try,  
 But May will see who will live or die.  
 Whoever is ill in the month of May  
 For the rest of the year is healthy and gay.  
 He who bathes in May  
 Will soon be laid in clay.  
 Be it weal or be it woe,  
 Beans blow before May doth go.  
 A peck of March dust and a shower in May  
 Makes the corn green and the fields gay.  
 Shear your sheep in May  
 And you'll shear them all away.  
 So many mists as in March you see,  
 So many frosts in May will be.  
 He that would live for aye  
 Must eat sage in May.

An old Wedmore saying is :—  
 Eat leeks in March and ramesans (garlic) in May  
 And then the doctor can go and play.

“Tucking” a baby :—

If you tuck him in May  
 You will drive him away.

He who mows in May  
 Will have neither fruit nor hay.

If cherries blow in April  
 You'll have your fill ;  
 But if in May  
 They'll go away.

They that go to their corn in May  
 May come weeping away ;  
 They that go in June  
 May come back with a merry tune.

If they would drink nettles in March,  
 And eat mugwort in May,  
 So many fine maidens  
 Wouldn't go to the clay.

\* \* \*

We are indebted to Mr. D. J. Gass for the following saying with regard to apple blooming :—

Blossom in March—got to search ;  
 Blossom in April—only a hatful ;  
 Blossom in May—come to stay.

\* \* \*

We are indebted to Mrs. Lansdowne, of Over Stowey, for the following notes :—

If you rear a May kitten it will be a great poacher, is a firm belief here—most people kill them on that account.

May is considered an unlucky month, except the Fridays—few Somersetshire girls care to be married in May. The hawthorn blossom, known as "May," is also considered unlucky to have indoors.

To rise early and bathe your face in May dew is still considered wonderful for the complexion.

Old wives consider a girl born in May will make but a slatternly housewife.

"The later the blackthorn in bloom after May 1st the better the harvest."

Thunder in May signifieth that year need, scarceness, dearth of corn, and great hunger.

\* \* \*

In the first volume of "Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries," the late Mr. Hugh Norris (the then Editor for Somerset) quoted the familiar saying "A May chit's noo good," and explained that "chit" meant either a child or a bud. He added "This proverb is often also applied to a kitten, which, if born in May, is popularly supposed to be given to eating flies and other insects, and be always thin and miserable-looking in consequence ; never catching any mice."

It is generally believed in Somerset that cats born in May have a nasty habit of bringing all sorts of vermin into the house, such as snakes, toads, and other such uncatlike prey, and for this reason May kittens are generally destroyed.

#### WEATHER AND OTHER SAYINGS FOR MAY.

We are indebted to Mr. Edward Vivian for the following additions to the "Weather Lore and Superstitions for May" which have already appeared in these columns :—

Cast never a clout till May be out ;  
 If you change in June 'twill be too soon.  
 May, come she early or come she late,  
 She'll make the cow to quake.

Who doffs his coat on a winter's day,  
Will gladly put it on in May.

A cold May and a windy,  
Make a full barn and a findy.

A wet May makes a big load of hay.

The haddocks are good  
When dipped in May flood.

Flowers in May,  
Fine cocks of hay.

Look at your corn in May,  
And you'll come weeping away.

Look at the same in June,

And you'll come home to another tune.

The more thunder in May, the less in August  
and September.

Says Aubrey :

Eat leeks in Lide (March) and ramsins (garlic)  
in May,

And all the year after physicians may play.

"Almost anything will take a trout in May."—  
Izaak Walton.

The proverbs teach and common people say  
It's ill to marry in the month of May.

## MAY 1.—MAY DAY.

### HOBBY-HORSING at MINEHEAD.

The Wells Theological College was founded on  
May 1st. 1840.

\* \* \*

At Nether Stowey up to a few years ago there  
was always a first of May Club, with Church  
Service, followed by a dinner and speeches.

\* \* \*

### ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, 661.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* relates that "In  
this year the Sun was eclipsed on the 5th of the  
Nones of May (equal May 1); and Earenbryht,  
King of the Kentish people died, and Ecgbyht  
his son succeeded to the Kingdom." It was  
formerly thought, even by Kepler, that this was  
total in England. The eclipse was, however, only  
partial in Somerset.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

Jennings in his "Observations" (1825) states  
that in the West and South of England it was  
formerly a custom, which possibly confined  
to some extent at the time at which he wrote,  
to recognise a *May* fool or gosling in the same  
way as an April fool. A couplet used in this  
connection was:—

May-day is come and gone,  
Thou art a gosling and I am none.

Rev. Prob. Hancock, in his "Wifela's Combe," says: "It has been affirmed that on the night of the first of May, 1827, when it had at length been determined to pull down the old (Wiveliscombe) Church, a sad knell was heard to issue from the bells in the tower; strange sounds, too, were heard from the church itself, as of spirits wailing for the doom of the habitation in which they had been lodged for so many centuries; and when the door was opened, a chill blast of 'misty uncertain solidity' issued upon the sexton and the masons, to their great discomfiture!"

\* \* \*

Mr. F. T. Elworthy, in "The Evil Eye," says:—"It is still believed that certain trees have the power of producing fertility. . . . This ancient faith in the fertilising power of the tree spirit is shown still in the common custom in many parts of Europe of placing a green branch on May-day before the house of a sweetheart. A similar custom is placed to the account of the Irish: 'They fancy a green bough of a tree fastened on May-day against the house will produce plenty of milk.' . . . Most of our May-day festivities, if traced to their ultimate origin, will be found to be branches of tree worship."

\* \* \*

#### UNLUCKY MAYPOLES.

It is not necessary to repeat what Mr. Willis Watson has written with regard to Maypole dancing. Several correspondents have sent us brief notes to the effect that Maypole dancing, with the weaving of the ribbons, still survived in many Somerset villages until about 20 years ago, and in some places it has lately been revived.

The London citizen who made the following entry in his diary in the time of Charles I. would appear to have had a superstitious dislike of Maypoles:—

"At Glastonbury, in Somersetshire, at the setting up of a Maypole, it, miscarrying, fell upon a child, and slew it, and it is reported that it was the churchwarden's child, who was the chief stickler in the business. Also, when the Maypole in the same town was again the second time a-setting up, a fire took place in the town, so as all the people about the Maypole were forced to leave it, and to run to the quenching of the fire."

\* \* \*

#### WASHING IN MAY DEW.

It was formerly a common custom for young people, and particularly young women, to go into the fields before sunrise on the first of May and to wash their faces in the dew, and also to



collect the dew for later use on account of its supposed efficacy in removing "summervoyes" or freckles. This custom prevailed in Taunton until within the past 50 years, and it is quite possible that it has been practised to some extent to a much more recent date. Mr. F. J. Snell, in his "Book of Exmoor," writes: "Among the ills which age will class as minor afflictions, but to which pretty maidens object as spoiling their beauty, is "summervoyes" or freckles, and by way of remedy, or prevention, they are wont to lave their faces in dew on three successive morns. This, by the way, is an old world belief in no wise restricted to Exmoor and the neighbourhood. An old quatrain has it:—

The fair maid who, the first of May,  
Goes to the fields at break of day,  
And washes in dew from the hawthorn tree,  
Will ever after handsome be.

The details may be different, but the idea is essentially the same.

"M.B.C.," writing in "Cassell's Family Magazine," November, 1890, said:—"Amongst many of the country people May dew is believed to be a potent remedy in disease. I have heard of an old woman who always recommended for a weakly child that it should be drawn along the grass wet with May dew three times running—on the 1st, the 2nd, and the 3rd of May—and that great benefit would be sure to follow. Young girls are also recommended to wash their faces in May dew to improve and preserve their complexions. Swellings of various kinds may be cured by a similar application; but in such cases if the patient be a man the dew must be taken from the grave of the last young woman buried; if it be a woman, from the grave of the last young man!"

\* \* \*

Another form of belief in the virtues of May dew held in some parts of the county tells us that if people who are in ill-health get up early on May morning and lick the dew off the leaves of the May bush they will get better.

#### MAY DAY.

This was the great rural festival of our forefathers. Their hearts responded merrily to the cheerfulness of the season. In Somerset—as in other counties—it was the custom for the younger members of all classes to rise at break of day and go a-maying to the sound of music and of song, and of the jovial blowing of horns. Arrived at the scene of action, usually some wood conveniently near, the mayers lay loose their youthful

spirits. One of their old songs comes down to us,

Come, lads, with your bills,  
To the wood we'll away,  
We'll gather the boughs  
And we'll celebrate May.

They danced and sang; broke down branches from the may trees and made themselves garlands of the flowers. They felled a long, straight sapling to be a May-pole, and the maidens bathed their fresh faces in the dew that fell from the blossoms in the hope of gaining a complexion as pink and white as they. Then they chose the prettiest girl to be crowned May Queen, and to sit in chilly state while the rest danced round her, and then, as the sun rose high in the heavens, there came the procession homeward, laden with flowers and greenery with which to decorate the house-doors, and so ensure good luck and plenty till May-day came again. In Herrick's *Hesperides* are the following allusions to this custom on May-day:—

Come, my Corinna, come; and coming, marke  
How each field turns a street, each street a park,  
Made green and trimmed with trees; see how  
Devotion gives each house a bough,  
Or branch; each porch, each doore, ere this  
An arke, a tabernacle is,  
Made up of white-thorn neatly interwove."

The May-pole was erected on the village green, festooned with wreaths and ribbons, and all the rest of the day the villagers made merry around it. There, too, it stayed in its post of honour till, on the following May-day, a new one was brought to supersede it. So, for many a year, the village green was never without its May-pole; for the old May-day customs lasted without intermission till 1644, when the Long Parliament sourly banished them, with many another sign of "harmelesse myrthe and honest neighbour-hoode." The Restoration in 1660, however, brought a revival of May-day festivities and the re-erection of May-poles all over the country. Associated with the May-day games were Robin Hood, Little John, Maid Marian or May Queen, Friar Tuck, and the Fool on his Hobby-horse, with the Morris dancers.

These old customs are now things of the past. Poole reminds us that a relic of the hobby-horse existed until recent years at Dunster. Many conjectures as to its origin have been given, one asserting that the famous hobby-horse was the ancient King of May; another that it was a religious fracas long ago, in which one party trounced the other; and even until recently it seems to have been not unusual for those con-

nected with the hobby-horse to catch ho'd of some luckless wight and give him a drubbing. The First of May was also a high day at Minehead. The ancient town was (continues Poole) paraded the evening before, as a reminder to the inhabitants of what was to take place on the morrow. At early dawn the sleepers were aroused by the beating of a great drum, whereupon they betook themselves to the cross road, a little outside Minehead, in the direction of Bidcombe, and there danced round the hobby horse for some time. Then home to breakfast, and off to Dunster Castle, where they were regaled with ale, and presented with coin, after gamboling about for some time on the lawn in front of the entrance. Then back again to Minehead, collecting donations on their way. The festivities appear to have lasted till May 3rd, and terminated at another cross way in the Porlock road.

All this is in accordance with old custom, for there is a rural ditty which was chanted in villages and country towns preparatory to gathering the May—a May eve song, which commenced:—

If we should wake you from your sleep,  
 Good people listen now,  
 Our yearly festival we keep,  
 And bring a Maythorn bough.  
 An emblem of the world it grows,  
 The flowers its pleasures are,  
 But many a thorn bespeaks its woes,  
 Its sorrows and its care.

After bringing home the "May" there was another song, which included the verses:—

We would taste your home brew'd beer—  
 Give not, if we've had enough—  
 May it strengthen, may it cheer,  
 Waste not e'er the precious stuff.  
 We of money something crave,  
 For ourselves we ask no share,  
 John and Jane the whole shall have,  
 They're the last new married pair.

The ditty concluded with a blessing on "good people all."

Another local custom used to be observed at Crewkerne. On May morning, at sunrise, maidens would repair to Beauty Spring and lave in it according to traditional conditions with a view to improving their complexions. Kneeling down at the spring, the water had to be thrown over the face and allowed to dry itself. If a perfect cure were not effected, then a visit the following year had to be resorted to. Beauty Spring has been rendered famous in some lines written by W. Greene, a former resident of Crewkerne. They

are as follows :—

THE "BEAUTY" SPRING AT CREWKERNE.

At early dawn, on the first of May,  
 She stood by the Beauty Well ;  
 Of a bonnier maid, or a better maid,  
 No man in the town could tell.  
 Her skin was white as the wind-flower's bloom,  
 Her eyes were hyacinth blue,  
 Her breath was sweet as the sweet primrose,  
 What did she come there to do ?

" I want," she said, as she laved her face,  
 While up rose the glowing sun,  
 " To be fairer than anything else beside  
 To him, my darling one.  
 O heaven, that art so rosy, grant  
 A part of thy bloom to my cheek !  
 Oh, may I be as this water pure,  
 As yonder violet meek !

" For I could not bear that my love should think  
 Anything better than I ;  
 I could not bear that a fairer face  
 Should in his memory lie.  
 I would that every moment should pass  
 In a tender, true caress ;  
 I would my life should be life of his,  
 That my love he ever should bless."

She turned away, and the lark sprang up,  
 And sang with joy above her ;  
 And over her sang, than lark more blithe,  
 The jubilant heart of her lover.

She grew more beautiful day by day—  
 The reason who shall tell ?  
 He said 'twas caused by her gentle soul—  
 She laid it all to the Well.

The young folks in and around Taunton, too, used to go into the fields before sunrise on May morning to gather May-dew to remove "summer-voys;" in fact, it was a common custom in Somerset. It is said the white thorn gathered on May-day kept witches away. Then Gay, in his "Shepherd's Week," tells us how a snail, placed among "the milk white embers" on the hearth, slowly crawled and spelt out a letter divining the name of a maiden's future husband.

Columns could be written dealing with May-day customs generally, of the sports around the May-pole, the antics of "Jack on the Green," crowning of the May Queen, the milkmaids' and the sweeps' festivals, the lappy day spent all along the country side. Some of the old May-time songs have come down to us, remnants of the songs of the olden times, sung by youths and maidens in the merry greenwood when Plantagenets and Tudors reigned in England. The May-day

rejoicings have gone. Alas! for the decay of these good old customs. Like Washington Irving, I value every custom that tends to infuse poetical feeling into the people and to sweeten and soften the rudeness of manners affected by many of the rising generation. The rural dance on the green and the homely May-day pageant have gradually disappeared in proportion as people have become expensive and artificial in their pleasures and too knowing for simple enjoyment. The rush and whirl of business to-day is causing people to "lay waste our powers." We have little time to commune with Nature; it is all "getting and spending." Happy, indeed, is the man who can afford to rest awhile to go out into the open to feast his eyes upon the flowers, to hear the song of the birds, the hum of the bees, and to conjure up in his mind the May games which did so much to bring happiness and contentment to the country-side.

The weather lore associated with May-day is considerable. Hoar frost on this day indicates a good harvest. The later the blackthorn in bloom after May 1st the better the rye and harvest. If it rains on Philip's and James'-day a fertile year may be expected.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

One of the May-day mummers, already mentioned, is called Jack-in-the-Green, and writing upon the subject Dr. Owen Pugh states that this character represents an ancient monarch, Melvas, King of Somersetshire, disguised in greenery and boughs, and thus arrayed lying in wait for Queen Guinevere, the wife of King Arthur, as she was returning from a hunting expedition.

EDWARD VIVIAN.

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#### MAY-DAY REVELS IN WEST SOMERSET.

In a general sense, perhaps, there is evidence enough that May-day was widely celebrated as a time of festivity in the West Country. In some degree it is to be found in the spirit of the folk songs collected by Mr. Cecil Sharpe, with their allusions to "dabbling in the dew," and philanderings with pretty maids "on May morning so early," but it is another thing to come across definite traces in old records or in the memories of old folk from which one can construct a clear idea of how local swains and maidens comported themselves on May-day and in what manner they amused themselves. Just a glimpse of how Minthead folk kept this day is afforded in the reminiscences of old inhabitants, but no other record has been found to amplify

or confirm their statements. Such information as has been gleaned, however, goes to show that May festivities in this district were of a very interesting character. A very old resident, long since "gone west," related how Minehead people were wont in his childhood to indulge in revels on May morning at Whitecross—a cross roads west of the town—where a Maypole was erected, and, to the music of clarionets and other instruments, lasses and lads danced around the flower-decorated pole, and crowned, not only a queen, but a king of the May. Gleanings from the memory of an old lady, who died some few years ago, just before she "scored her century," showed that in her childhood's days "old-fashioned people" with their children donned white aprons on May morning and went out into the fields to catch the dew, afterwards choosing from among them the prettiest girl and making her Queen of the May. The old lady spoke of "old-fashioned people"; evidently the younger generation were even then beginning to scorn the simple pleasures of May-day. Methinks one must go back still further to find May celebrations in their heyday. Fortunately, quite by chance, a unique evidence has been acquired by the writer of the fact that the Maypole and its appurtenant merriments had an existence at one time at any rate in one place in this district—and that the most appropriate background for such a custom, viz., in the old-world town of Dunster. A copy of an old print, apparently of the 17th century, shows a joyous assembly of holiday-garbed lads and lasses tripping merrily around a large flower-decked Maypole erected in the main street of Dunster, with the old yarn market adorned with floral garlands in the background. Looking on, or enjoying themselves in various ways, are a great many holiday makers, while in the foreground a stylishly-dressed young gallant, on horse-back, who might be the young 'Squire of the Castle, perched high in the background, chats with two fashionably attired ladies. It is a picture that serves more than mere words can do to convey an impression of the May-day revels as they were enacted in this corner of the West Country.

#### THE MINEHEAD HOBBY-HORSE.

Although there appears no sign of it in the picture referred to above, doubtless there is somewhere among the happy crowd portrayed, the Minehead hobby-horse gambolling and prancing about for their diversion. From such scattered and brief records as have been handed down, there is little doubt that the hobby-horse was a live feature in local May-day celebrations.

Savage appears to be the first writer who mentions it, and he states in the "Hundred of Carhampton" that the custom "has prevailed for ages, but what gave rise to it is at present unknown." As it exists now, for the custom is not quite defunct, though shorn of most of its glories, the hobby-horse consists of a light frame-work, by no means horse-like, but more resembling an inverted boat, covered with a profusion of multi-coloured ribbons, and carried by a man whose head, protruding through the middle of the frame-work, is hidden by a grotesque mask and surrounded by a conical cap, also adorned with ribbons. Rough housing painted with vari-coloured rings stretches from the sides of the framework to the ground, and on one side of this are the words, "The Sailors' Horse," the custom having always been kept up by the seafaring element among the inhabitants. At the rear end of the "horse" is attached a long tail, the business end of which is an actual cow's tail fastened by a length of rope to the frame-work. The man inside, whose feet only are visible below the housing, prances around and rushes from side to side of the road, now swinging the tail and scattering the onlookers, and now sitting up to some affluent-looking personage with his hand stuck out through the side of the frame in an importuning manner. It hardly needs saying that the exertion of carrying the "horse" about and performing the queer antics which are attendant on the custom, is so exhausting and enervating that liberal potations of stimulating liquor are found frequently necessary, the "largesse" which is accumulated being thus expended. Of course, there are attendants with the "horse," usually two, one of whom plays an old-fashioned tabor, and the other a concertina. A generation ago, so old inhabitants say, it was accompanied by quite a number of musicians, and also by quaintly attired gullivers, who performed on persons reluctant to open their purses the ceremony of "booting" or "pursing," which consisted in the victim being picked up by two of the men and held face downwards while a third struck him with an old boot ten times, the hobby-horse bowing solemnly at each stroke. At the tenth stroke the horse swung its long tail round, the victim was dropped, and everyone rushed out of range of the tail. A former squire of Dunster Castle, who refused a donation, so the story goes, was taken out of his carriage and thus booted. Up to 1914 the custom was kept up without a break, within living memory at any rate, and it was the practice at six o'clock on May morning for the hobby-horse to visit Whitecross, where in earlier days

it was the central spirit in the May morning revels, and on the evening of the third of May, before the horse went back into its stable for the year, it was taken up to Cher, a high cross-roads on the opposite side of the town. It was believed that if these visits were regularly kept up the custom could never fall through. A lapse from this unwritten law, however, took place during the war, and now the continuation of the custom hangs in the balance. An old picture of the hobby-horse in the writer's possession shows that at one time it had "snappers" at the front, which, worked by a cord from inside, formed another weapon of intimidation besides the tail, these snappers, which were covered with a hare's skin and ears, being capable of giving anyone an uncomfortable pinch.

Numerous amusing stories anent the custom have been preserved. Tradition says that a party of marauding Danes, contemplating a landing at Minehead, were frightened away by the appearance of the "horse." Another story—and a true one—tells of how it was taken once to Porlock, and of how the Porlock men set upon the Minehead party and beat them and took their "horse" and hung it up on the top of the Porlock church steeple, to the derision of Minehead folk. Yet a third story affirms that some Padstow sailors landing at Minehead stole the hobby-horse, and on their return to Padstow established the practice there. Curiously enough, Padstow is the only other place in the West of England where a similar custom has been maintained. The tale has been told, too, of how a former Vicar of Minehead—a stern autocrat—forbid the custom, and how to evade his edict men made the "horse" in a wood on the hill with the utmost secrecy, and how on one occasion the hobby-horse knocked the Vicar down just by that ancient hostelry, the Plume of Feathers, much to the reverent gentleman's disgust and annoyance.

Much more might be written on this quaint custom in the light of reminiscences that have been gathered from old people, and a great deal more might be said on similar customs elsewhere, such as the Padstow hobby-horse, the "hodening-horse" at Thanet, the Abbots Bromley (Staffs) hobby-horse, &c., but here is neither the place nor the space for discoursing on other than West Somerset observances, interesting though the subject may be, so let these notes suffice for the present.

—H. W. KILLE.



**MAY 2.—FIRST SUNDAY IN MAY, 1920.**

A correspondent, writing in Vol. 15 of Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries, gave the following interesting account of a visit which he paid to Skipperham Well (Ashill) on a Sunday in May nearly 30 years before:—"In company with a friend, on Sunday I visited Skipperham Well, or 'Skivern's Well,' as the vernacular has it, where from some immemorial time the countryside assemble for the 'play,' as they term it, during the first three Sundays in May. When we reached the famous well, we found a group ranged round it, and several persons were bathing their eyes with its waters. The well is about three feet square, and of the same depth, with its sides formed of large square stones. The water was bubbling up through two fissures at the bottom, and ran away in a stream. It looked as clear as crystal, but as one bent over, the light was concentrated into brilliant bands of prismatic colours; the water being chalybeate, the oxide of iron was observable everywhere.

"There was evidently enough here in a superstitious age, to give the well that supernatural notoriety it acquired in the dark ages, and kept up almost to the present. In an adjoining field a great many boys were engaged in a game of 'rounders'—another custom of the place, and a policeman standing by, told me that he had no authority to interfere till six o'clock should strike, when they would be allowed to play no longer."

**MAY 3.—KIDNEY BEAN DAY.****TOTAL ECLIPSE of the SUN, 1715.**

The eclipse of the sun in 1715 was probably the most celebrated ever recorded in England. It was total in Somerset and adjacent counties, the line of totality passing right across England from Cornwall to Norfolk. The celebrated astronomer Halley has left a most interesting account of his observations of it.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**KIDNEY BEAN DAY.**

There is a superstition on the borders of Devon and Somerset that kidney beans will not grow unless they are planted on the 3rd of May. Any labourer will tell you that he would not think of planting his "banes" on any other day. To do so would be almost tempting Providence, so strong is the belief in the superstition.

**MAY 5.—TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE MOON,  
1110.**

This eclipse, which occurred in the reign of Henry I., shortly before midnight, was what is

known as a "black" one, the Moon being quite invisible. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says:—"The Moon appeared in the evening brightly shining, and afterwards by little and little its light waned, so that as soon as it was night it was so completely quenched that neither light nor orb nor anything at all of it was seen. And so it continued very near until day, and then appeared full and brightly shining. It was on this same day a fortnight old. All the night the air was very clear, and the stars over all the heaven were brightly shining. And the tree-fruits on that night were sorely nipt."

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

### MAY 8.—

Rain on May 8th foretells a wet harvest.

### MAY 10.—ROGATION DAY.

Sow biennials (Sweet Williams, Brompton Stocks, &c.) on May 10th and plant out on November 10th.

—W. C. BAKER.

\* \* \*

The author of "Prayer-book Saints and Holy Days," speaking of Ascension-day (this year, Thursday, May 13th), says: "This festival was, alas! better kept than it is now. Three days have been set apart to prepare for it. These are called Rogation days, from *rogo*, 'to ask,' and solemn processions went round the fields praying for good harvests. After the Reformation these solemn processions degenerated into the coarse and unlovely ceremony of 'beating the bounds.'"

\* \* \*

Dr. C. H. Poole, in his "Customs, Superstitions, and Legends of Somerset" (published 1877), said: The practice of "Processioning," "Beating the Bounds," or "Gangdays," is of ancient date, and is still preserved in many parishes.

"That ev'ry man might keep his own possessions,  
Our fathers us'd in reverend processions  
(With zealous prayers, and with praiseful cheere),  
To walk their parish limits once a year."

\* \* \*

The Rogation Days are the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Holy Thursday or Ascension-day. It is with these days that the perambulation of the bounds of parishes is associated, although the practice, no doubt, had its origin in pre-Christian times. The ancient Romans had customs which they called Terminalia and Ambarvalia, festivals in honour of

the God Terminus and the Goddess Ceres. Terminus, a Roman divinity, was supposed to preside over bounds and limits, and to punish all unlawful usurpation of land. The Roman festival was, of course, observed in our county of Somerset. To-day it is represented by "beating the bounds," but it is—or was before the war—becoming more general to hold a religious service during Rogation Days, when the parish was perambulated. Years ago, a religious service also entered into the proceedings. The Gospel was read aloud under maybe a "Gospel Tree." For "certain Gospels be read in the wide field amongst the corn and grasse, that by the verture and operation of God's word, the power of the wicked spirits which keep in the air and infect the same (whence comes pestilences and the other kindes of diseases and sicknesses) may be laid downe and the aier made pure and cleane to the intent the corne may remain unharmed, and not infected of the said hurtful spirits, but serve for our use and bodily sustenance." Minister, churchwardens, and parishioners were wont to deprecate the vengeance of God, beg a blessing on the fruits of the earth, and preserve the rights and properties of the parish. It was a pretty custom, although it may probably have been degraded in some cases. It is interesting, however, to note that perambulation of parish bounds was in vogue 700 years before the birth of Christ! It was many years after this, of course, there were parishes in England. About the year 452 it is recorded that Claudius Mametius, Bishop of Vienna, ordered the Rogation Days to be observed as public fasts, with solemn processions and supplications on the occasion of some great public calamity. At length it became the law of the Latin Church that they should be observed annually with processions and supplications to secure the blessing on the fruits of the earth and the temporal interests of man. In pre-Reformation times these perambulations were a matter of great ceremony. We are told that at one place the perambulators would stop to feast; at another they would assemble round a cross to be edified with some Godly admonition or the legend of some saint or martyr, and so complete the circuit of the parish. The lord of the manor, with a large banner, the priests in surplices and with crosses, and other persons with bells, banners, and staves, followed by most of the parishioners, walked in procession around the parish, stopping at the crosses, forming crosses on the ground, saying or singing Gospels to the corn and allowing "drinkings and good cheer," which was remarkable, as the Rogation Days were appointed as

fasts. The Church of England, at the Reformation, discontinued the public processions, but ordered these days to be observed as private fasts. But the useful part of the perambulations was retained. By the injunction of Queen Elizabeth it was required that the people should once a year, with the curate and substantial men of the parish, walk about the parishes as they were accustomed, and at their return to the church make their common prayers. And the curate, in these perambulations, was, at certain convenient places, to admonish the people to give thanks to God as they beheld His benefits, and for the increase and abundance of the fruits of the earth. In some parts of the country Rogation Days are called gang days—the word being derived from the Saxon “gangan” —to go. Similarly the weed milk wort is called Rogation or gang-flower, from the custom of decorating the pole (carried on such occasions) with these flowers.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**MAY 11.—EDGAR CROWNED at BATH, 973.  
RELIEF OF TAUNTON, 1645.**

On Whit-Sunday, May 11th, 973, King Edgar was crowned in Bath Abbey. It is one of the most interesting historical events in our county, because it was the first and only Coronation which has taken place in Somerset, and Edgar was the first King of England, for it was only in his reign that England was called England. The ceremony took place with a great display of pomp and pageantry. We are told that strangers, distinguished and otherwise, thronged into Bath from all quarters. “There was a great heap of priests, a crowd of monks, and of wise men a great gathering.” With the King, there surged into the Abbey a long procession of nobles and ecclesiastics vested in robes of white and purple, and amid the acclamations of the populace, the crown was placed on the Monarch’s head by Dunstan. When Edgar knelt at the altar, Dunstan began the “Te Deum” (says Meehan in his “Eight Episodes in the ‘History of Bath.’”) At the conclusion of the hymn the Bishop raised the King from his knees, and at Dunstan’s dictation he took a three-fold oath—that the Church of God and all Christian people should enjoy true peace for ever, that he would forbid all wrong and all robbery to all degrees, and that he would command justice and mercy in all judgments. Then the consecration prayers were said, the Archbishops anointed him, the antiphon, “Zadok the Priest,” was sung (this has been sung at every British Coronation since), and all

joined in the shout, "Let the King live for ever." Dunstan next invested him with the ring and sword, placed the crown on his head, and the sceptre and rod in his hands, and both the Archbishops enthroned him. The splendour and solemnity of the ceremony evidently took strong hold on the imagination of the people.

"There was bliss mickle  
On that happy day  
Caused to all."

says a poem in commemoration of the event, preserved in the Saxon Chronicle.

Of priests a heap,  
Of monks much crowd,  
I understand.

It was a glorious day. From Bath the King proceeded on his annual sea voyage round the island, and on his arrival at Chester eight Kings awaited him to do homage, and all swore "to be faithful to him and to be his fellow-workers by sea and land." They included the Kings of the Scots, of Cumberland, of the Isles, and five Welsh princes.

#### RELIEF OF TAUNTON, 1645.

On this day Goring's headquarters were at Wells. Hopton and Sir John Berkeley were at Taunton with Goring's Foot, about 1,200; besides 3,000 others, Cornish, Devon, and Somerset men, and at least 2,000 Horse. On advice that Fairfax had advanced to Blandford, they drew off their great piece of ordnance to Bridgwater, and prepared everything else ready for their retreat to Langport and Bridgwater the next day, with the resolve in these fresh quarters to refresh themselves and await Goring's advance. But before retreating they ventured a general assault. The rebels hindered the Royalists from getting much ground in the town. Next morning, they having heard that Fairfax was not in a condition to march, returning to the assault of the town, burned a third of it, and took certain works and houses. Yet at six o'clock the rebels continued in possession of the Castle, the Church, Maiden's Fort, and an entrenchment in the Market-place. When the relief force arrived they found the enemy had entirely disappeared. One of the tragic moments of the siege was that when Hopton, on the 10th day, sent a message offering fair terms if the town would yield, Blake returned answer that he had four pairs of boots left, and would eat three of them before he should have it. On receiving this refusal, the assault was repeated, but not so furiously, and without any fresh success. Green, in his "Siege and Defence of

Taunton," tells us that the last attack was made to cover the attempt of some traitors within to fire the town. Two of the treacherous villains were taken in the act; one, from the fury of the people, was brained at once; the other was cut to pieces by the soldiers. And the women made "quick despatch" of a woman who was acting with them. Before they died they implicated some fifty others, and confessed they were to receive ten pounds each for their work. Some of their accomplices, taken afterwards, were hanged. The fire had been kindled in a most dangerous place, but by this prompt discovery and the united exertions of the people, it was soon extinguished. Within three hours after, to the surprise of the besiegers, the relief appeared, and after all their labour and gallantry they were obliged to draw off hurriedly, unsuccessful and disappointed. Thus was Taunton relieved a second time just in the "nick of time," just at the "pinch of their utmost straits," after being five times stormed, and after a general siege of about fifty-four, and a close one of about forty days. On being viewed, the town was found one of the saddest spectacles eyes ever beheld. Two-thirds of it were consumed by fire, especially about East-street, and the people almost starved. The thatch had been taken from the houses to feed the horses, the beds were had been used for match, and only two barrels of powder remained. During the siege of the garrison, about 100 had been slain outright, and 200 were found badly wounded. Of the besiegers, from 500 to 1,000 were supposed to have been killed. On the next day (the 12th May) Colonel Weldon entered the town, the inhabitants being joyed beyond expression. The country people, to the number of about a thousand, came in from their hiding places in the woods, and with "broad eyes of wonder" gazed upon the works which had defended the place, and upon the soldiers who had defended the works, looking upon them as giants rather than men. Thanksgiving services were held in all churches and chapels, and letters of thanks were sent to Fairfax, Weldon, and Blake, with money for distribution amongst the soldiers, whilst a public collection was ordered and made for the poor distressed inhabitants, who had suffered so much by their "matchless magnanimity." The 11th of May was long kept as a memorable day; a day of earnest thanksgiving for this most fortunate deliverance. "Thanks to the Lord," cried one preacher, "for He is gracious, and His mercy endureth for ever; who remembered us at Taunton, for His mercy endureth for ever." A ballad was written on the event as follows:—

The eleventh of May was a joyful day,  
 When Taunton got relief ;  
 Which turn'd our sorrows into joy,  
 And eas'd us of our grief.

The Taunton men were valiant then,  
 In keeping of the town,  
 While many of those who were our foes  
 Lay gasping on the ground.

When Colonel Massey of the same,  
 Did understand aright,  
 He, like a man of courage bold,  
 Prepared himself to fight.

With that our soldiers, one and all,  
 Cast up their caps and cry'd :  
 " What need we fear what man can do,  
 Since God is on our side."

Long time did Goring lie encamp'd  
 Against fair Taunton town :  
 He made a vow to starve us out  
 And batter our castle down.

Within our castle did remain  
 (A garrison so strong)  
 Those likely lads which did unto  
 Our Parliament belong.

Before daylight appear'd in view  
 The news to them was come,  
 That Goring and his cursed crew  
 Were all dispersed and gone.

But who can tell what joy was there,  
 And what content of mind  
 Was put into the hearts of those  
 Who'd been so long confin'd.

Our bread was fourteen pence per pound  
 And all things sold full dear ;  
 Which made our soldiers make short meals  
 And pinch themselves full near.

Our beer was eighteen pence per quart,  
 As for a truth was told,  
 And butter eighteen pence per pound  
 To Christians there was sold.

The Cavaliers dispers'd with fear,  
 And forced were to run  
 On the eleventh of May, by break of day,  
 Ere rising of the sun.

Let Taunton men be mindful then,  
 In keeping of this day ;  
 We'll give God praise, with joy always  
 Upon the eleventh of May.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## MAY 13.—ASCENSION DAY.

As is the weather on Ascension-day, so may be the autumn.

\* \* \*

Lewis's Topographical Dictionary of England, 1849 edition, says in its account of Dulverton:—"In the neighbourhood is a mineral spring, the water of which is impregnated with iron, but it is not now used medicinally; there is also a spring called Holy Well, to which on Holy Thursday it was formerly the custom to carry persons afflicted with disease."

\* \* \*

The author of "Prayer-book Saints and Holy Days" states that the only ancient church in England which is dedicated to the Ascension is that of West Lydford in Somerset, but most of our local works of reference give the dedication of this church as to St. Peter. A fair was formerly held at West Lydford (Lydford Green) on Holy Thursday (Ascension-day), and it is possible that the church was originally dedicated to the Ascension, and the dedication changed either when the church was re-built or at some other date.

\* \* \*

Ascension-day, emphatically termed Holy Thursday with us, is designed in the same manner by King Alfred. There is evidence that day was observed in very early times, for St. Chrysostom preached a homily on that day which has come down to us, as also has another by St. Gregory of Nyssa. St. Augustine speaks of it as a day with which Christians had long been familiar, saying, as a modern preacher might, "We celebrate this day the solemnity of the Ascension." The parochial perambulations, referred to under May 10th, often took place on this day. On this day, too, in the olden days, various rites were performed at wells, such as decorating them with boughs of trees, and flowers placed in various fancied devices. In some places, indeed, it was the custom, after prayers for the day at the church, for the clergyman and singers even to pray and sing Psalms at the wells. The decoration of five wells at Tissington, in Derbyshire, has acquired considerable notoriety in consequence of the elaborate and imposing nature of the ceremonial. There is little question of its being a survival of a very ancient and probably Pagan practice—one that is found in varied forms in other parts of England, and no doubt pertained in past days in our Somerset, which possesses so many holy wells. There is some weather lore associated with Ascension-day.



if it rains on that day, though never so little, it foretells a scarcity to ensue that year, and sickness, particularly among cattle; but if it be fair and pleasant then to the contrary, and pleasant weather mostly till Michaelmas. Another is "Fine on Holy Thursday, wet on Whit-Monday; fine on Whit-Monday, wet on Holy Thursday," and a third: "As the weather on Ascension-day, so may be the entire autumn."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**MAY 14.—TOM CORYATE COMMENCED HIS  
WONDERFUL WALK, 1608.**

**GREAT ECLIPSE OF THE SUN,  
1230.**

Thomas Coryate was born at Odcombe in 1577. He was the son of the then Rector. In due time he went to Oxford, then entered the service of Prince Henry as a comic attendant, and next became a great traveller, and the introducer of the use of forks in this country. Coryate, in fact, made two journeys, the result of the first being a thick quarto book, printed in 1611, which he entitled "Coryate's Crudities, hastily gobbled up in five months travells in France, Savoy, Italy, Helvetia alias Switzerland, some parts of high Germany, and the Netherlands. Newly digested in the hungry aire of Odcombe, in ye county of Somerset, and now dispersed to the nourishment of the travelling members of this Kingdome." He set out from Dover at 10 o'clock in the morning of the 14th May, 1608, and landed at Calais. He went to Paris, crossed the Alps to Italy, visiting Milan—where he first saw an umbrella—Cremona, Mantua, Padua, and Venice. Up to this time he had travelled, for the most part, either on horse-back or by the usual wheeled conveyance of the country. On leaving Venice he hurried homewards, and made the whole journey on foot—going down the Rhine, however, by boat. He embarked at Flushing, on the 1st October, and arrived at the Custom House, London, on the 3rd October. The journey out and home from Odcombe to Odcombe was 1,975 miles, and he declared he "walked afoote, with only one pair of shoes, from Venice to Flushing," some 900 miles. These shoes were hung up in Odcombe Church, and are said to have remained there until 1702. He next left London on the 20th October, 1612, and arrived at Zante 13th January, 1613. He then sailed to the Trojan shore. He visited Constantinople, eventually finding himself at Jerusalem. He walked for 15 months at a personal expenditure of about two

pounds ten shillings, and traversed 2,700 miles. For this exploit Tom dubbed himself the Odcombian Leg-Stretcher. He died at Surat, on the 17th December, 1617.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

#### GREAT ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, 1230.

Says Roger of Wendover: "On the 14th of May, which was the Tuesday in Rogation week, an unusual eclipse of the Sun took place very early in the morning, immediately after sunrise; and it became so dark that the labourers, who had commenced their morning's work, were obliged to leave it, and returned again to their beds to sleep; but in about an hour's time, to the astonishment of many, the Sun regained its usual brightness.

EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### MAY 17.—DEATH OF RAJAH BROOKE, 1917.

Sir Charles Johnson Brooke, G.C.M.G., Rajah of Sarawak, died on this day. Sir Charles was a notable Somerset man. He was born on June 3rd, 1829, at Berrow Vicarage, his father being the Rev. Francis Charles Johnson, vicar of Whitelackington, Ilminster, who had married a sister of Sir James Brooke, the first Rajah of Sarawak. The future Rajah bore the name Charles Anthony Johnson, but when chosen by his uncle to be his heir and successor on the throne of Sarawak, he took the name of Charles Johnson Brooke. He was educated at Crewkerne School, until, in his 13th year, he entered the Royal Navy as a volunteer of the first class. In 1844 he paid his first visit to Sarawak as midshipman on board the *Dido*, under Captain Keppel (afterwards Admiral of the Fleet Sir Harry Keppel). On this occasion he took part in an expedition for the suppression of piracy on the coasts of Borneo, and thus laid the foundation of that intimate knowledge of the natives and of that capacity for tactful and sympathetic dealing with them which chiefly caused the uninterrupted success and security of his long reign. After a second visit to Sarawak, in 1852, as lieutenant in the *Macander*, again in command of Captain Keppel, he retired from the Navy in order to assist his uncle in the administration of the Raj. In the following year he was entrusted by the Rajah with the difficult task of subduing a rebel Dayak chief, who, after murdering a British officer, had established himself, with a large band of followers, on a well-nigh impregnable mountain. This was the first of a series of similar expeditions, all of which he led with signal success,

relying in every case almost entirely upon a force composed of Sea Dayak and Malay volunteers, who, armed only with their native weapons, served him faithfully and well. In the same year he was given the title Tuan Muda of Sarawak, and continued to bear it until he succeeded his uncle as Rajah in 1868. In 1888 the Rajah of Sarawak was created G.C.M.G., and at the same time, by agreement with the British Government, Sarawak, which had up to that date remained independent, became a British Protectorate, and in 1904 the position of Sir Charles Brooke as Sovereign of Sarawak was formally recognised by King Edward VII..

—W G WILLIS WATSON.

### MAY 18.—WELLINGTON PARISH BOUNDS BEATEN, 1903.

A correspondent has kindly sent us a copy of a report which appeared in the *Wellington Weekly News* of May 20th, 1903, from which we quote the following particulars:—

The boundaries of the parish of Wellington were beaten on Monday and Tuesday, May 18th and 19th, 1903; the only previous record known to the reporter related to the perambulation which took place on June 10th and 11th, 1884, but we notice that Mr. Robert Knight, one of the overseers who accompanied the party in 1903, stated that he had assisted in a similar perambulation 33 years before. In connection with the 1903 ceremony the beaters assembled in the Market-place at 9.30 on the Monday morning to the number of about 150. Amongst them was the veteran leader of 1884, Mr. O. G. Walter, and some three dozen school boys with their willow wands; also the bellman in his showy uniform, with the Portreeve (Mr. J. W. Webber) and Captain Gill as leaders. After the party had been photographed, Mr. Geo. Broadribb (the Court Leet's water bailiff) led the way with the boys immediately following, and then came all and sundry, including men with ladders, hatchets, coils of rope and staff hooks. Sergt. Broadribb led off at a swinging pace through High-street, past the Parish Church, to Poole Crossway, and under the railway bridge to Wharf Cottage, where the boundary beating was to begin. Here Mr. O. G. Walter, as one of the old parishioners who had taken part in the perambulation of the parish 19 years before, read the following proclamation.

OYEZ! OYEZ!! OYEZ!!!

I do proclaim and give notice that by order of the Overseers of the Poor of this parish of Wellington and other inhabitants, and on behalf of the

inhabitants of the parish that we parishioners here present at Wharf Cottage on the Nynhead-road this 18th day of May, 1903, have assembled for the purpose of perambulating the ancient bounds of our parish to the end and intent that such bounds may be examined, protected, and maintained.

The bounds of this parish from hence southward to the Hill and from thence northward to the parish boundary stone by the road at Beam-bridge will be perambulated on this day, and the remainder to-morrow.

**GOD SAVE THE KING.**

We regret that the pressure upon our space makes it impossible to set out the route in detail. It covered altogether a distance of about 18½ miles, including wading or swimming across the River Tone, and enclosed about 5,295 acres.

An interesting fact in connection with Nynhead Bridge is that one half of the bridge belongs to Nynhead, a quarter to Wellington, and the remaining quarter to West Buckland. In support of this statement Mr. O. G. Walter read correspondence which came before the late Milverton Highway Board in 1868 indicating that when the bridge was repaired the parish of Nynhead bore half the cost, Wellington a quarter, and West Buckland a quarter.

On arriving at Wharf Cottage, after having completed the two days' perambulation, the party, numbering about 140, formed a procession, headed by the boys, and marched to the Town Hall. The Portreeve was carried through High-street shoulder high, and cheers were given for him and for Captain Gill, who had led the beaters throughout, and to whose invitation the beating of the bounds on that occasion was largely due. The proceedings terminated with the singing of a verse of the National Anthem.

**MAY 19.—ST. DUNSTAN'S DAY.**

On the last leaf of the second register at Christon is the following entry :—

May 19th, 1718.

Memorandum.—A Procession or Perambulation was made Round the Parish of Christon by the Minister and Inhabitants thereof accompanied with Ancient Neighbours who had performed that office near forty years ago, and remember the old marks and metestones (vizt).

Then follow 23 names.

\* \* \*

Dunstan must always be one of the most prominent figures in Somerset history before the Conquest, for his biographers tell us that he

revived religion and learning over the length and breadth of the land, and held together for half a century a monarchy which, in its artificial structure and balanced policy, contained within it the seeds of its own decay. We claim him as a Somerset man. He was born probably at Baltonsborough. It is certainly a noteworthy fact—says Dr. Armitage Robinson, Dean of Wells—that all the local references to St. Dunstan's name, which are still on record, belong to the immediate neighbourhood of Baltonsborough. The church there is dedicated in St. Dunstan's honour—the only such dedication in Somerset. Baltonsborough is the one spot round which all the local memories of Dunstan cluster, and we may allow the claim of the villagers that the saint was born in their midst. He was a nephew of Athelm, the first Bishop of Wells, became the first reforming Abbot of Glastonbury, the restorer of monasticism in England, the wise counsellor of our Saxon Kings Edmund and Edred, and then Archbishop of Canterbury, the leading statesman of the reign of Edgar the Peaceable. For centuries his fame was obscured by false accusations of heartless severity, ignorant monkery, silly superstition; until the late Bishop Stubbs finally rescued him from his detractors by publishing the earliest records of his life and showing him for the great Englishman that he was. John Richard Green, in 1862, at a meeting of the Somerset Archaeological Society, began to do Dunstan justice, speaking of him as "the first of that great line of ecclesiastical statesmen who counted among them Lanfranc and Wolsey, and ended in Laud." And in later years the Dean of Wells has done great work in straightening out some of the chronological complications and to settle some important dates, and to awaken a new local interest in our Somerset hero. Dunstan was educated at Glastonbury, became a clericus or professional man of the day, and was placed in the cœnobium there. He was ordained to the priesthood by Ælfege the Bald. Freeman says not a few famous men in our history have been deeply wronged by coming to be known only as the subjects of silly legends or, worse still, of perverted and calumnious history. So have Leofric of Godgifu suffered; so has Alfred himself suffered, but Dunstan has suffered more than all. The great historian describes Dunstan as the greatest son, the greatest ruler, Glastonbury ever saw. He was a strict Churchman, a monastic reformer, who called up again the religious life of Glastonbury after a season of decay—who stands charged with no authentic record as guilty of any act of cruelty or persecu-

tion, but who does stand forth in authentic records as the greatest minister of successive West Saxon Kings, of successive Lords of all Britain, in days when Wessex was the heart and centre of English rule, and when Glastonbury stood first among English sanctuaries, the chosen burial place of Kings. So mightily under him grew the fame of Glastonbury, that a greater name than all was drawn within its spell, and men at the other end of England deemed that it was at Glastonbury, and not at Athelney, that Alfred himself held his last shelter, when the bounds of Wessex, the bounds of England, reached not beyond the coasts of a single island of the Sumorsætan. Dunstan became Archbishop of Canterbury, and legend says that his relics were stolen after the attacks by the Danes upon S. Alphage, A.D. 1012, removed to Glastonbury, and buried beneath a stone, taken out for the purpose, in "the Larger Church" by the side of the Holy Water Stoup, on the right-hand side of the entrance of the monks. When the Abbey Church and all the other buildings at Glastonbury were burnt down in 1184, it is said the relics of St. Dunstan were re-discovered, and the case which contained them opened up by the Prior in the presence of all the brethren. They were then collected and placed in a new shrine. The Dunstan Chapel was discovered in 1910.

There is a well-known Somerset legend told in the following form by William Caxton:—When St. Dunston was wery of prayer then used he to worke at goldsmith's worke wyth hys owne handes for to eschewe ydleness. And on a tyme as he sat at his werke the deuyll which ever had grete envye at him came to him in an eventyde in lykness of a woman (as he was busy to make a chalys) and with smyling sayd that she had grete thynges to tell him, and thenne she began to tell hym many nice trifilles and no maner therein, and thenne he suppose that she was a wycked spirite and caught her by the nose wyth a payre of tongues of yren brenninge hote, and then the deuyelle began to rore and crye and faste diewe awaye, but saynt Dunstone held fast till it was fayre wythen the nighte and thenne he let her goo, and the feend departed with a horrible noise and crye and sayd that all the people mighte here alas what shame hath this carle done to me, how may I taste quyte him agen? But never after the deuyell had never lust to tempte him in that crafte.

There are other stories of St. Dunstan. Upon one occasion Dunstan having consecrated a church, and seeing afterwards that it did not point full east and west, he set his shoulder to it,

and by-and-by it looked directly eastward! One day he hung his harp upon the wall, when suddenly it commenced playing by itself the tune of the anthem "Gaudent in coelis animæ Sanctorum."

St. Dunstan's-day is usually associated with a cold easterly blast. The authorities declare that St. Dunstan, who was a great brewer, sold himself to the Devil on condition that the enemy of mankind should blight the apple trees, and thus stop the production of cider, the rival beverage. Of course, the assertion that Dunstan was a brewer has been denied. In Devonshire the 18th, 19th, and 20th May are known as "Franklin days"—I never heard of them on my native heath, South Somerset. But some few years ago, as a result of enquiries about Franklin days, I gleaned the information that a certain brewer at Bristol, being much disturbed by cider making, puzzled his brains to find a way to stop it. At last he decided that if the apple crop might be blighted, it would be the better for the brewers of beer! So he appealed to the Evil One, who promised that if this brewer would sell his soul to him he would spoil the apple crop, by sending three or more frosts from the 18th to the 23rd May in each year, and the bargain was made. Evidently this Devon version is associated with the Dunstan legend. There is no doubt that, generally, a few frosty nights trouble us about this period of the month of May. Perhaps the learned can tell us why. Some attribute the cold winds and frost about the middle of May to the melting of the Arctic ice and the Gulf Stream being considerably cooled in consequence.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### MAY 21.—CULMSTOCK FAIR.

A familiar saying tells us that

Till Culmstock Fair be come and gone

There mid be apples or mid be none.

Miss Masey writes:—Another saying is:—  
" 'Tis a light 'twixt the devil and the maltster."  
But I don't understand how this evolves; the maltster would benefit by a poor apple crop, but I should expect the devil to prefer beer to cider.

### MAY 22.—TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, 1724.

The eclipse which occurred on this date is remarkable not only from the observations made and the persons of its observers, but also from the fact that it was the last totality to be seen

in England for nearly two centuries. In Somerset its watchers had a splendid sight, for the central line of totality crossed southern England. Dr. Stukeley, who observed it from the neighbouring county of Wilts, having stationed himself on Haraden Hill, near Salisbury, has left a valuable account of it, which those interested may find in "Itinerarium Curiosum," 2nd Edition, Vol. I., p.180. Of the darkness he says that he seemed to "feel it, as it were, drop upon us . . . like a great dark mantle," and that the spectacle "was beyond all that he had ever seen or could picture to his imagination the most solemn." Only with difficulty could he discern his companions' faces, and they presented a ghastly appearance. When the totality was ending a small lucid spot appeared, and from it ran a rim of faint brightness. In about 3½ minutes after this the tops of the hills began to alter in hue from black to blue, the horizon to show grey streaks, and the birds flew up joyously. English royalty watched the eclipse from Kensington, and the King of France, under the guidance of the greatest astronomers of the time, viewed it from the Trianon.

EDWARD VIVIAN.

### WHITSUNTIDE.

Whitsuntide, rather than Easter, has been for very many years the general holiday and festival season in West Somerset. Until the institution of Bank Holidays Good Friday was the only day's holiday recognised at Eastertime, and that was usually devoted to potato planting and gardening. At Whitsuntide, however, there was a general holiday from the Saturday to the Tuesday or Wednesday in Whitsun week, and the season of the year was more in favour of outdoor recreations and merry-makings.

Whit-Sunday was in the majority of rural parishes the day for the Sunday School "anniversaries," as they were called, both amongst Church and Nonconformist bodies—although where, as at Wellington, several Nonconformist Sunday Schools were carried on, these anniversaries were spread over two or three Sundays before and after Whit-Sunday, so as to allow the members of the different denominations to attend each other's school anniversaries, and incidentally to contribute to the collections taken at the special services in aid of the upkeep of the schools. Special hymns and anthems, which the scholars had been practising for weeks previously, were sung at the anniversary services, and the work of the Sunday Schools was brought as prominently as possible before the members of the congregations. There was great rivalry



as to which school attracted the largest congregation and acquitted itself best in the musical portion of the services.

—W.S.P.

### MAY 23.—WHIT-SUNDAY.

Mr. S. G. Jarman, in his "History of Bridgewater," writes under the date of May 23rd, 1455:—William Lord Boaville, brother-in-law of Richard Earl of Warwick, visiting this neighbourhood, surprised and took Stogursey Castle from the Percy family, and burnt it almost to the ground. Since then the once important fortress has laid in ruins.

\* \* \*

There has been a good deal of discussion in times past about the origin of the name Whit-Sunday. The suggestion that it arose from the appearance of the neophytes on that Sunday and during the octave in the church in the white garments which they had received at their solemn baptism on the preceding Saturday, called Whitsun-eve, is too fanciful. Hearne gives an explanation of the word in his glossary to his edition of "Robert of Gloucester" under Wyttesonttyd. His words are: "There are many opinions about the original of the name, all which I forbear noticing, unless it be one not taken notice of by common etymologists, but occurs in folio liii<sup>a</sup> of a very rare book printed by Wynken de Worde. . . . The words to our purpose are these: In die pentecostes. Good men and wymmen, this day is called Wytsonday because the Holy Ghost brought wytte and wysdom into Christis disciples, and so by her prechyng after in to all cristendom. Thenne maye ye undersfande that many hath wytte, but not wysdom. For there ben many that hath wytte to preche well, but there ben few that have wysdom to live well. There be many wyse prechers and techers, but her lyving in no maner thyng after her prechyng. Also there be many that labour to have wytte and comyng, but there ben few that avayleth to come to good lyvyng." Wycliffe wrote the word, in his translation of the New Testament, Witsunday. Our Anglo-Saxon forefathers had no word like Witsunday or Witsontide, but called the Sunday and its octave by the term Pentecostes. Witsontide—says one authority—is an English word, and did not, it seems, get into use earlier than the 12th or 13th century. This, however, is certain, that its introduction was long after the custom had ceased of neophytes wearing a white robe for eight days after their baptism. Thus we find that the root of the word is not "white," nor

had anything to do with white garments, but "wit"—mind, understanding—and Pentecost was so called to signify the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost of the soul—the understanding—the "wit" of man.

A great corn harvest is said to always follow a fine Whit-Sunday, for rain makes the wheat mildewed.

Whit-Sunday bright and clear  
Will bring a fertile year.

Whitsuntide was a time of merry-making. Sir John Lubbock, in selecting Whit-Monday as a Bank Holiday, was only perpetuating a custom which existed in mediæval times. We Somerset folk should be particularly interested in the season, if only for the close associations our own King Arthur had with it. On Whit-Sunday this King—great in history and romance—is represented as holding his most splendid Court. Sir Thomas Malory, in his "Mort d'Arthur," tells us how "then King Arthur removed into Wales and let erie a great feast that it should be holden at Pentecost after the coronation of him at the cite of Carleon." More substantial monarchs than Arthur held Pentecost as one of the grand festivals of the year, and it was always looked upon as the special season of chivalrous adventure of tilt and tournament. To assist our ancestors in making merry at Whitsuntide parish-ers regularly provided the needed stimulus out of which they claimed their due share of profit. A house or barn was set apart and a quantity of ale was brewed by the churchwardens, which was called Whitsun ale or Church ale. This was done in Somerset. The ale was sold to the parishioners who came there to feast, drink, and enjoy themselves, the profits being applied to the repair of the church, and often times to charitable and other purposes. One has but to turn to almost any parochial accounts of say, Tudor times, to find entry after entry referring to Whitsun ales. About a century ago a "Whitsun ale"—as the gathering was called in some parts—was conducted in the following manner:—"Two persons are chosen previously to the meeting to be lord and lady of the ale, who dress as suitably as they can to the character they assume. A large empty barn or some such building is provided for the lord's hall and fitted up with seats to accommodate the company. Here they assemble to dance and regale in the best manner their circumstances and the place will afford, and each young fellow dreads his girl with a riband or favour. The lord and lady honour the ball with their presence, attended by the steward, sword bearer, purse bearer, and mace bearer, with their several

badges and ensigns of office. They have likewise a train bearer or page, and a fool or jester, drest in a party-coloured jacket, whose ribaldry and gesticulation contribute not a little to the entertainment of some part of the company. The lord's music, consisting of a pipe and tabor, is employed to conduct the dance." In later days the festival degenerated, but in the old times there was a reverence about it which kept it pure. Shakespeare gives us some idea of this when he adverts to the song in *Pericles* :—

" It hath been sung at festivals  
On ember eves and holy ales."

These old parochial gatherings have gone. It is now the fashion to celebrate Whitsuntide by excursions to the seaside, or was before the war. Perhaps the old village clubs more nearly represented the gatherings, which used to take place in the Church barn, when the merry swains quaffed the nut-brown ale and master met man, all agreeing—as the old chronicles say—"to be good friends for once in the year." The times have changed, but it is a question if modern amusements tend to that good fellowship between employer and employed as they did in the days when Whitsun ales were in vogue.

Reference has been made—(on May 14th)—to Tom Coryate, of Odcombe. Tom took part in a Whitsun ale in the year 1606. The stock of ale at Odcombe Church being exhausted—all but sixteen shillings—the churchwardens solicited Tom to "set abroach his wits" and invent some conceit to draw a good company to Odcombe. He accordingly planned and arranged that 100 men should meet him at Odcombe Cross on Whit-Sunday, duly furnished with muskets, and armour, and music; himself, as captain, to be mounted on a milk white steed. This being done, they marched off for Yeovil. At Hendford, Tom ascended the cross and addressing a crowd of two thousand people, told them he and his friends were determined to spend their money for the benefit of their church, hoping a similar courtesy for the church of Odcombe. In due time the Yeovillians went to Odcombe, and were given a hearty welcome, and no doubt they assisted in replenishing the Odcombe exchequer.

Collinson, in his "History of Somerset," speaking of Yatton, says :—"John Lane, of this parish, gent., left an acre of ground called the Groves to the poor for ever, reserving a quantity of the grass for strewing the church at Whitsuntide."

--W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## MAY 24.—WHIT MONDAY.

## THE VILLAGE CLUB DAY.

A correspondent writes:—"When I was a boy living in East Somerset the school-boys and girls used to sing on May 24th:—

The twenty-fourth of May  
Is the Queen's birth-day.  
If you don't give us holiday  
We'll all run away.

\* \* \*

Twenty-two years ago one of the oldest inhabitants of Taunton wrote in this column:—"I remember another custom, namely, the making of a kind of pudding or junket at Whitsuntide called 'Whitpot.' It was a sweetmeat greatly enjoyed by the youngsters. I think it must be over 70 years ago since I last tasted it."

\* \* \*

In 1900 a correspondent wrote in this column:—"Whitedown, on the road between Crewkerne and Chard, about four miles from the latter place, is a lonely wayside spot on which a fair is still held on Monday or Tuesday in Whitsun week." (See Proceedings of the Somerset Archæological Society, Vol. 28, p. 143).

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Mr. A. L. Humphreys, in his "History of Wellington" (1889), says:—"The perambulation of the town stream to Wearhead at Woodlands on Whit-Monday has, after many years of obscurity, again become customary, and it is the intention of the water bailiff to maintain this laudable revival. . . . This stream was given to the town by Sir John Popham.

\* \* \*

The Rev. James Street, in his "Mynster of the Ile," says:—"It was a custom, in connection with the Whitsun-Monday Club walk proceedings, to admit folk to the tower (of the church), the coppers therefor being the perquisite of the sexton, 'who kept the rusty key and turned the latch.' A description of all that might be seen and heard from the tower on such occasions included the following:—

"The Parson's garden is so near the tower,  
We see two lovers in its pleasant bower;  
Then Fanny Chatter, near the Churchyard wall,  
Solicits business at her sweetmeat stall;  
We hea Dame Blaster rating at her daughter,  
Because she loiters with a pail of water;  
We see the carts and waggons down below,  
And hear the fighting cocks give crow for crow."

### CURIOUS DEVON CUSTOM.

Although the following paragraph has no direct connection with the county of Somerset we consider it of sufficient interest to merit a place in this column, especially as it relates to an adjoining county. We are indebted to Mr. C. S. Whittaker for the cutting, which we believe was taken from the *Birmingham Weekly Post*:—A curious custom is kept up in the parish of King's Teign-ton, Devon, every Whitsuntide. A lamb is drawn about the parish on Whit-Monday in a cart covered with garlands of lilac, laburnum, and other flowers when persons are requested to give something towards the animal and attendants' expenses; on Tuesday it is killed and roasted in the middle of the village. Formerly it is said to have been roasted in the bed of the stream which flows through the village, the water of which was turned off the previous Saturday in order that the bed might be cleaned and purified. The lamb is then sold in slices at a cheap rate to the poor. The origin of the custom is forgotten, but a tradition supposed to trace back to heathen days is to this effect: The village suffered from a dearth of water, when the inhabitants were advised by their priests to pray the gods for water, whereupon water sprang up spontaneously in a meadow above a third of a mile above the weir in an estate now called Rydon, amply sufficient to supply the wants of the place, and at present adequate even in a dry season to work three mills. A lamb, it is said, has ever since that time been sacrificed as a votive thank-offering at Whitsuntide in the manner before-mentioned.

### THE VILLAGE CLUB.

Whit-Monday was the date of the annual Club walks. At Creech St. Michael the parishioners, together with some from near villages, used to meet and parade the village. Flags were carried and the people dressed in their best, the girls being mostly in white dresses. A service was held in the church, followed by a dinner at the inn. The rest of the day was given up to sports and games, which were continued until dark. This was once the only real holiday of the year for farm workers.

—C. S. WHITTAKER.

\* \* \*

Whit-Monday was the day for the Village "Club Walks" as they were called. These Clubs are now, I believe, all, or nearly all, defunct, having been superseded by the large Friendly Societies and the Industrial Insurance Companies, but at one time they formed a very important

feature of village life. The Hockaller or Ockaller Club was, until its dissolution in September, 1890, one of the best known of these, and its Club walk on the 29th May, which often fell on Whit-Monday, may be taken as typical of most of them. This Club was composed principally of residents in West Buckland and the adjoining parishes of Bradford and Trull, and, like nearly all these organisations, had its head-quarters at the village inn, in this case at the Blackbird Inn, on the main road from Taunton to Wellington. Here on the morning of the 29th May the members mustered in strong force (failure to do so entailed a fine), often to the number of 40 or more. A procession was formed, and, headed by a band (for many years the band of the Wellington Company of the Volunteer Rifle Corps enjoyed this privilege), and with flags and banners and the famous "garland," marched to the church, where a short service was held. The procession then paraded the village and returned to their head-quarters at the Blackbird Inn. Here the annual "Club dinner" was held, and in addition to the members, the principal farmers and residents were invited, and turned up in such large numbers that the resources of the inn were often taxed to the utmost. The usual loyal and patriotic toasts, and the toast of the day, "Success to the Ockaller Club," were duly honoured, and a collection was made at the table in aid of the Club funds. This business over, the members adjourned to the bowling alley, or to a field adjoining the inn, where, to the strains of the band, dancing was kept going until night-fall, and racing and other sports were indulged in. Knowing the customs of those days, we need not wonder that Whit-Tuesday was necessarily a holiday for the majority of the Club-men. Reference has already been made to the "garland," which formed the principal feature of the procession. It was indeed a most elaborate structure of stout painted poles with a profusion of flowers, forming an artistic frame-work for the inset banner bearing the name and motto of the Club. On the previous Saturday and Sunday, and in the early hours of the Monday morning, many busy hands were engaged in gathering and arranging these flowers, and so heavy was the completed garland that four men were required to carry it, with four others to relieve them, a by no means unnecessary relief when there was a strong wind blowing.

Whatever faults and defects these village clubs may have had, they served a useful purpose by enforcing a measure of providence on their members, and serving to brighten the monotony of rural life.

—W.S.P.

Legislation has put an end to the village club festivals—more's the pity. There used to be three days in the year in my dear old home in Somerset—Race-day, Club-day, and Fair-day. Life was almost regulated by them; at least, no-one along the countryside would dream of making a hurdle until Crewkerne Fair had been held. That was unwritten law; just the same that no-one would plant kidney beans until Garge Yenton (Hinton St. George) Fair-day. And no-one, who could avoid it, would stay away from the races, or do any more work than absolutely necessary on Club-day. They were, in truth, "the maddest, merriest days of all the glad New Year." What made the Club festivities throughout Somerset so delightful was because at this time of the year—Whitsuntide—nature presented herself in all her loveliness. All the Club festivals followed a similar routine. To describe one is practically to describe all. Can one imagine a more charming setting for the Club dinner than in an orchard amid the apple blossom, with the perfume of wild flowers all around, the birds joining in a triumphal chorus of thanksgiving to the Giver of all Good Gifts. What bustle and excitement there was prior to, and after, the dinner! Long before the sun showed his shining face "up auver Ten Acres," the ancient band of ringers were busy in the old belfry of the Abbey-like church. Clash! Clang! go the bells until the tower fairly shakes. The jackdaws can sleep no longer. The rooks quit their nests high up in the elms surrounding the Churchyard. Men, women, and children leave their beds to open the "chimney" windows and listen to the joybells. Their music floats through the streets of the little town, along the leafy, flower-bedecked lanes, across the valleys, and combs, to the farm-houses snugly situate in the most charming orchards and paddocks. It sets the milking pails dancing and the rabbits in the "sidelen" field scatter hither and thither amid the morning dew and find life full of happiness. The farmer calls to wife and maid, and cowman, and carter, to hurry up with their work because it is Club-day, "an all o'ee must go to church and start th' day prapper like." Even before the bells are a-going, men and youths have passed along the lane on their way to the little copse down by the tiny bridge which crosses the little stream near the old turnpike gate. And they have laden themselves with young oak trees, fir trees, and boughs of hawthorn, wherewith to decorate the outside of the headquarters of the Club. How proud they are of their "trimmings," and it is not long before a veritable avenue of trees appears in the street,

the entrance to the "public" is embowered with greenery and flowers, and a snug little "cubby-hole" formed for the dear old lady and her furniture can. Even the pump at the bottom of the street leading to the church receives its share of adornment. What a time for the children! They watch the decoration of the inn, they never miss a movement in the erection of the "stannens" and shows and roundabouts. They criticise the proprietor of the nut stall as he fixes the target which later on causes young marksmen to exhibit their prowess with the rifle. They know the mechanism of the revolving pointer which decides whether it is a short or a long stick of rock which will come to the investor of a ha'penny chance. They watch the unpacking of the gingerbread horses, decorated with gilt paper, and the huge bottles of "comfits" and the treacle pies. And it is part of their duty to superintend the display made upon a big "stannen" of all kinds of toys. And who, with a copper, can withstand the appeal of the old lady proprietor, who has come to the club for years and years, and is as well known as a life-long resident: "Pick 'em out where you likes, m'little dears; they're all a penny. A penny buys any article." With eyes opened wide with interest they see Professor Italiano erect his Temple of Mystery. An exclamation of wonderment escapes from scores of throats when the Professor hoists the painted picture over the portal of the "Temple" which illustrates a magician, attired like an Indian Nabob, bowed down with the weight of his own jewels, extracting treasure from an immaculate-looking "chimney-pot" hat. It is a mystery to the little folk how it can be done, but a mystery of equal depth is why the old fellow, now seated on an upturned bucket, consumes a breakfast consisting of a penny bloater, when apparently he might, from the inside of a "boxer," have obtained bacon and eggs upon silver dishes, and coffee served in silver cups. Then is unrolled, next door, the picture of the giantess, and lower down the street is Tom Thumb, a boxing saloon, and the roundabouts. There is so much for the children to see they forget about home and mother and breakfast. What a scubbing and rubbing there is when they arrive! And the little maid, who disappears into the cottage with her hair in curl-papers, soon emerges again wearing the whitest of white frocks, the bluest of blue sashes, and with the frizziest of frizzy heads. Racing and tearing before the polishing business was gone through, she appears on her way to church as the demurest of demure maidens, and walks "as stiff as a stroad."



The bells clang and clash again. From a distance a band is heard approaching. Members of the Club, bearing brass-headed poles, and each dressed in Sunday best, and wearing a substantial button-hole, meet in and around the "public." Then, with due ceremony, the banner of the Society is brought out of its case and unfurled. The Secretary calls the roll and, "falling in," the Chubbites march to church, thus commencing the day's festivities with a religious service, and continuing to observe a custom which appertained down through long centuries. Before entering the church a visit is paid to the Rectory, where the Rector is awaiting his parishioners. The dear white-haired old man is as excited as the youngsters. He loves Club-day because he can join with his neighbours in their merry-making. What if, before night draws to a close, in some instances the waters of Hebron have been polluted to too great an extent with the wine of Bacchus? The good old Rector looks upon the delinquents with a forgiving smile. He falls in at the head of the procession and leads his people to the grand old church. A simple service takes place, a plain homely address is based on the words, "Bear ye one another's burdens."

Clash! Clang! The bells seem to have gone mad. The sun shines with all its power, the birds sing their loudest, the band plays a lively air, and the Chubbites—many of them past the allotted span of life—step out briskly to pay the accustomed round of visits. Farmer Stacey is first called on. He has tapped his best cask of cider. The "wine of the country" is brought out in milking pails, and everyone drinks to the health of "Measter, missus, and the little 'uns." Then the band strikes up a dancing tune, and men and maidens are tripping it on the lawn. Another drink of cider, and a move is made for the Mill, the Brewery, Farmer Osborne's, Farmer Upham's, and it is dinner time. What a hurry-scurry and a bustle there has been at the hostelry ever since daylight. Sacks of potatoes have been peeled, lanyards of cabbage prepared for the pot, the butcher's cart, laden with the primest joints, have been backwards and forwards to the inn for days, and 'Squire has sent choice contributions for the "head table," and flowers have come from the Manor garden and the cottage of the labourer. What would Club-day be without flowers? The marquee under which the dinner is laid has to be decorated. At intervals of half-a-yard a vase or a bowl of flowers must be apparent, and, above all, there is the Chairman's seat to be transformed into a floral throne. The band plays "The Roast Beef of Old England," when Boniface, flushed with

excitement, and perspiring as the result of exertion, announces that dinner is served. Everyone is soon busy, and the waiting nymphs rush hither and thither satisfying the requirements of the diners, who, by this time, have acquired wonderful appetites. The clatter of the knives, forks, and plates is punctuated by the song of the thrush, the notes of the cuckoo, the drone of the bees. Nature does her part in adding charm to this open-air assembly. A few speeches are made, and then the party adjourn outside. Clash! Clang! The bells are at it again. The band, seated in Farmer Upham's old yellow waggon, are playing. In the paddock dancing is going on briskly at one end, at the other the youngsters are enjoying "kiss in the ring," and the little lads have their sports. So the hours pass, until it is time for the Clabbites to pay more visits and to receive more hospitality. And when this is over there is more dancing in the field, and, as the shadows lengthen, the streets of the little town fill, the place is illuminated with flare lamps. Professor Italiano is mystifying his audience, Tom Thumb holds receptions, the shooting stalls are well patronised, and, from the inn, comes sounds of merriment and glee, the tootling of a flute, the twang of a banjo, and the scrape of a fiddle.

The sun is sinking. The children wend their way homewards, very tired but very happy. They blow trumpets and wave miniature Union Jacks. The Rector and his good lady are also on their way home. Amid the pleasures of the day they have not forgotten their less fortunate friends. Into different cottages baskets, filled with dainties, have been carried; with them come words of cheer to the depressed, words of comfort to the sick. The old ringers have joined their friends at the inn; the tower is silent; the jackdaws and the rooks have gone to bed. Professor Italiano is making preparations for his departure. The prancing chargers, with gilded manes and tails, are being packed away, in company with gingerbread soldiers and cans of barley sugar. The old lady has long since taken herself and her furnity can home. In time a quietness steals o'er the scene—the little town sleeps.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## MAY 25.—WHIT-TUESDAY.

ST. ALDHELM.  
GLASTONBURY OLD ABBEY  
BURNT DOWN, 1184.

## WHIT-TUESDAY.

Whit-Tuesday was, and still is in West Somerset, the day for the town and village Sunday School feast—in fact, the “Children’s day”—and until comparatively recent years was *the* outdoor holiday of the year. Taking Wellington as a typical example. All the Sunday School children assembled at their various schools, the Church School commencing its proceedings with a short service in the Parish Church. The children from the Church School at West Buckland were conveyed in a number of decorated waggons, lent by farmers in the parish, to Wellington, where they joined in the day’s proceedings. In the early afternoon separate processions were formed of all the various schools, and each of these, headed by a band when obtainable, and with every banner and flag in its possession, paraded through the principal streets of the town, which were, when the day was fine, so thronged with spectators as to be at times almost impassable. The famous “garland” of the Heckoller Club was usually handed over to the West Buckland School, and formed an imposing feature in the procession, while other rival but less elaborate “garlands” were made and carried in other sections of the procession. The processions having returned to their various schools, tea was provided for the scholars, and afterwards for teachers and helpers. In the case of the Church Schools tea was, when fine, an *al fresco* meal in the beautiful grounds at Drake’s Place, which the late Mrs. Putman threw open to the public for the evening. The Church Schools not only included the West Buckland School, but branch schools at Ford-street and Bowerman’s-lane, the Church Institute, and, until the formation of the separate All Saints district, also a large contingent from Rockwell Green. Games of various kinds, racing, jumping, and other competitions went on vigorously during the evening at Drake’s Place and at other fields near the town, which had been kindly lent for the occasion to the various schools, and until recent years attracted pretty well the whole population of the town and neighbourhood. The evening usually concluded with a flight of balloons or a display of fireworks, and so brought to an end the Whitsuntide celebrations in Wellington, certainly the most popular annual event of the locality. It may be imagined how anxiously

the weather prognostications were watched and the local weather prophets consulted, for a wet Whitsuntide was nothing short of a general calamity.

—W.S.P.

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In connection with the children's treats on Whit-Tuesday it is interesting to note what our forefathers considered as suitable provisions for the youngsters at these festivals. Eighty or ninety years ago, so I am credibly informed by one who took part in them, it was customary to provide cake and ale. "Cakes and Ale" made a not infrequent combination at festivities as shown in common references by the older dramatists, and it yields a title to one of Douglas Jerrold's better known books. For many children the Whitsun festival might be the only time in the year when cake was tasted, and milk was despised when the more tasty beverage was obtainable, whilst tea was too great a luxury to be wasted on children. Some of the boys and girls by carefully draining their mugs of beer, keeping well out of sight and then waiting their opportunities would obtain two, three, or more re-fills, as well as getting mugsfuls by purchase or promises from other children, or gifts of it from the few who did not want it. In this way occasionally it would chance that they became so intoxicated that they could scarcely stand; sometimes even that was too much. An ancient told me that he well remembered being at work as a boy of nine in fields not far from Beckington, not, it is true, on Whit-Tuesday, but on the day of the Coronation of Queen Victoria in 1838, and stopping work for a minute or two he listened to the bells ringing for the celebration. He added that at such treats as were given on the occasion cake and beer were served to the children—the drinkable being the more highly esteemed of the two. It is not suggested, however, that this was the universal practice, and I have met several very old people who had no personal knowledge of it.

E. VIVIAN.

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#### ST. ALDHELM.

St. Aldhelm was one of the most famous men in early history. A kinsman of King Ine, he was a member of the Royal house of the West Saxons and a man intimately associated with our county; in fact, by some he is considered to have been a native of Somerset. That he died there is beyond doubt. Aldhelm might have been a King, but instead of filling the West Saxon throne, he rose, as Abbot of Malmesbury and

Bishop of Sherborne, to the highest rank save one in the English Church. Professor Freeman writes that "In those days, when Royal and Princely saints were so common, Aldhelm was the brightest light, but still only one light, among several, in the saintly galaxy of the West Saxon house. As Abbot of Malmesbury, Aldhelm was one of the greatest builders of his time. The realm of Ine was adorned with a number of churches, the work of his saintly kinsman. One of these, happily, remains to us, the church reared by Aldhelm on the scene of his uncle Cenwealh's victory, the Church of St. Lawrence at Bradford-on-Avon, just within the borders of Wiltshire. In addition he built a monastery in honour of St. John the Baptist at Frome about the year 705, reared the minsters at Sherborne and Malmesbury, and another church at Wareham. At Bruton, besides the Church of St. Mary, to which King Ine gave the precious altar which Aldhelm had brought from Rome, Aldhelm built the greater Church of St. Peter. This, like the church at Wareham, was standing in William of Malmesbury's days. Aldhelm died at Doulting in 709. William of Malmesbury has left an interesting account of the event. Doulting was probably given to Aldhelm by Ine for life, and after his day to whomsoever he (Aldhelm) might will it, with an implicit reservation in favour of Glastonbury. The building that witnessed his departure was a wooden church, into which (says William), when breathing his last, he had directed that he should be carried in order that he might expire more easily. The blessed Egwin, Bishop of Worcester, was informed by a radiant vision from Heaven of the death of his brother Bishop, and was commanded to repair to the place. Sped on his way by the instigations of sorrow and love, he soon arrived at Doulting, and having offered prayers for the repose of the soul of Aldhelm, directed his body to be removed to Malmesbury. The funeral procession was remarkable for this—that in consequence of the abundance of miracles that were wrought on the way—stone crosses were erected at intervals of seven miles, to which many persons afflicted with incurable disorders, approaching with faith, obtained, through the vehemence of their supplications, a speedy cure. William says the crosses were all in existence in his day—130 years after the event—and one was in the cloisters at Malmesbury. They were known in his time as "Biscep-stanes" or "Bishopstones." William adds 'he fame of Aldhelm needs not falsehood to support it. Many as are the things related to him that are of doubtful authenticity, there are as many which are never called in question. Among the legendary

stories is one describing how, when Aldhelm was visiting Rome as the guest of Pope Sergius I. (687—701), in taking off his chasuble thinking that the attendant was ready, he threw it off behind his back. The minister, however, was not there to receive the chasuble, in fact, there was no-one and nothing to catch it. But a ray of the sun, shining clear through the transparent glass of a window, caught the chasuble and held it miraculously suspended in the empty air! The story about the white marble altar given by King Ina to St. Mary's Church, Bruton, is surrounded by some mystery. Aldhelm brought it from Italy, but the animal carrying it up the Alps fell, and the marble slab was broken in two. The saint miraculously mended the altar, leaving only an irregular mark or cicatrice where the fracture had been. A practical man, in working out the declared measurements of the marble, found it weighed a ton—a decent weight for an animal to carry up the Alps!



#### GLASTONBURY OLD ABBEY BURN'D DOWN. 1184.

The starting point in the architectural building of the later Glastonbury Abbey was in the year 1184, when, as we learn from Adam of Domesham's Chronicle, "In the summer, on St. Urban's-day (May 25th), the whole of the monastery, except a chamber with its chapel, and the bell tower, was destroyed by fire." We learn from the same writer, as well as from the chronicle of John of Glastonbury, who had access to much the same series of records, that Henry II., after the fire, committed Glastonbury to Ralph FitzStephen, one of his Chamberlains; and that "he completed the Church of S. Mary of square stone of most splendid work, in the place where from the beginning the old church had stood, sparing nothing which could add to its adornment." A writer, probably Adam of Domesham himself, says of the fire: "The beautiful buildings erected by Henry of Blois, and the church, a place so venerated by all, and the shelter of so many saints, was reduced to ashes! What groans, what tears, what plaints arose as they saw what had happened and pondered over the loss they had suffered. The confusion into which their relics were thrown, the loss of treasure, not only in gold and silver, but in stuffs and silks, in books, and the rest of the ornaments of the church, must even provoke to tears, and justly so, those who far away do but hear of these things."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**MAY 26.—ST. AUGUSTINE.  
MINEHEAD FAIR.  
CHURCHSTANTON CLUB.**

There are three churches in Somerset dedicated to this Saint—Clutton, Locking, and West Monkton. St. Augustine was the monk sent to England by St. Gregory the Great to convert the English. By favour of Ethelbert, he became Archbishop of Canterbury.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**MINEHEAD FAIR.**

We quote the following brief extract from "The Universal British Directory of Trade and Commerce" (1790-97, five vols.) :—"Minehead is an ancient borough and market town, whose market is held on Wednesday. It has one fair on Wednesday in Whitsun week, and was formerly a considerable place of trade, both for the great quantities of wool and linens it imported from Ireland, as for the considerable manufactures carried on in the woollen branch at home, but it is now gone much to decay, there being only a few vessels employed in the coal trade and a small herring fishery.

**CHURCHSTANTON CLUB.**

The old Village Club at Churchstanton always held their annual "walk" on the last Wednesday in May, which was regarded as a gala day by the inhabitants of that and surrounding parishes. The members assembled at head-quarters early in the morning, and, preceded by a band, proceeded to the Parish Church, where a special service was held. Right in the forefront of the procession was carried an immense "garland," consisting of the Club's banner mounted on arched poles and surrounded with old-fashioned country flowers. After the service visits were paid to the principal houses in the vicinity, commencing with the Vicarage, where the whole of the people having assembled on the lawn, a few words of welcome were said by the Rector. Returning to head-quarters the members and their friends sat down to dinner, after which the business of the Club was transacted and speeches made. The company then adjourned to the field to indulge in various pastimes and to join the women folk for dancing on the green, which was kept up with much zest until about ten o'clock. A very enjoyable day was spent not only by the children, who saved their coppers for weeks, but also by the adults, who took a general holiday. Many years ago the "Club" was held at Churchford, but in later years it was removed to the King's Arms at Churchstanton. The larger Societies, with accumulated funds, have now

displaced this ancient institution, and a much-valued event has ceased to exist.

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### MAY 27.—CLEANING MINEHEAD MILL- POUND.

The Rev. Preb. Hancock in his "History of Minehead," quotes an interesting statement of the custom of the Manor, drawn up by the tenants on January 5th, 1646, in which the second custom reads as follows:—

"2.—Item. The custom is that every customary sutor or his lawful servant ought to cleane or help to make cleane the Lorde's customarye millpound yearely the Thursday in the Whitson weeke, and every one of them ought to have of the Miller fo. their paines their dinner."

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### MAY 28.—JOCELIN CONSECRATED BISHOP OF WELLS, 1206.

#### DEATH OF LORD DAUBENEY, 1507.

Jocelin, who was consecrated Bishop of Wells in 1206, was the son of Jocelin, Bishop of Salisbury. To him was assigned the erection of the oldest portions of the north porch of Wells Cathedral. The remainder of the early English part of the building is assigned to him. In 1208 he was banished by King John for having, at the command of the Pope, published an interdict. He was five years abroad in consequence, and during all this time, and six years more, he was engaged in a struggle with the monks of Glastonbury, who did not like the union of their Abbey with the See of Wells. The severance was obtained May 18th, 1218, and from that time calling himself, instead of Bath and Glastonbury, "Bath and Wells," he set to work in earnest about the building. His life was spared for more than the 20 years which it took to complete and dedicate it. Jocelin was a native of Wells, and had been a canon before he became bishop. He was a truly great man, in advance of his age, a man of great prudence and foresight, and who had formed most magnificent ideas of the fortune of his great diocese. The Bishop's palace was originally built by him between 1205 and 1241. Jocelin died in 1242.

#### DEATH OF LORD DAUBENEY, 1507.

Lord Daubeny, if not born at South Petherton, spent many of his early days there. He was the son of William Daubeny, of South Petherton, and was created a baron of the Realm by King Henry VII., his patent of nobility bearing date March 12th, 1485-6. He had previously been



appointed a Privy Councillor, Constable of Bristol Castle, and Master of the Mint, besides having many other honourable offices conferred upon him. In the early part of 1487 he was elected Knight of the Garter, and the succeeding years saw him enjoying the Governorship of Calais. In 1494 he was made Justice Itinerant of the King's forests south of the Trent; in 1495 he was Lord Chamberlain of the King's household. He was a great soldier as well, and was entrusted with the command of the English forces on the continent. So successful was he at the time in action against the French at Dixmude and Nieuport in Flanders, and so stoutly did he defend his own fortress of Calais, when subsequently besieged, that the baffled General who commanded the enemy's army on these occasions (the Lord Cordes, Governor of Picardy) is recorded to have declared in his impotent wrath "that he would be content to lie in hell seven years so he might win Calais from the English." In the month of June, 1497, Daubeney defeated the Cornish rebels, under the Lord Audley, at Blackheath, and in September of the same year he commanded the King's forces in the West against Perkin Warbeck, whom he drove from Taunton into sanctuary at Beaulieu in Hampshire; from which the Pretender was lured by specious promises, and finally induced to surrender himself at Taunton, where King Henry's Army was quartered. In this year Lord Daubeney was made Constable of Taunton Castle, and in 1503 he was enjoying the same post in Bridgwater. He died May 28th, 1507, and by his will he bequeathed his body to be buried in Westminster Abbey, leaving lands in Wilts and Dorset of the value of £26 13s 4d yearly, "with the intent that the issues of the same three priests should perpetually be maintained to sing for his soul and the souls of his father and mother, viz., two in the church where he was buried, and the third in the church of South Petherton, where divers of his ancestors lay interred."

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### MAY 29.—OAK APPLE DAY.

Oak Apple Day, being supposed to be the day on which Charles II. hid in an oak, it was quite a common custom to place boughs of oak athwart the doors of inns and other houses. Also oak apples were, and sometimes still are, worn, and the horses decorated therewith.

MISS B. MASEY.

\* \* \*

A correspondent writes:—

It is the custom in many parts of the West

Country to wear the sprig of oak on Oak Apple-day (May 29th). If you are found before noon without the sprig of oak you must expect to get a pretty severe pinch, but if you retain the emblem after noon then some kind friend will step on your toes as a reminder.

\* \* \*

You will probably be preparing notes for "Oak Apple Day," and may like to know that it was the custom at Stoke St. Gregory for some of the young men of the village to cut oak boughs and fix them to the gates of the principal residents on that morning, afterwards calling at the houses for a money tip or drink of cider. A school-children we always pinched any one of our number who was not wearing a sprig of oak.

NATIVE.

\* \* \*

A correspondent informs us that years ago in the neighbourhood of Taunton if any one applied the term "Shig shag" to a youngster found without an oakleaf after twelve o'clock on May 29th the youngster was likely to retort:—

Shig shag's gone past,  
You're the biggest fool at last;  
When Shig shag comes again,  
You'll be the biggest fool then.

\* \* \*

May 29th, "oak apple-day," is still kept up by the children, who wear sprays of oak. "Show your oak" is the cry, and if you cannot you must be pinched. They used to expect a holiday from school, but that has died out. The rhyme they recited was as follows:—

"The 29th of May is oak apple-day,  
If you don't give us holiday we'll all run away."  
May is the great month of Village Clubs, and the 29th of May Club was a bigger and more imposing affair than that on the 1st of May.

MRS. LANSDOWNE.

\* \* \*

Mr. A. L. Humphreys, in his "History of Wellington" (1889) says:—The 29th of May is still known as Oak Appte-day, and as the anniversary of the Restoration of Charles II. it is still customary for boys to wear in their hats a sprig of oak with the apple gilded over with leaf gold. A tradition of the neighbourhood is that the King came into these parts when hiding after the Battle of Worcester, and it is believed that he was secreted at Dunster Castle.

\* \* \*

Early in the morning on Oak Apple-day working men used to go out in search of oak boughs,

which were cut down and placed against the houses of the villages. Many of the boughs were as big as small trees, and when in place they gave the village a very pretty appearance. In the evening the men went the round of the houses, being regaled with plenty of cider, and in some cases small gifts of money. This custom, like many another, has died out with the old inhabitants. The day is also called Sbit-Sack Day, but I have never heard the meaning.

C. S. WHITTAKER.

\* \* \*

"East Somerset" writes:—"When I was a boy in Somerset 40 years ago it was the custom for carters on the 29th of May to decorate the heads of their horses with small boughs of oak and for schoolboys to wear a few oak leaves, and if possible an oak apple, in their coats. Any lad who appeared without a piece of oak in his button-hole was called 'Powder-monkey' or 'Shig-shag,' and was shouted after in the streets. Many boys concealed their oak leaves in their boots, and when a companion called them 'Powder-monkey' or 'Shig-shag' for wearing no oak they would retort 'Thee't Powder-monkey theeseelf then, 'cause I've got some in my boot!' Indeed I understand this custom of *concealing* the oak leaves was so general in some parts of East and South Somerset 70 or 80 years ago that anyone who applied the term 'shig-shag' to a country lad was very likely to receive the reply

'And you're S'ig-shag for calling me so,  
For I've got some oak in the heel of my shoe.'

\* \* \*

May 29th was formerly one of the days on which the church bells of many of our towns and villages rang merry peals, and a number of our parish registers bear record that when it was decided to discontinue as far as possible the ringing of the bells, it was very frequently continued on May 29th and November 5th, and on no other day. Thus at a church vestry held at Minehead on April 11th, 1732, it was decided, as the cost of ringing had become so excessive, that the number of anniversaries on which the bells should be rung should be reduced to five, of which May 29th and November 5th were two, and in 1765-66 it was decided that the ringers should be paid "for ringing on 5th of November and 29th May yearly and on no other day at ye expense of ye parish."

\* \* \*

"Oak-apple Day," as it was and is still called in West Somerset, has been regularly observed,

as might be expected in a county which so warmly espoused the cause of the Stuarts. Not so many years ago almost every public-house, many public buildings, shops, and even private houses displayed large oak boughs over and around their doorways on "Oak-apple Day," and few would venture out of doors in the morning without a sprig of oak. Amongst the younger generation the appearance of such a daring individual was greeted with cries of "Show your oak," and the failure to do so was duly punished by a vigorous "pinch." The large cream-coloured oak-gall or "oak-apple," as it was always called, was much in evidence, and was usually worn as a "button-hole." Even now the wearing of oak sprigs and "oak-apples" is a very general custom, although I have not for some years seen the display of the oak bough at the doorway.

—W.S.P.

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In his Book of West Somerset Dialect the late Mr. F. T. Elworthy says:—Oak Apple-day, called also, but not often, "Oaken bough-day." It is the common belief that this is the anniversary of the day on which King Charles hid in the oak. Even fairly educated people hold this belief, in spite of history and of the better known Restoration Service in the old Common Prayer-books. Pulman, in his *Rustic Sketches*, gives it as "the anniversary of the escape of Charles II. in the oak!" Tradition holds that the King came into these parts when hiding after the battle of Worcester, and at Dunster Castle there was (up to a recent date) a secret cupboard in a wall, which was shown as the place where the King was hidden. On the 29th May it is still the custom for all the public-houses, and many private ones, to fasten a green bough of oak at the side of the outer door. When they can be got oak apples are stuck on this bough, often covered with gold leaf. There seems little sign of the custom dying out. Farm boys also stick sprays of oak with oak-apples if procurable in their hats, while the houses always have to be "trimmed" with oak on King Charles's Day.

\* \* \*

Again, in his "Evil Eye," Mr. F. T. Elworthy wrote:—"Here in Britain we all believe in the sacred groves of our Druid forefathers, whose worship is said to have always been under an oak. The Saxons held their meetings under an oak, and there are endless stories connected with that tree, all of which may be said to be kept alive by our still commemorating the 29th of May as 'Oak Apple day' with boughs of oak—a notable example of popular inaccuracy—the date

of the Restoration being perpetuated by the memory of King Charles's escape on quite a different occasion. We are too apt to forget that besides King Charles's Oak, all this tree-worship is in our very midst, and is kept up to this day."

\* \* \*

It was formerly the custom for the publicans of Taunton to decorate the entrances to their houses with oak branches on May 29th, and also on Fair-days. At one time it was generally believed that on these particular days any person in the town might throw his house open for the sale of liquor without a license, provided he displayed the oak branch at the door. A correspondent writing in these columns 23 years ago said "Oak branches are put on the outside of a few inns nowadays on the 29th of May and Fair-days in Taunton, but I never knew during the past 60 years of any person in the town selling liquor without a license on Fair-days in consequence of exhibiting on the outside of his premises the oak branch. There are houses called 'bush-houses' on Fair-days at West-street, Bridgwater, near the Fair Field, where liquors are sold without a license, I believe." Two years later (1899) another correspondent wrote: "For many years I had not seen an oak bough on the exterior of inns or private houses at Taunton, but this year I noticed one in East Reach and another on the outside of the Tailors' Arms, Upper High street, and was told that there were others in the neighbourhood, so that it is evident the practice has not absolutely died out."

#### CURIOUS CUSTOMS AT NORTON.

We understand that 60 years ago it was the custom on the 29th of May in each year to pull a young oak tree up the Norton Church tower and fix it at the top in sight of everybody.

In 1898 a well informed correspondent gave an interesting account in these columns of My Lord William and My Lady Sarah Dudderidge, of Staplegrove and Norton. My Lord Dudderidge was born at Norton in 1787, being the fourth child of Mr. and Mrs. John and Ann Dudderidge, of that place. He was a flax merchant, and at one time owned the old "Pig and Whistle," Staplegrove, since destroyed. He and his wife obtained their remarkable titles through the following curious circumstances:—The old Norton Club used always to be held on the 29th day of May, and upon this occasion "My Lord" always used to act as a kind of J.P. for anyone found fighting, getting intoxicated, and otherwise misbehaving themselves. Their names were booked, and the next day they were apprehended and taken before a jury empannelled for the occasion at the Ring of Bells, and presided over

by My Lord Dudderidge, who was usually invested in a large red tablecloth to add to the dignity of his office. The delinquents were then arraigned before the Court, and sentences were meted out to each according to the gravity of their offence. Light cases were fined by having to pay for additional beer and spirits (!), but graver cases were sentenced to the stocks, or even to hanging. To carry out the latter sentence the men in this sorry plight had a rope placed under their arms, by which they were drawn up to one of the large branches of the apple trees in the orchard behind the hotel. After they were considered to have paid the penalty of their offence they were cut down and let free. Upon one occasion My Lord sentenced his own brother George, otherwise "Buggins," a man of remarkably wide shoulders, to the stocks, which stood by the Norton Pound. But "Buggins" was too quick for them. It is true he allowed himself to be secured in, but immediately the backs of his persecutors were turned he took a key from his pocket, unlocked the stocks, and jumping out to the surprise of all was in the hotel almost as quick as his lordship. This court had been in existence for some time before Lord Dudderidge was appointed judge: his predecessor was known as Lord Popham. My Lord Dudderidge and his lady were always addressed by their titles up to the day of their death. My Lord died and was buried at Staplegrove, Christmas, 1864, and his wife only survived a fortnight, and was buried somewhere in Bristol.

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### ROYAL OAK DAY.

In Somerset the folk—and the children especially—used to keep up Royal Oak-day. We called it "Shik-Shack" Day—why, it is not apparent, but the fact remains. Indeed, why the day should have been observed at all puzzled a good many people, but then King Charles had close connection with the neighbourkoo, and very nearly fell a captive to his pursuers as he was seeking to escape from Wessex. Being well beaten by Cromwell, at Worcester, on the 3rd September, 1651, he followed the sage advice that he who fights and run away will live to fight another day. So he made himself scarce, found his way into Wessex, and to gain sanctuary at the house of Colonel Wyndham, "my old acquaintance and a very honest man," who occupied a manorial mansion close to the southern border of our county. Lazy and careless as Charles might have been as a politician, he had wit enough to look after the main chance, and that wit saved him on more than one occasion, and especially when he was questioned by an in-

quisitive ostler at a Wessex inn where he had stabled his horse. But in the end "William Jackson," the name which the King adopted, managed to escape to France. As the history books tell us, he returned to England after the death of Cromwell, and there were great rejoicings at the restoration of the Monarchy on May 29th, 1660. The people of England were, from the very earliest days, fond of celebrating something or honouring somebody, so as the Restoration was a satisfactory sequence to the flight from Worcester, and as an oak tree had a great deal to do with the erratic Monarch, the "vulgar people," as an old chronicler describes them, perpetuated the chief event of Charles II.'s life by wearing oak leaves in their hats on the 29th May, and by dressing their horses' heads with them. Old customs die hard, so in this year of grace people are found, principally in the rural districts, who, on this day, wear a sprig of oak, not because they have any especial love for Charles, but because it is Royal Oak-day, and it is the custom so to do. But years ago, in Somerset, the day was associated with a good deal of merriment, and in this the children principally participated. The youngsters, when they awoke on "Shik-Shack" Day, would put their shaggy little heads out of window and find that during the night a great oak tree had grown up as high as the "chimney," and after they had spent some time in expressions of wonder and in dressing themselves, and in lacing up their boots, they raced away down the road and found more oak trees had mysteriously grown outside other cottages, and more children were lost in wonderment. The oak trees swayed in the morning breeze, and the birds came and pitched on the topmost branches, and twitted and looked as knowing as a bench of magistrates. There was more chattering and more twittering as the children picked off leaves and oak apples and the little girls pinned them in their "pinnies," and the little boys put them in their coats, and they marched up and down the road as proud as peacocks because it was "Shik-Shack" Day. And the chaps going too and from their work on the farms had oak leaves in their hats, and the waggoners decorated the bridle of "Darling" and "Jack" and "Merry" and "Polly" with oak leaves and oak apples. Everybody and everything was adorned with oak leaves, because it was considered to be unlucky to be found without a sprig—in fact, persons who could not produce a leaf on demand were subjected to certain pains and penalties. In some parts of Somerset boys used a taunting rhyme with which they used to insult persons who had not oak

leaves in their hats: "Royal Oak, the Whigs to provoke." But as in King Charles's days, so it was in Somerset half a-century ago, people wore the oak leaves as a badge of loyalty to the Crown. Some of them had probably heard the rhyme:—

Blest Charles then to an oak his safety owed,  
The Royal Oak! which now in song shall live,  
Until it reach to heaven with its boughs—  
Boughs that for loyalty shall garlands give.

The day was never passed without "God Save the Queen" being sung over and over again all along the country side. In one sweet little spot in Somerset Royal Oak-day was "the day" of all the year for the children. It was the boys' day—because the maidens had had their "day" on May-day. The boys met at the school, and the best lad—the one who had put in the highest number of attendances and was well-behaved—was chosen as "King Charles," and attired in royal robes. A dear old lady in the village owned a bath-chair and a donkey—the latter by the way, had only one eye—and these she lent to the schoolmaster. The chair was decorated in the most ornate manner with flowers and greenery and miniature flags, and "King Charles," taking his seat amidst the beautiful surroundings provided by Dame Nature, was drawn "in State" through the village, accompanied by cheering children and excited inhabitants. Then service was attended at the Parish Church, and, subsequently, there was more processioning. Its simplicity was charming. It formed a picture for a painter as the little pageant moved along between banks bright with flowers, where ferns were unfolding, the golden gorse ablaze in the double hedges, and the marsh marigolds or bulls' eyes were adding brightness to the rural scene. On they went until the farm-house was reached, and here the youngsters were regaled with milk and home-made cakes. And across fields and through orchards, shedding their pearly-white blossom, they passed to other farms, and thence to a field where tea was provided, and where all the grown-ups were as busy as bees and as happy as they could be because they were invited to wait upon "King Charles" and his retinue and their followers. Of course, there were sports and country dancing until the village fiddler and the children were tired out—almost too tired to sing the National Anthem—but they awoke for that, and did it with a heartiness which is a characteristic of the people of the "Land of Summer." Children in other villages were not so fortunate as to be able to be ruled for one day



in the year by King Charles, but they contrived to derive some amusement from the wearing of oak leaves on "Shik-Shack" Day. If a lad wearing the oak met another minus the adornment he greeted him with "Shik-shack," and was entitled, by unwritten law, to give him a pinch. But if the one challenged produced his oak leaf—and lads would frequently hide some in their hats or pockets—then he would retort "Thee't shik-shack thee'zef, then," and bestowed as many pinches as he could inflict upon his companion before the latter got out of range. But there was another strange law about "shik-shack"—no penalty for not wearing or producing it could be imposed after twelve o'clock (noon), and should a lad neglect to notice the church clock "hit out" the dozen, and challenge a chum after noon, he usually met with the retort :

Shik-Shack's gone past,  
Thee't the biggest vool at last,  
When Shik-shack comes agwain,  
Thee't 'll be th' biggest vool then.

"Shik-shack," the "King Charles" procession and the tea and sports for the children on the 29th May are practically things of the past, even in Somerset, where old customs linger, perhaps, longer than in any other part of the country. The house on the borders of our county, where King Charles was concealed fifteen days, still remains, but many of the landmarks associated with the flight of this Monarch from the Cromwellians have disappeared, and with them the custom of wearing oak leaves in the hat on "Shik-Shack" Day.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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Among all your correspondents on the above subject not one mentions a custom of changing the oak leaves for ash leaves after mid-day. The custom exists in North Somerset and in several other parts of England. No very satisfactory explanation of the custom has ever been offered. Next after the oak the ash was the tree held in highest veneration, and the above custom perhaps lends colour to the theory that the wearing of oak on May 29th has more to do with Druid tradition than with the Restoration.

—ETHELBERT HORNE.

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**MAY 31.—RICHARD LOVELL EDGEWORTH,  
BORN 1744.**

On this day that extraordinary man Richard Lovell Edgeworth was born at Bath. The husband of four wives—two of them sisters—and

father of nineteen children, one of them the celebrated Maria Edgeworth, he was a friend of the eccentric Thomas Day. His career is strange and interesting. A Member of Parliament, he was a reformer and Catholic emancipationist. He died 13th June, 1817.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.



## JUNE.

Now have young April and the blue eyed May  
Vanished awhile, and lo! the glorious June  
Comes like a young inheritor.

This is the sixth month of the year. The Saxons named it *Weyd-monat*, because their beasts did then "wade" in the meadows. It had other names in the days of our forefathers, but probably the correct suggestion is that June is derived from *Juno*, in whose honour a festival was celebrated at the beginning of the month. It is one of the most delightful months of the year—we have all the summer before us. The fields and the hedges are in full blossom, the trees are in their richest dress. Spring, says one who has written finely of the seasons and their change, may now be considered as employed in completing her toilet, and for the first weeks of this month putting on those last finishing touches which an accomplished beauty never trusts to any hand but her own. It is the month of hay-making and sheep shearing: it gives us our longest day. Perhaps, above all, it is the month of flowers. The eulogies of bye-gone Mays and Junes, especially from the floral standpoint, is enshrined in poetry, and that poetry is greatly, and often unconsciously, influenced by the traditions that have lingered from classic days, and were originally transported from classic climes. And in those climes May and June were, and still are, all that the most enthusiastic of poets have claimed for them. It is almost startling to notice how eloquent are the very names of June flowers of the memories and influences of "gods dethroned and deceased." There is the peony—we call it the "piny" in Somerset—so named from *Pæon*, the physician of the gods, or, as some say, *Apollo* himself. It was with the roots of this flower that he healed the wounds of gods and heroes. In quite modern times it was customary for children in the West of England to wear necklaces made of beads of peony roots as a preventative and remedy for illness. The necklaces were especially good in cases of epilepsy and when children were cutting their teeth. The peony, too, "drove away tempests, dispelled enchantments, and

chased away evil things." The many coloured iris has for name parent the beautiful rainbow messenger of the gods; the violet recalls the hapless Io, who, when metamorphosed into a heifer, pastured on the sweet flowers. Then there is the rose—the flower of June. So essentially a national flower has it become that it is a pleasure to note, among the thousand and one derivations for the name—or one of the names of our island—is the Rose itself. "The country is called Albion," declares Pliny: "Oh, rosas albas." Then the rose has such mystic properties. It is an antidote against poison and the evil eye; it is potent as a love charm; from its petals maidens forecast, as did Margaret from the daisy, their fortune in love. Symbol of love and symbol of secrecy, it has been made the symbol of warring armies; it is interwoven with the sweetest songs and subtlest fancies of poets of all times; it has become a synonym for excellence, a title for those whom nations hold in love and honour. Reams could be written about June and its association with the flowers and the poets, and nowhere, even in these prosaic days, could the Muse be inspired more than in beautiful Somerset amid the apple orchards, in their pearly dress, or in the vales where the red sorrel towers above the daisy and the delicate wind stirs all "the grassy meadows into waves." To-day the grass is thick in the meadows. A delicious perfume pervades the countryside. Buttercups and moon daisies, purple clover, so loved by the bees, cuckoo flowers, with their pale lilac blooms, and the meadow orchis grow in wild riot among the grass, as do the large yellow-rayed blooms of the dandelion, with the downy balls, which look so beautiful, in their whiteness, and which every wind deprives of their seeds. In the hedge at the bottom, close by the oak, now out in full leaf, is a clump of tall handsome fox-gloves, with their purple-freckled bells, shaking in the breeze. Close by, the woodbine, which has been in leaf almost longer than any other plant along the hedge-row, is fast preparing to give to the world a deluge of perfume from its red and delicate yellow-tinged flowers. And it is easy, from its flexible boughs, to follow the course of the sun east to west, for they form a canopy "where honey-suckles ripened by the sun forbid the sun to enter." The snowy whiteness of the wild cherry and the wild plum, and the fragrant hawthorn is gone, but the sweet delicate colourings of the dog-rose will soon put the hedge on the side of the meadow in a perfect tune of colour, each bud, be it pale pink, or of a deeper tint, breaking forth from amid the large shining sprays of bright green leaves, and blending in

perfect harmony with all that surrounds. The ferns are now in their full glory. Down by the stream the flowers grow to the water's edge. The silver-lined leaves of the willow and the deep green foliage of the alders quiver gently and gracefully this summer day. The marsh marigolds are so thick as to form veritable blocks of gold all the way to the bend of the river, where the king-fisher has her nest. Gleaming in the sun are the large crumpled and waving petals of the golden yellow ducks-bill, and close down to the edge of the river are the sedges with their simple brown chaffy head. Here and there are clumps of blue forget-me-nots. They gem the little island formed by a lump of earth, detached from the bank near the home of the water-vole, which slips away as footsteps approach.

We look to June to give us calm weather so that the corn may be "in tune." There should be some rain, because

A good leak in June  
Sets all in tune.

Another variant is

A dripping June  
Brings all things in tune.

A June damp and warm does the farmer no harm, but a cold and wet June spoils the rest of the year.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### WEATHER AND OTHER LORE FOR JUNE.

A dry summer never begs its bread (or ne'er made a dear peck).

Short cowslip stalks foretell a sunny June.

A good hay year a bad fog year.

A calm June puts the farmer in tune.

Mist in May and heat in June

Make the harvest come right soon.

The best hay is made before Midsummer.

Springs will be dry until the wind blows.

June damp and warm

Does the farmer no harm.

Wait (wheat) or barley'll shut in June

'Nif they baint no higher than a spoon.

They that go to their corn in May

May come weeping away.

They that go in June

May come back with a merry tune.

We are indebted to Mr. Edward Vivian for the following list of sayings:—

Don't change a clout till May be out :

If you change in June 'twill be too soon.

A swarm of bees in June

Is worth a silver spoon.

Fine weather in June  
 Corn sets in tune.

Or as Ray has it :

Calm weather in June sets corn in tune.

A dripping June  
 Brings all things in tune.

After a wet April a dry June.

A misty May and a hot June  
 Bring cheap meal and harvest soon.

A wet June makes a dry September.

A cold and wet June spoils the rest of the year.

If June be sunny harvest comes early.

In April the koo-coo can sing her song by rote,  
 In June of tune she cannot sing a note.

At first koo-coo, koo-coo, sing still can she do.

At last, kooke, kooke, kooke; six kookes to  
 one koo. Hayward, 1587.

Look at your corn in May  
 And you'll come weeping away;

Look at the same in June

And you'll come home to another tune.

When the sand doth feed the clay

(i.e. when the summer is a wet one)

England woe and well-a-day;

But when the clay doth feed the sand

(i.e. if summer is dry)

Then it is well with England.

#### FENCE MONTH.

For centuries it has been customary to establish for hunted creatures a Fence or Defence Month. In *Manwood's Forest Laws*, Part II., c. 13, it is described as "A time during which deer in forests do fawn, and their hunting is unlawful. It begins fifteen days before Old Midsummer and ends fifteen days after it." There were fence months for fish from early times. Statutes for their protection were made in the 13th year of Edward I. and in the reign of Richard II. Close times for fish, flesh, and fowl have been the subject of much legislation during the last century.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

The apiarist (though there are not many of us who can claim that distinction since the late ravages of the "Isle of Wight disease"), who has a swarm this month may rejoice in measure as the swarm is in the earlier or later weeks. "A swarm of bees in June is worth a silver spoor; (silver is still high, mind you). A swarm out in July isn't worth a fly."

The cuckoo claims attention now, for "In June he alters his tune," and it is common lore in Somerset that you never hear him after Mid-

summer Day—that is, in the ordinary course of nature. Should you by mischance hear him later, it is a sign of ill portent, and if by dreadful hop you should hear his call after o'd Midsummer Day (6th July) it's your call, too, for you'll never live to hear him again.

—P. W. MATHEWS.

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### REBELS AT WELLS, 1497.

Mr. Edward Vivian kindly reminds us of an interesting incident in the history of our county by sending the following paragraph:—

“Thomas Flammoek, an attorney, and Michael Joseph, of Cornwall, headed a rebellion against the taxes levied to pay the expenses of the Scottish War. They marched towards London. At Wells, James Touchet, 14th Lord Audley, a nobleman of broken fortune, took command, and led the rebel army until its defeat at Blackheath, June 22nd, 1497. Audley Flammoek and Joseph were executed six days later.”

The story is told rather more fully in Mr. W. R. Richmond's "Story of Somerset," from which we quote the following:—"Taxation under any pretext was pleasing to the money-loving disposition of Henry; and to defend the North against what proved to be but a make-believe invasion he taxed the whole country. A lawyer named Flammoek stirred up the Cornishmen by telling them that the tax was but an excuse to fill the King's coffers, and that the men in the North could well defend themselves without the aid of money from the West. At the head of an excited rabble, poorly armed, Flammoek marched towards London, and in Somerset received many additions to his force. The official at the head of the tax-collectors fled in terror before their advance, and to escape from capture took refuge in Taunton Castle. This ancient building had been repaired during the reign of Henry VII., and a new gateway built, still to be seen facing Castle Green and bearing the arms of the first Tudor King. The insurgents broke into the castle, dragged out the tax-collector, and murdered him.

At Wells they were welcomed by Lord Audley, a man whose weak disposition and folly made him unworthy of the noble family to which he belonged. He was ever eager for change, lacking in judgment, and so vain that when the rabble clamoured that he should be their leader, he accepted the offer as a compliment, and led them to the Kentish wilds of Blackheath. There they were attacked by the royal forces under Lord Daubeny and defeated with great loss. Audley was beheaded on Tower Hill, and Flam-

mock and other leaders were hanged, but, with a clemency rare in those times, the rank and file of Somerset and Cornwall were permitted to return in peace to their homes. The ruins of Lord Audley's castle may still be seen at Castle Hill, in Nether Stowey.

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Up to the present we have been unable to find the exact date on which Flammoock passed through Wells. If any of our readers can give us the information we shall be grateful.

**JUNE 1:—STOKE ST. GREGORY CLUB.  
G.W.R. TO BRIDGWATER  
OPENED, 1841.**

Stoke St. Gregory Club was always held on the second Tuesday after Whitsun Day, and was for many the only holiday during the year. Its observance was practically identical with that described by Mr. Willis Watson with one or two additions. On that day the villagers always partook of "whit-pit," for which the milk was given by the farmers. Also "Stoke Club pudding," which was of the baked plum variety. After the service in the church the members of the Club, who wore blue streamers on their poles and round their hats, walked three times round the Churchyard, headed by a brass band, which generally came from Othery.

Apropos of "whit-pit" the following was told me by a Bridgwater friend. I do not know whether it was included in your previous lists of comparisons:—(To eat) as fast as a dog will eat "whit-pot."

—NATIVE.

\* \* \*

Mr. S. G. Jarman gives the following account in his "History of Bridgwater":—"The line was opened on Whit-Tuesday, June 1st, 1841, amid very general rejoicings. It had been intended that the opening should have taken place on the day previous, but an engine had unfortunately been thrown off the line by colliding with a trolly, and the ceremony had to be postponed. At nine o'clock on Whit-Tuesday morning there was a vast assemblage at Bristol terminus, and the "Fireball" engine, with eight coaches (four of each class) steamed slowly from the station at 14 minutes to ten, amid loud and enthusiastic cheers. The whole town of Bridgwater turned out to welcome the train, and at the station the Band of the West Somerset Yeomanry waited and hailed the approach of the train with appropriate music. The journey occupied one hour and three-quarters, there being no stoppage between. It was stated in a local paper at the time that interested spectators lined the whole



route between the two stations . . . . The "Fireball" left Bridgwater for the return journey at 20 minutes after two, amid general enthusiasm, and Bristol was again reached just after four o'clock, every passenger expressing delight at the novelty, and unbounded satisfaction at the success of the undertaking. About a year later the Railway was carried on to Taunton."

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**JUNE 3.—KING GEORGE V.'s BIRTHDAY.  
CORPUS CHRISTI.  
WILLIAM HONE BORN, 1780.**

To-day King George V. attains his 55th birthday. His Majesty has paid several visits to Somerset. "Long Live the King."

**CORPUS CHRISTI.**

Corpus Christi clear  
Gives a good year.

Corpus Christi-day, says the "Festa Anglo-Romana," in all Roman Catholic countries, is celebrated with music, lights, flowers strewed all along the streets, rich tapestries hung out upon the walls, &c. It was held annually, in memory, as was supposed, of the miraculous confirmation of the doctrine of Transubstantiation under Pope Urban IV. Anciently, in this country, as well as abroad, it was the custom to perform plays on this day, representing Scripture subjects. Although there can be no doubt that miracle plays were known to Somerset folk in the olden days, none seem to be in existence, and a discovery of such would be a great find. We know they took place in Cornwall, for Edwin Norris, in the appendix to his translations of the Cornish Miracle Plays, quotes accounts of the amphitheatres in which these old dramas were represented. The plays they acted were in the Cornish language, the subjects taken from Scripture history. In some places the Mendicant Friars exhibited and explained the History of our Saviour. The Cotton MS. contains a collection of dramas in old English verse (of the 15th Century) relating principally to the history of the New Testament. The first trace of theatrical representation in this country is recorded by Matthew Paris, who wrote about 1240, and relates that Geoffrey, a learned Norman, Master of the School of the Abbey of Dunstable, composed the play of St. Catherine, which was acted by his scholars. London, Coventry, and Chester were notorious for their mystery plays. Sometimes the plays were enacted in the churches, sometimes in the churchyard, or in some field adjoining. According to Strutt, when mysteries

were the only plays, the stage consisted of three platforms, one above another. On the uppermost sat God the Father, surrounded by his angels; on the second the glorified saints, and on the last and lowest men who had not yet passed from this life. The acting of plays in churches was much declaimed against by the religious writers of the 16th Century, and Bonner, Bishop of London, 1542, the 33rd year of the reign of Henry VIII., issued a proclamation to the clergy of his diocese, prohibiting all manner of common plays, games, or interludes to be played, set forth, or declared within their churches or chapels. Some of my readers will, no doubt, recollect that the late Rev. Charles Marson, of Hambridge, did something to revive the miracle plays in Somerset by getting the children of his parish to perform a homely Nativity Play. Schooled by Mr. Marson, they enacted the story of Bethlehem in broad dialect. He always contended that children acted as naturally as ducks took to water. The children of Hambridge, he related, were simply told the story of the Secunda Pastorium, and they acted it without more ado, reproducing the life as they knew and the talk they heard. At Wedmore Church, as at Axbridge, there are signs of double rood-lofts, and the suggested explanation is that it was the custom to act miracle plays upon these great platforms.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### WILLIAM HONE BORN, 1780.

At Bath on June 3rd, 1780, William Hone was born, whose troubled life did not prevent him from adding many valuable works to England's antiquarian literature. After failing as a bookseller in London and being tried three times and acquitted for publishing injurious matters he found himself in a debtor's prison, and after a rescue from that he failed as a coffee-house keeper. Most of his voluminous writings have been forgotten, but his "Every-day Book," "Table-book," and "Year-book" exist as store-houses of much useful information. Hone died on 6th November, 1842, at Tottenham.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### JUNE 4.—THE CIVIL WAR IN SOMERSET, 1643.

It was on St. George's-day (April 23rd), 1642, when Sir John Hotham shut the gates of Kingston-upon-Hull in King Charles the First's face, and civil war became inevitable. On Friday, July 22nd, information came of a great stirring in Somerset to raise horses with all speed, under the command of Lord Poulett, to the great terror of the inhabitants, and that Sir Ralph Hopton was

expected within two days. Having been appointed by the King Lieutenant-General of the six Western Counties—including Somerset—and Commissioner of Array, William Seymour, first Marquess of Hertford, attended by his younger brother, Francis, Lord Seymour of Trowbridge, John Lord Poulet (afterwards fifth Marquess of Winchester), Sir John Stawel, and Sir Ralph Hopton, made an attempt to put the Commission into execution at Wells. On Monday, 1st August, the war began in Somerset with an affair at Shepton Mallet. I propose dealing with incidents in the Civil War in order of the dates on which they occurred. By the beginning of May, 1643, with the exception of Cornwall, the whole of the South and West of England was in Parliament's hands. The Parliamentary Party in Somerset, with a view to prevent the junction of Hopton with Hertford, "summoned the whole county to rise and keepe their rendezvous at Taunton Deane." Colonels Popham and Strode lay at Shepton with 4,000 men with the same object. On June 4th Hopton effected a junction at Chard with Hertford and Prince Maurice. At the approach of their combined forces, numbering about 6,300 men with some 16 field pieces, Taunton surrendered, and the garrison of Bridgwater fled without striking a blow. The garrison of Dunster Castle sent in its submission about the same time. Hertford stayed in Taunton seven or eight days, and appointed Sir John Stawel Governor of Taunton, Colonel Edmund Wyndham (then High Sheriff of Somerset) Governor of Bridgwater, and Mr. Francis Wyndham Governor of Dunster Castle. At Glastonbury there was a skirmish with a small body of horse. These men were easily defeated by the Royalists, driven through Wells and over the Mendips. At Chewton the Royalists found themselves in the presence of Waller's Army, which had for some time been established at Bath. West Somerset was, for the most part, hostile to him; East Somerset, a land of small freeholders and thriving monasteries, favourable to the parliamentary cause. The Royalists' Commanders were the first to move. They swept round by way of Frome to Bradford-on-Avon, and threatened Bath by way of the Avon Valley. For a great part of this information and for other particulars I shall give I am indebted to Bayley's admirable work on "The Civil War in Dorset."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### JUNE 6.—OWEN PARFITT DISAPPEARED, 1768.

One of the most remarkable stories of the disappearance of a Somerset man is that of

Owen Parfitt, which was told at some length in our issue of January 31st last. Briefly the story of his disappearance is as follows:—Parfitt, who was an old tailor, was rendered a helpless cripple by paralysis and became emaciated almost to a skeleton. He was so weak that he was unable to leave his bed without assistance. He depended on his neighbours for support, and was taken care of by an aged sister, who had a young woman named Susannah Snook to help her. One evening—Collinson says in 1763, and another account says in 1764, whilst a third gives the exact date as June 6th, 1768—Parfitt was taken downstairs and placed in his invalid's chair at the front door of his house at Board Cross, near Shepton Mallet, for the benefit of the air, an old great coat being thrown over his shoulders. In this position he was left for a few minutes, and on Susannah's return the helpless man had completely vanished, leaving the great coat hanging over the back of his chair. The general opinion was that he had been spirited away by supernatural means, and to add to the terror of the superstitious neighbours, a terrible storm with lightning and thunder suddenly burst over Board Cross. A most exhaustive search was made for him, living or dead. Every wood, ditch, pond, and well for miles around was searched, but in vain. It has been suggested that some Bristol acquaintances of Parfitt's had strong reasons for wishing him out of the way, and that they carried him off and murdered him, possibly with the connivance of a widow named Loekyer, who lived near, and was on terms of intimacy with Parfitt, to whom she was slightly related, and who did not bear a very good character. But this at best is merely a suggestion, and no proof of anything of the kind has ever been forthcoming. In spite of the fullest enquiries in every possible direction no trace of Owen Parfitt and no solution of the mystery has ever been found.

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**JUNE 8.—WILLIAM DAMPIER BAPTISED,  
EAST COKER CHURCH, 1652.**

**SAVARIC ENTHRONED BISHOP  
OF GLASTONBURY, 1199.**

**WEATHER LORE.**

If on the eighth of June it rain  
It foretells a wet harvest, men sain.  
To expect a wet harvest you may be fain  
If on the eighth of June it should rain.

One hopes it will not rain on this day, because the old lore is that if the 8th June is wet it foretells

a wet harvest. Another old saying is that if it rains on this day it will rain 40 days later. Well, with a fine interval, it would not be so terrible an infliction.

\* \* \*

William Dampier, the famous navigator, was born at East Coker in or about the year 1652. He was the son of a farmer. The parish register records his baptism, but the exact house and date of his birth are uncertain, and he lies in an unknown grave. Captain Basil Hall describes him as the "prince of all navigators," and Howe, Exmouth, and Nelson made their midshipmen study his writings. The Rev. Charles Powell, vicar of East Coker, says Dampier was a most careful observer and recorder of things new and strange, of plants and animals, harbours, winds and currents, and his surveys and charts were excellent and invaluable at the time they were made. He was the first English Navigator to explore the coasts of Australia, and to give an account of the natives. He also made a number of discoveries in the East Indies. It was he who proved, in the spring of 1700, that New Guinea was an island, and he discovered at its S.E. extremity another island, to which he gave the name of New Britain. Some of the ships in which he was sent to sea to explore and fight were so old and rotten that one of them sprang a leak and sank "through perfect age," whilst in another, in which he captured the town of Punia, and took at sea a stout Spanish ship, it was necessary to repair the injuries his own vessel sustained with tallow and charcoal, "not daring to drive a nail for fear of making it worse." The famous Alexander Selkirk—prototype of the more famous Robinson Crusoe—was an officer under Dampier, and it was as a result of a quarrel between the two men that Selkirk was, at his own request, landed upon the lonely island of Juan Fernandez. In 1708 Dampier started on his third voyage round the world—this time as pilot to Captain Woodes-Rogers, on board the "Duke." This voyage was eminently successful, and the expedition returned to England in 1711 with a booty of nearly £200,000, in addition to bringing home Alexander Selkirk, whom Captain Woodes-Rogers and his pilot, Dampier, had "rescued." Half the prize money was distributed among the officers and crew, but, unfortunately, Dampier died before the distribution was made, probably in poverty, and, certainly in obscurity and neglect.

#### SAVARIC ENTHRONED.

Savaric, Bishop of Bath and Glastonbury, was an extraordinary prelate, and his enthrone-

ment as Bishop of Glastonbury was one of many extraordinary incidents associated with the history of the county of Somerset. When Reginald, who became Bishop of Bath in 1174, and who was transferred to Canterbury in 1191, was dying, he recommended the monks of Bath to choose his kinsman, Savaric, to succeed him. Savaric's association with Somerset is a remarkable one, because he was a remarkable man, and the policy he followed led to the gravest trouble between the See of Bath and the authorities of Glastonbury Abbey, with the result that the Abbey revenues were considerably impoverished, and it was long before they had won back the advantages which the See had gained from them. Canon Church, writing of Savaric, says his worldly and eccentric career is a strange interlude between the decorous and beneficent episcopates of his predecessors, and that of Bishop Jocelin, his successor. As a citizen of the world he exercised remarkable influence for his personal ends with the chief personages of his time at home and abroad—Popes, Emperor, and Kings. He was one of the diplomatic agents at the Court of Henry VI., Emperor of the Romans, in the European questions raised by the captivity of Richard. At home his annexation to the See of Bath of the Abbey of Glastonbury by a circuitous and bold intrigue formed one of the ecclesiastical events which throw light on the relations of Church and State at the time just preceding the Great Charter. In the Patent Rolls for Surrey, of the year 1172, Savaric is named as heavily fined £26 3s 4d for striving to wrest a bow from the King's foresters. Notwithstanding, in 1175, he was Archdeacon of Canterbury. Appointed at Westminster, by Archbishop Richard; he was treasurer of the church at Sarum in 1180, where his uncle was Bishop. He signs as Archdeacon of Northampton in a document in the Wells registers of a date later than 1180, attesting a grant of the church of Carhampton, in West Somerset, to Bishop Reginald. As Archdeacon of Northampton he came under the displeasure of King Henry, and his conduct was matter of complaint to the Pope. By some mysterious means, this disgraced Archbishop contrived to obtain the King's sanction to his appointment to any bishopric to which he might be elected. Savaric worked his schemes with a good deal of ingenuity, and before the end of 1191 he was nominated as Bishop of Bath. The election rested with the two chapters, the Canons of Wells, as well as the monks of Bath, but without waiting for the assent of the Wells Chapter, and in spite of their protests, the King's justiciar gave the King's assent to Savaric's election. The election was confirmed by the

Pope, and, after some delay, Savaric was ordained priest at St. John Lateran, Rome, on September 19th, 1192, and consecrated Bishop of Bath the next day, September 20th, 1192. In the winter of the same year, Richard, returning from Palestine, was taken prisoner near Vienna. Savaric was one of those who took part in the negotiations for the King's release. And he was careful that his own interests did not suffer. He extorted from Richard the exchange of Bath City for the Abbey of Glastonbury, and the union of the Abbey to the See of Bath, so that the jurisdiction and rights of an Abbot should be vested in him, with the title of Bishop of Bath and Glastonbury. Then he schemed to be made Archbishop of Canterbury. But he was losing no opportunity—meanwhile maturing his plans for Glastonbury. He levered Abbot Henry from Glastonbury to the Bishop's throne at Worcester, on December 12th, 1193, and the Abbey passed under the jurisdiction of Savaric as their Abbot. "This bold invasion"—says Canon Church—"of the independence of the great and most ancient abbey which, until the last 40 years, had held the primacy among the abbeys of England, though effected by a surprise, was not submitted to without a severe struggle. War between Wells and Glastonbury ensued for the next 25 years, until 1219—fought out under the two episcopates of Savaric and Jocelin. Savaric's audacity and strength of will carried him through his struggle with more success than either of his brethren, and he transmitted to his successor the title of Bishop of Bath and Glastonbury, with a fourth part of the revenue and a large portion of the manors of the Abbey. Savaric's induction as Abbot of Glastonbury is exciting. On Whit-Sunday, June 8th, 1199, he appeared in person at Glastonbury, attended by the Dean Alexander, the Precentor of Wells, William of St. Faith, and other secular clergy and soldiery. The doors of the Abbey were found closed, and were forced open; the cloisters of the church were empty, and the monks, all but eight, refused to appear. The sacristy was broken open, and the secular clergy in the vestments of the monks formed the procession of installation. The monks were then shut up in the infirmary, and soldiers took post in the cloisters through the day and night. Next day the monks were summoned to the Chapter House, where some were publicly beaten, threats, promises, cajolery were used with others, and at last the signatures of 50 in number were extorted to a deed addressed to the Pope, by which they acknowledged Savaric as their Abbot and promised obedience. The names of the Commissioners and of witnesses

present attested the deed, it was sealed with the Convent seal, and then the great seal of the Abbey was given up to Savaric. In 1200 Savaric took the title of Bishop of Bath and Glastonbury, and contemplated moving his See from Bath to his new acquisition. An arrangement was come to between Savaric and the Convent, and the award of a Commission was the basis of a concordat, which lasted for the remainder of Savaric's episcopate. The Bishop died at Sciens la Vielle (either Liens or Civita Vecchia) on August 8th, 1205, and was buried before the High Altar at Bath Abbey.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**JUNE 10.—GEORGE EARLE BUCKLE BORN,  
1854.**

**WELLINGTON PARISH BOUNDS  
BEATEN, 1884.**

The famous editor of the *Times* was born at Tverton Vicarage, near Bath, and at the early age of thirty took over the editorship of that famous newspaper.

\* \* \*

Mr. A. L. Humphreys, in his "History of Wellington" (1889), says:—The ancient custom of Beating the Bounds in Rogation week is still occasionally observed, a number of townsfolk perambulating the limits of the parish. Particular encouragement is offered to lads to join in this perambulation, so that they may acquaint themselves with the parish bounds. The last "Beating of Bounds" was observed on the 10th and 11th June, 1884. . . . The Chairman of the Local Board and the Assistant Overseer are the principal "Beaters." It is lawful and customary to appropriate a certain sum of parish money for refreshment for the "Beaters." This is done in accordance with a custom prevalent time out of mind.

**JUNE 11.—ST. BARNABAS.**

**HAYMAKING TIME.**

**THE GLASTONBURY WALNUT.**

The 11th of June mow away—grass or none.

\* \* \*

Many events of less importance are better known than the fact that on this day 1877 Parliament passed the Somerset Drainage Act.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

In 1611 "Edward Wilson that was slayne



at Stoford Fayre was buryed ye day after ye fayre, 12th June."

The fair was originally on the feast of St. Mary Magdalene (22nd July), to whom the church was dedicated, but the date was altered to the festival of St. Barnabas.

—F. W. MATHEWS.

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St. Barnabas, though not of the number of the twelve chosen by our Saviour, is, nevertheless, styled an Apostle by the primitive fathers, as well as by St. Luke, to whom that portion of the Scriptures called the "Acts of the Apostles" is ascribed (Acts xiv., 14). Barnabas's Divine vocation, and the share he took in the Apostolic labours, obtained him this title. It is said he was slain by the Cypriot Jews A.D. 61. There is only one church in Somerset dedicated to this saint—that of Queen Camel.

Collinson tells us that beside the Holy Thorn there grew in the Abbey Churchyard at Glastonbury, on the north side of St. Joseph's Chapel, a miraculous walnut tree, which never budded forth before the feast of St. Barnabas, namely, the 11th June, and that on that very day shot forth leaves and flourished like its usual species. This tree is gone, and in the place thereof stands a very fine walnut tree of the common sort. It is strange to say how much this tree was sought after by the credulous; and though not an uncommon walnut, Queen Anne, King James, and many of the nobility of the realm, even when the times of monkish superstition had ceased, gave large sums of money for small cuttings from the original.

The author of the *Festa Anglo-Romana* says: "St. Barnabas-day, or thereabout, is the summer solstice or sun-sted, when the sun seems to stand, and begins to go back, being the longest day in the year, about the 11th or 12th of June; it is taken for the whole time, when the days appear not for fourteen days together either to lengthen or shorten." Something like this, no doubt, induced the rhyme:

Barnaby Bright,

The longest day and the shortest night.

Brome, in his "Travels," 1700, p.p. 332, 333, says:—"But to come nearer to our own Days, here was something not many Years since very notable and strange, the Walnut Tree in the holy Church-yard, that did never put out any leaves before St. Barnabas Day, and upon that very Day, grew rank and full of leaves, and the Hawthorn in Wiral Park, that always on Christmas-day sprouted forth as if in May, both deserve Credit, as well as admiration, of the truth of

which we were credibly informed by diverse Persons, inhabitants of this place, who having then still some young Scions of each Tree remaining in their Gardens, yet did not find them blossom like the other, which, through the malice and fury of some Person in the late wars, were cut down and destroyed."

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### HAY-MAKING TIME.

On St. Barnabas-day  
Put a scythe to the grass.

—OLD RHYME.

Let us have a peep at a hay-field in our "Land of Summer" in my younger days. Let St. Barnabas-day pass, and the weather be kind, there will be plenty of life in the meadows. Almost before the morning mists have disappeared, the mowers, with their scythes, will reach the gate of the field. Just inside, under the shadow of the branches of the "gurt elum," and among the long grass, will be placed the "zider virkin," and here, at intervals, thirsty and hungry mowers will find meat and drink. The fragrant crop—not dead ripe, mind, because then the seeds would fall from the plants and rob the hay of many of its virtues. No, the grass must be "just right" if the hay is to be perfect, and the weather must be dry all the time. So when the "glass" is steady, and farmer decides, mowing is commenced, and the air of the countryside is filled with sweetness. Working in perfect harmony, the mowers, with measured paces, lay the grass in swathes. With musical rhythm they draw their whetstones from heel to toe down the blades of their scythes, few words passing between them. They sweep, sweep, sweep their blades through the thick grass, while the birds attend to their household duties in the hedge, the cuckoo gives forth his limited, but musical notes, and the children look into the field and picture the happiness they will have when the real hay-making commences, and men and women come with long rakes, and the waggons haul away huge loads to the corner down under the holly bush, and all have dinner under the elm tree, and the cider is passed round and pipes smoked, and the work resumed. The next day the mowers are gone, the scythes are busy in the meadow on the other side of the lane, and the whetstones are heard at intervals. The men move with the same rhythm; the grass forms the same kind of swathes to the same accompaniment of bird music. The hay is being turned in the first meadow by the men and boys and women. With deft motion they manipulate their picks. The sun shines with strength, and

he respite in the shade is welcomed. The farmer—one of the real Somerset sort—does his friends all. Workmen and visitors share and share alike. For “vorennoons” there is bread and cheese and cider; for dinner a joint of meat is roasted, with an abundance of potatoes, in the kitchen oven, and one of the merriest pic-nics imaginable takes place. The “virkin” provides liquid refreshment all the day. And when the sun is sinking low, sunburnt men and women are able to appreciate the rest which follows honest labour. In due time, if the weather is still fine and bright, the hay will be put up into “pooks,” and then along will come the great yellow waggon to receive the load, which threaten to bury “Darling,” and to engulf old Jacob, who claims to be the champion “pitcher” of the district. Meadow after meadow is cleared. Anxiously do the children look forward to the last day. That is their day, with a pic-nic tea, the rice home in the last waggon, and the peep into the large kitchen afterwards, where men and women are being regaled by the farmer and his good wife to the hay-making supper, when all is jollity, when everyone is happy, when master and man are drawn closer together and cement the feelings of good fellowship which characterises the people of the rural districts. Men feel it an honour to be associated with a certain farm: they proudly boast of the generations of their folk who have worked on an estate or for a family from time out of mind.

There is no season of rural life which provides brighter scenes of happy labour, love, and social glee than hay-making time. It comes to us when the country is looking at her best, when Nature has put on her gaudiest dress, at the season of the year when flower and foliage are in a perfect state. The spring has merged into summer. She has completed her toilet, she has put on the last finishing touches, and to the perfume of the flowers is added the scent of the newly-mown grass. It is the time when men and maids wander down the lane, past the farm, and, standing on the rustic bridge, which crosses the stream, dream of a happy future, for their hearts are attuned by the season of the year. They see the things of Nature around them in perfect harmony. The stream flowing towards the sea sings them a song of love. The sun has sunk to rest. The meadow, which has been a scene of quiet, steady industry all the day, is now deserted. The rabbits venture from their underground homes and look with amazement upon the field denuded of its coat of many colours. The water rat slips from his hole in the river bank and crosses the stream in search of food. And when the shadows have deepened, and deepened, from

affections. Jan of Konigshaven once wrote

At Strasbourg hundreds of folk began  
To dance and leap, both maid and man :  
In open market, lane, or street,  
They skipped along, nor cared to eat,  
Until their plague had ceased to fright us.  
'Twas called the dance of holy Vitus.

The weather-wise used to tell us  
If St. Vitus's Day be rainy weather,  
It will rain for 30 days together.

And prayers were offered to St. Vitus that he would use his influence so that it should not rain and so spoil the prospects of the barley crop. It is a little remarkable that two or three times in the month of June there is weather sayings which are but variants of the St. Swithin legend. St. Vitus is evidently held responsible if we get thirty continuous rainy days, and if June 27th should be wet—the saints commemorated on this day being St. Ladislas, King and Confessor, and St. John, Priest and Confessor—we are promised continuous rain for seven weeks!

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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#### A WESLEY INCIDENT.

Referring to John Wesley's belief in witchcraft, Satanic agency, and the like, the Rev. Wm. Hunt, in his "Diocesan History of Bath and Wells," tells us that a certain lunatic at Yatton, named George Lukias, was declared in 1788 to be possessed by a devil. He was taken to Bristol, and after lengthy proceedings (which Mr. Hunt described as "revolting"), in the Vestry room of the Temple Church, seven Methodist clergymen declared that they had cast the devil out of him. Public thanksgiving was offered for his recovery in Yatton Church on Sunday, June 15th.

**JUNE 16.—SIR AMYAS POULETT OF HINTON ST. GEORGE KNIGHTED FOR BRAVERY, 1487.**

**MONMOUTH AT CHARD, 1685.**

**SS. QUIRICUS AND JULITTA.**

**ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, 1406.**

**ECLIPSE OF THE MOON, 1117.**

Sir Amyas Poulett was the son of William Poulett, who became possessed of the Manor of Hinton St. George by marrying Elizabeth, daughter and heir of John Denebrand, at that time owner of the Hinton Estate. Sir Amyas was knighted for his gallant behaviour on the field of battle at Newark-on-Trent, in the year 1487. It was he, probably, who built the most

ancient part of Hinton House, and caused a wall to be built round his Hinton Estate in order, it is said, to provide work for the poor in the neighbourhood. He it was who, as High Sheriff of Somerset, put Wolsey in the stocks for being drunk at a fair, and had so many years of repentance, as Wolsey, when he became Chancellor of England, was not oblivious of the old displeasure ministered unto him by Amyas Poulett, and kept him a prisoner in the Middle Temple for the space of five or six years. Amyas was much employed by King Henry VII., and was appointed Steward of the Bishopric of Somerset by Bishop Fox. Sir Amyas made his will on April 1st, 1538, as follows:—"I leave my soul to God Almighty, and my body to be buried in the church at Chafecombe. I leave to the Parish Church of Chafecombe 3s 4d, of Chard 3s 4d, of Crokehorne 3s 4d, of Ylminster 3s 4d, of Southpetererton 3s 4d, of Dynyngton 3s 4d, to the Abbot and Convent of Ford 10s. All other my goods I give wholly to my son and heir, Sir Hugh Poulet, knight, to bestow of my said goods such portion for the weal of my soul as shall be thought best by his discretion to be necessary and fruitful for me, charging him to be friendly and loving to my sons, John and Henry Poulet, to help them according to his power, not doubting but that they will render to him due benevolence, and use themselves by his advice in their affairs. Further, I charge my said son, Sir Hugh Poulet, to use himself justly and gently amongst my tenants that they may lawfully enjoy all such bargains as they have taken of me according to the order of the law in this Realm. And I also require him to be favourable and friendly to all my servants as his power shall serve him, remitting the full order of everything to the wisdom and discretion of my said son, Sir Hugh Poulett, with God's blessing and mine to him, and all his brothers and sisters, and my god-children. And this, my very will, I have subscribed with my hand, in the presence of Thomas, Abbot of the Monastery of Ford, Sir Hugh Webber, parson, of Dynyngton, and Richard Webber." Sir Amyas was descended from Hercules, Lord of Tournay, in France, who in the reign of Henry I. settled at Pawlet, near Bridgwater, and took his name from that place.

#### MONMOUTH AT CHARD, 1685.

The Duke of Monmouth landed at Lyme Regis from Holland on June 11th, 1685, with only 82 followers, from whence, after a short delay, he proceeded towards Taunton, reaching Chard on the 16th June, amid the acclamations of the people. He collected what followers he could,

asserting his claim to the Throne, and denouncing his uncle, its possessor, as "a murderer, an assassinator of innocent men, a traitor to the nation, and a tyrant over the people." He received at Chard a reinforcement of 40 horse, headed by Mr. John Speke, a son of the 'Squire of Whitelackington. The Duke's little army camped in a field near Ilminster that night.

#### SS. QUIRICUS AND JULITTA.

Tickenham Church is dedicated to these Saints, and the tower parapet contains their niched figures. The name Quiricus is said, in Saxon times, to have formed part of a charm against fever.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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#### ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, 1406.

On this day in 1406 there occurred an important eclipse of the Sun, and so far as Somerset was concerned it appears to have been almost total. So dark was it that people could hardly recognise one another.

#### ECLIPSE OF THE MOON, 1117.

In 1117 there were two total eclipses of the moon, the first of them on this date.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### JUNE 17.—TAUNTON FAIR.

Writing in these columns 23 years ago, one of our correspondents gave the following interesting account of Taunton Fair half a century before:—How different this fair is now to what it was 50 years ago. On the last fair day not a single animal was exhibited for sale. Fifty years ago the fair lasted three or four days. The whole of Bridge-street from the George to some distance up North-street would be lined with cattle and sheep. The horse fair was held below the George and towards the Staplegrove-road. Then there was the garlic fair, held on the Bridge at six in the morning. The produce was brought from Bridgwater by boats, and a considerable trade done in it. The last two days of the fair was devoted to diversions, such as donkey racing, climbing the greasy pole for legs of mutton, jumping in sacks, wheelbarrow races, and such like. Most of the inns in the neighbourhood exhibited the oak bough in front of their doors, and many houses were allowed to sell beer during the fair without a license.

Another correspondent added that the custom of putting green boughs in front of houses in which drink was sold at fair times was general. It was common enough at Taunton during both the Town Fair and North Town Fair; and he

suggested that the proverb " Good wine needs no bush " owes its origin to this custom.

An old local saying tells us that if you want your swedes to grow you should sow the seed on Taunton Fair Day.

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**JUNE 18.—BATTLE OF WATERLOO, 1815.  
MONMOUTH REACHES TAUNTON, 1685.  
WELLINGTON (or WATERLOO)  
FAIR.**

The Wellington Monument will always remind Somerset men of the great battle of Waterloo, and although we cannot claim the Iron Duke as a Somerset man—he was born in Ireland—it is probable he was of Somerset descent. Four hundred years before the battle there had been living in the county of Somerset Sir John de Welleleigh, Sir Thomas de Wellesleigh, Robert de Wellesleigh, Philip de Wellesleigh, and others of the same name. Is it not, therefore, possible, asked a correspondent in " Notes and Queries " many years ago, that when Sir Arthur Wellesley took the title of Baron Douro of Wellesley he was thinking of his (probably) Somerset ancestors of the 15th Century? It has been shown that the Duke of Wellington owed his names of Wesley and Wellesley to Welswe, Wesley, or Wellesley, near Wells. As it was the Earl of Mornington, the Duke's grandfather, who first had this pedigree, or most of it, traced, we may suppose that it was for this reason that his son assumed the title of Viscount Wellesley, which descended to the Duke's elder brother, and that the Duke himself was influenced by this consideration when he purchased the Manor of Wellington and styled himself Baron Douro of Wellesley in Somerset.

**MONMOUTH REACHES TAUNTON 1685.**

On this day the rebel Duke of Monmouth rode into Taunton from Chard, and was accorded an amazing welcome. On the 20th inst. he was proclaimed King in the Market-place.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**WELLINGTON (OR WATERLOO) FAIR.**

*The Salisbury and Winchester Journal* for November 3rd, 1917, contained the following reference to the Wellington Monument:—" A fair is appointed to be held annually near the column on the 18th of June, to commemorate the glorious victory achieved by British valour at Waterloo; and a prize for wrestlers, called the ' Shaw Prize,' will be given at this fair. The prize is so named in memory of Shaw, the Life

Guardsman, who distinguished himself at the Battle of Waterloo by the numerous deadly blows he dealt amongst the enemies of his country; he was a Somersetshire man by birth, and formerly a noted wrestler. Four new brass 6-pounders, which ornament the column, and are a present from the Prince Regent, will be discharged annually at the fair in honour of the day."

The *Times* for May 26th, 1819, announced that "Lord Somerville has instituted an annual Fair on Blackdown Hill, in Somersetshire, which is to be held near the Wellington Pillar, and to be called Waterloo Fair, on the 18th of June, in commemoration of the splendid victory gained on that day."

One or other of these was evidently the fair to which Mr. A. L. Humphreys, in his "History of Wellington," refers in the following paragraph:—"Upon the completion of the Wellington Monument on the Blackdown Hill, a man who went by the name of Doubledanger organized a pleasure fair, to be held annually on the open space around the pillar, and to be called Waterloo Fair. This was continued for about two years, and then ceased."

We have searched the files of the *Taunton Courier* and other local papers for a number of years, but we can find no reference to any fair on Blackdown Hill on the 18th of June after the year 1819. The *Western Flying Post* for Monday, June 21st, of that year contains the following paragraph:—"Friday (the anniversary of the glorious battle of Waterloo) the fair appointed to be held on Blackdown Hill, Somerset, was attended by an immense number of persons. A variety of sports, such as wrestling, back-sword playing, and other rural feats were exhibited."

We should be glad if any of our readers could give further particulars with regard to this fair, or with regard to Shaw and his connection with Somerset.

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Waterloo Fair was held near the Wellington Monument many years later than the date mentioned (June 21st, 1819), in the Calendar of Customs in your issue of July 31st last. I remember reading a long account of it in the *Wellington Weekly News* about twenty-five years ago. This may have been simply an attempt to revive it, as we have been reminded that Mr. A. L. Humphreys, in his "History of Wellington," intimates that the fair, started soon after the completion of the monument, only survived a couple of years. —F.W.

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Your correspondent F.W., who in your issue of August 7th expresses the opinion that this fair



was held as recently as 25 years ago is, I think, under a misapprehension with regard to the date. It is true that until 25 years ago, and I believe for a few years later, a pleasure fair was held on the hill around the base of the Wellington Monument, but this was held on Good Friday, and not on the 18th June, and it was an account of one of these fairs which appeared in the *Wellington Weekly News*, and which I remember reading at the time. Swings, roundabouts, shooting galleries, gingerbread stalls *et hoc genus omne* were mustered there on Good Fridays and attracted large numbers of young people from the neighbourhood around. This gave rise to a great deal of adverse criticism from many of the more orthodox, who felt that such a fete was altogether unfitting for a day set apart for solemn religious observance, and I remember well efforts being made by the local clergy and others to prevent its continuance. These efforts were in the end successful, and the fete has not to my knowledge been held there for a good many years.

W.S.P.

### JUNE 19.—LETTING THE PUXTON DOLMOORS.

#### MONMOUTH and the TAUNTON MAIDS, 1685.

Among the many ancient customs which were observed in olden days in our county of Somerset, few are more interesting than the letting of the Dolmoors at Puxton. In this and the adjoining parishes of Congresbury and Wick St. Lawrence are two large pieces of land, called the East and West Dolmoors, in which some of the villagers had formerly certain common rights, decided every year by a kind of lottery held on the Saturday before Midsummer-day. Among the Puxton Church records are three sets of accounts, that is to say, those of the Churchwardens, the Overseers of the Poor, and the Overseers of the Dolmoors or Common Lands in this and the adjacent parishes.

The following curiously descriptive account of the remarkable local custom of allotting the Dolmoors is from a Somerset gentleman, and appeared in a publication dated 1826 :—

The two large pieces of common land called Dolmoors, which lie in the parishes of Congresbury, Wick St. Lawrence, and Puxton, were allotted in the following manner :— On the Saturday preceding Midsummer-day (O.S.) the several proprietors (of the estates having any right in these moors) or their tenants were summoned at a certain hour in the morning by the ringing of

one of the bells at Puxton, to repair to the church, in order to see the chain (kept for the purpose of laying out Dolemoors) measured. The proper length of such chain was ascertained by placing one end thereof at the foot of the arch dividing the chancel from the body of the church, and extending it through the middle aisle, to the foot of the arch of the west door under the tower, at each of which places marks were cut in the stones for that purpose. The chain used for this purpose was only eighteen yards in length, consequently four yards shorter than the regular hand measuring chain. After the chain had been properly measured, the parties repaired to the commons. Twenty-four apples were previously prepared, bearing the following marks, viz., five marks called "Pole-axes," four ditto "Crosses," two ditto "Dung-forks or Dung-pikes," one mark called "Four oxen and a mare," one ditto "Two Pits," one ditto "Three Pits," one ditto "Four Pits," one ditto "Seven Pits," one "Horn," one "Hare's Tail," one "Duck's-nest," one "Oven," one "Shell," one "Evil," and one "Hand-reel."

It is necessary to observe that each of these moors was divided into several portions called furlongs, which were marked out by strong posts, placed at regular distances from each other; which posts were constantly kept up. After the apples were properly prepared, they were put into a hat or bag, and certain persons fixed on for the purpose, began to measure with the chain before mentioned, and proceeded until they had measured off one acre of ground; at the end of which the boy who carried the hat or bag containing the marks took out one of the apples, and the mark which the apple bore was immediately cut in the turf with a large knife kept for that purpose. This knife was somewhat in the shape of a scimitar with its edge reversed. In this manner they proceeded till the whole of the commons were laid out, and each proprietor knowing the mark and furlong which belonged to his estate, he took possession of his allotment or allotments accordingly, for the ensuing year. An adjournment then took place to the house of one of the overseers, where a certain number of acres reserved for the purpose of paying expenses, and called the "out-let or out-drift," were let by inch of candle!

During the time of letting, the whole party were to keep silence (except the person who bid), under the penalty of one shilling. When anyone wished to bid, he named the price he would give, and immediately deposited a shilling on the table where the candle stood; the next who bid, also named his price and deposited his shilling in like

manner, and the person who first bid was then to take up his shilling. The business of letting thus proceeded till the candle was burnt out, and the last bidder, prior to that event, was declared the tenant of the out-let or out-drift for the ensuing year.

Two overseers were annually elected from the proprietors or their tenants. A quantity of strong ale or brown stout was allowed for the feast, or revel, as it was called; also bread, butter and cheese, together with pipes and tobacco, of which any reputable person, whose curiosity or casual business led him to Puxton on that day, was at liberty to partake, but he was expected to deposit one shilling with the overseer, by way of forfeit for his intrusion. The day was generally spent in sociality and mirth, frequently of a boisterous nature, from the exhilarating effects of the brown stout before alluded to; for it rarely happened but that some of the junior part of the company were desirous of making a trial of their skill in the sublime art of pugilism, when hard knocks, thumps, bangs, and kicks, and consequently black eyes, bloody noses, and sore bones were distributed with the greatest liberality amongst the combatants. . . . Yet after these civil broils, the parties seldom bore each other any grudge or ill will, and generally, at the conclusion of the contest, they shook hands, became good friends again, and departed with the greatest sang-froid to apply

“ Fit med'cines to each glorious bruise  
They got in fight, reds, blacks, and blues;  
To mollify th' uneasy pang  
Of ev'ry honourable bang.”

In the year 1779, an attempt was made to procure an Act of Parliament for allotting these moors in perpetuity: but an opposition having been made by a majority of the proprietors, the plan was relinquished. The land, however, was actually enclosed and allotted in the year 1811, and the ancient mode of dividing it, and, consequently, the drunken festival or revel, from that time discontinued.

It is interesting to note that the custom of letting land by an inch of candle is still observed at Tatworth, near Chard.

#### MONMOUTH AND TAUNTON MAIDS.

Monmouth participated in a great procession at Taunton on this day in 1685. It will ever be memorable because of the little maids of Taunton who participated therein. They were 27 in number, and pupils of a Miss Sarah Blake and Mrs. Musgrave. Each child bore a small flag worked by her own hands—a compliment for which, as Macaulay relates, they afterwards paid

most dearly. Monmouth was presented with a sword and a Bible. The Duke kissed the blushing damsels and swore to defend the sacred volume with his life. —W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**JUNE 20.—MONMOUTH PROCLAIMED KING  
AT TAUNTON, 1685.**

**SOMERSET REGIMENT FORMED,  
1685.**

**TRANSLATION of St. EDWARD  
THE MARTYR, 982.**

A revel was formerly held at Heathfield on the Sunday before Misdummer, but it has been discontinued for many years past.

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Taunton gave an hysterical welcome to the rebel Duke of Monmouth. The Duke, in his royal progress through the West—says a chronicler—had, by his affability, made a deep impression on the rural mind, and on raising the standard of rebellion he was received with intoxicating enthusiasm. The maidens lost their hearts and the youths lost their heads. Monmouth's vanity was not proof against all this popular adulation, and instead of being content to pose as the champion of the Protestant faith, he foolishly allowed himself to be proclaimed King in the Market-place. This was followed by three other proclamations—one setting a sum of money on King James's head; the second declaring the Duke of Abenmarle a traitor if he laid not down his arms.

**SOMERSET REGIMENT FORMED, 1685.**

The 13th First Somerset, or the Prince Albert's Regiment of Light Infantry, owes its formation to the Monmouth Rebellion, when it was felt that "the small Regular Army left in England was not sufficiently numerous to protect the Crown and Kingdom against lawless usurpation." It was then decided to raise more cavalry and infantry, and Theophilus, Earl of Huntingdon, was, by commission, dated June 20th, 1685, appointed Colonel of one of the regiments ordered to be raised, now known as the Somerset Regiment. It was raised in the Southern Counties, Buckingham being its headquarters. In the middle of July, 1685, it was employed to guard prisoners taken after the Battle of Sedgemoor. The regiment was not associated with the county until 1782, when it received directions to "assume the title of the 1st Somersetshire Regiment, and in order to facilitate the procuring of recruits, to cultivate a connection between that county and the regiment."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, 540.

In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* it is recorded for 540 that "The Sun was eclipsed on the 12th of the Calends of July (equalling June 20th), and the stars appeared full nigh half-an-hour after 9 a.m."

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

## TRANSLATION OF ST. EDWARD THE MARTYR, 982.

As Somerset formed part of the kingdom of the West Saxons, it naturally claims its share of the boy King and Saint Edward, who was treacherously murdered by his step-mother Elfrida, at Corfe Castle, on March 18th, 979. His body was cast into a marsh to be hidden and forgotten. But the people loved their young King: it was believed that a pillar of light revealed where his corpse was laid; it was removed to the church at Wareham, and three years after the murder it was translated to the Monastery of Shaftesbury on June 20th. The church at Gouthurst is dedicated to this saint, and that at Chilton Polden may be dedicated to him or to St. Edward the Confessor.

JUNE 21.—MONMOUTH PROCLAIMED KING  
at BRIDGWATER. 1685.  
LONGEST DAY.

June 21st must be always a day of interest to the people of Bridgwater, because it was then the Duke of Monmouth led his forces into the town and was proclaimed King at the High Cross by the Mayor and his brethren in their formalities, and here his declaration was read. His army, which consisted of 6,000 men, were encamped in the Castle Field, and every effort was made to supply them with arms. Few were provided with pikes and muskets, the majority had to be content with rough implements fashioned out of farming or mining tools. The most effective of these weapons were scythes fastened to poles; but although the country for miles around Bridgwater was searched for a supply of scythes, not enough could be found for the whole of the Army, and hundreds who wished to enlist had to be sent away for lack of weapons. The Mayor and Aldermen came out in their robes to welcome Monmouth, and walked before him in procession to the High Cross, where the proclamation was made. "King Monmouth," as he was called, took up his residence in the Castle.

## LONGEST DAY.

This day the sun enters the sign Cancer, and is then at the extreme distance north of the Equator. Though there is but slight difference

in the length of the days about June 21st, there is, in general, one of these days which is a few seconds longer than the other. This is the day on which the Summer Solstice falls, and at the end of a century is June 20th or 21st, whilst at the beginning it is a day later, and June 21st or 22nd is the longest day. The reason for this difference in date is because the Tropical Year is not an integral number of days.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**JUNE 22.—PRINCE and PRINCESS of WALES VISITED WELLS and GLASTONBURY, 1909.  
DUKE of MONMOUTH at GLASTONBURY, 1685.**

The Prince and Princess of Wales (now the King and Queen) on this day, in 1909, attended the Millenary Service at Wells Cathedral, and afterwards proceeded to Glastonbury, where they were present at the ceremony of the restoring of the ancient Abbey to the Church of England. Their Royal Highnesses occupied seats on a raised *dais* in the church of the great Abbey. The Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells, on behalf of the Abbey Trustees, asked the Archbishop of Canterbury and his Council to accept the power of directing the future use of the Abbey, and His Grace accepted the charge. After the ceremony a number of presentations were made to the Prince and Princess of Wales, who left for Longleat, the seat of the Marquis of Bath, shortly before six o'clock. Their Royal Highnesses the following day visited several places in the county which are associated with the Duchy of Cornwall.

**DUKE OF MONMOUTH AT GLASTONBURY.**

After being proclaimed King at Bridgwater, Monmouth proceeded to Glastonbury, some of his troops resting for the night in the houses of the little town, others in the two churches, while the remainder lighted their camp fires and slept amid the ruins of the famous Abbey. From Glastonbury their line of march lay through Wells to Shepton Mallet and on to Norton St. Philip.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON

**JUNE 23.—ST. JOHN'S EVE.  
PRINCE of WALES BORN, 1894,  
ST. ETHELREDA.**

From the highest antiquity, the vigil of St. John has been given over to mystic rites, some of which, as, for instance, the arts of maiden divination, survive even unto the present times. It was an established custom for people to go out

into the woods and bring in branches of trees and plant them over their doors with demonstrations of joy to make good the Scripture prophecy concerning the Baptist that many would rejoice at his birth. This custom was once almost universal in England. All the boughs used were hallowed, and many of them were employed afterwards to protect cattle against witches or from being "over-looked." To this end they were hung up at the stall door where the cattle stood. It was customary in towns to keep a watch on St. John's-eve. Every citizen either went himself, or sent a substitute, and an oath for the preservation of peace was administered to the company at their first meeting at sunset. On the whole the most interesting customs connected with St. John's-eve were those of a superstitious character. Page, in "An Exploration of Exmoor," writing in 1890, says "There is a church where on old Midsummer-eve one or two people still go to watch for the spirits of those who are doomed to illness or death within the ensuing year. A few years ago, so many were affected (or afflicted) with this morbid curiosity that a gate, studded with nails on the top, and still in existence, though no longer in situ, was erected to keep them out. The watchers were in the habit of repairing to the porch, there to note the faces of the phantoms passing into the building. Those who came out again would have an illness, while those who remained within would assuredly die. A short time since a tailor was remonstrated with for his tardiness in completing a suit of clothes. He testily replied that there was no necessity for haste, as the customer would be dead within a twelve month, thus letting out that he, at any rate, had been out on Midsummer-eve. It need scarcely be added that he has never heard the last of it. I did not ascertain whether a watcher ever saw his own ghost; if such were the case, the experience can hardly have been a pleasant one."

Page continues by remarking that Midsummer-eve has pleasanter and more amusing—albeit, to the parties concerned, sufficiently nerve-shaking—customs, than that of watching for those about to die. The amorous god is at hand to-night, and young men and maidens are on the tip-toe of expectation. *Place aux dames*. It is a bright moonlight, and rosy-checked Chloe stands in the churchyard with some hemp-seed in her hand. This she tosses over her shoulders, and with tremulous lips exclaims:—

Hemp-seed I scatter,  
Hemp-seed I sow;  
He that is my true love,  
Come after me and mow.

Presently she casts a fearful glance behind, and there is her lover, scythe in hand, in pursuit. Then she incontinently takes to her heels. No second glance is permitted, or the phantom will overtake her and ungallantly cut her legs with his scythe. On Midsummer-eve, too, she may discover the initials of her future lord by placing beneath her bed a basin filled with water, where float the letters of the alphabet face downwards. If the fates be propitious, the morning light will reveal two or three which—presumably with Cupid's assistance—have turned over during the night—the first letters of the Christian name and surname of the husband that is to be. Another method for ascertaining the personal appearance of her true love is to lay the table for supper, open all the doors, and wait till the clock strikes twelve. As midnight chimes, a shadowy figure enters, and with very unspiritual appetite attacks the supper and disappears. Twelve hours later Chloe may, if she list, know the year of her marriage. Midsummer-day dawns, and at noon let her take a wedding ring, tie it to one of her hairs, and suspend it in a glass of water. The clock again strikes twelve, and ere the last stroke has died away "the ring will have tinkled against the glass as many times as there will be years before she will be a wife." Fern seed was regarded as possessing great magical powers, and it was believed to make anyone invisible who could catch some in a plate without shaking the plant. Shakespeare refers to this in "Henry IV." Stowe says on the vigil of St. John Baptist every man's door is shadowed with "greene birche, long fennel, St. John's wort, orpine, white lilies, and such-like. St. John's wort coming into bloom about St. John's-day, and having flowers which reminds of the sun with its darkness and evil-dispersing rays, was regarded as specially powerful to avert evil. It was gathered on St. John's-eve to be hung up in houses as a preservative against thunder and evil spirits; it was burnt in the Midsummer fires for magical purposes. The orpine plant was commonly called the "Midsummer Man." It was set in pieces of clay, or potsherd, watered, and placed in the house. Anxious maidens hurried down in the early morning to discover whether the stalk inclined to the right or to the left. If the former, the maiden's lover would prove true to her; if the latter, he would be false. With regard to roses, if a maiden gathered one on Midsummer-eve, and kept it folded in a clean sheet of paper until Christmas-day, without looking at it, it was said that she would find it as fresh as when she plucked it, and if she wore it on her breast the man who was to become her husband would come and pluck it out. Times have changed.



To-day the young people no longer keep vigil on St. John's-eye, sow hemp-seed, or pluck orpine. They profess to be above these things!

One of the "Cheap Repository Tracts," entitled "Tawney Rachel, or the Fortune Teller," said to have been written by Miss Hannah More, relates, among other superstitious practices of Sally Evans, that "she would never go to bed on Midsummer-eve without sticking up in her room the well-known plant called 'Midsummer Men,' as the bending of the leaves to the right or to the left would never fail to tell her whether her lover was true or false." The "Midsummer Men" were the orpine plants, which Mr. Brand says is thus elegantly alluded to in the "Cottage Girl," a poem written on Midsummer-eve, 1786:—

The rustic maid invokes her swain :  
And hails, to pensive damsels dear,  
This eve, though direst of the year.

\* \* \*

Oft on the shrub she casts her eye,  
That spoke her true-love's secret sigh ;  
Or else, alas ! too plainly told  
Her true love's faithless heart was cold.

#### PRINCE OF WALES BORN, 1891.

The Prince of Wales attains his 26th birthday to-day. H.R.H. is a considerable landowner in our county of Somerset.

#### ST. ETHELREDA.

There is but one church in Somerset dedicated to St. Ethelreda or St. Audry, commemorated on this day. She was the third daughter of Annes or Anne, the holy king of the East Angles and St. Hereswyda. She was born at Ermynge, a famous village in Suffolk. St. Audry reminds us of St. Audries, the seat of the Hood family in the beautiful Quantock country, and it is the church of West Quantoxhead which is dedicated to this saint.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, 1191.

On this day in 1191 there was an eclipse of the sun, and, according to Camden, the stars were visible at ten in the morning.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### MIDSUMMER-EVE SUPERSTITIONS.

Amongst the many superstitions in West Somerset connected with Midsummer-eve, the following are amongst the most interesting, especially to young ladies:—

(1) Mrs. Lansdowne kindly sends us the following beliefs from the Stovey district:—Midsummer-eve is a great time for girls in love.

Presently she casts a fearful glance behind, and there is her lover, scythe in hand, in pursuit. Then she incontinently takes to her heels. No second glance is permitted, or the phantoms will overtake her and ungallantly cut her legs with his scythe. On Midsummer-eve, too, she may discover the initials of her future lord by placing beneath her bed a basin filled with water, where float the letters of the alphabet face downwards. If the fates be propitious, the morning light will reveal two or three which—presumably with Cupid's assistance—have turned over during the night—the first letters of the Christian name and surname of the husband that is to be. Another method for ascertaining the personal appearance of her true love is to lay the table for supper, open all the doors, and wait till the clock strikes twelve. As midnight chimes, a shadowy figure enters, and with very unspiritual appetite attacks the supper and disappears. Twelve hours later Chloe may, if she list, know the year of her marriage. Midsummer-day dawns, and at noon let her take a wedding ring, tie it to one of her hairs, and suspend it in a glass of water. The clock again strikes twelve, and ere the last stroke has died away “the ring will have tinkled against the glass as many times as there will be years before she will be a wife.” Fern seed was regarded as possessing great magical powers, and it was believed to make anyone invisible who could catch some in a plate without shaking the plant. Shakespeare refers to this in “Henry IV.” Stowe says on the vigil of St. John Baptist every man's door is shadowed with “greene birche, long fennel, St. John's wort, orpine, white lilies, and such-like. St. John's wort coming into bloom about St. John's-day, and having flowers which reminds of the sun with its darkness and evil-dispersing rays, was regarded as specially powerful to avert evil. It was gathered on St. John's-eve to be hung up in houses as a preservative against thunder and evil spirits; it was burnt in the Midsummer fires for magical purposes. The orpine plant was commonly called the “Midsummer Man.” It was set in pieces of clay, or potsherd, watered, and placed in the house. Anxious maidens hurried down in the early morning to discover whether the stalk inclined to the right or to the left. If the former, the maiden's lover would prove true to her; if the latter, he would be false. With regard to roses, if a maiden gathered one on Midsummer-eve, and kept it folded in a clean sheet of paper until Christmas-day, without looking at it, it was said that she would find it as fresh as when she plucked it, and if she wore it on her breast the man who was to become her husband would come and pluck it out. Times have changed.

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(1) Mrs. Lansdowne kindly sends us the following beliefs from the Stowey district:—Midsummer-eve is a great time for girls in love.

They go out alone and fill a cup with running water, saying :

“ Water, water, running free,  
May my love run swift to me.”

Then gather red and white roses, arrange them on a table, before an open window, in a heart shape, and go to bed. In the morning if they are still fresh your lover is true ; if faded, some other girl will take him from you ; if disarranged, you will have a new sweetheart. Shut your eyes and take one, if red, you will marry a rich man, if white, a poor one.

(2) To see your future husband, you must on Midsummer-night's-eve open wide the front door, lay a clean white cloth upon the table, and place upon it a shoulder-blade of lamb on a dish. Place also on the table a penknife. When the clock is striking twelve the man who is to be your future husband will stick the penknife in the shoulder of lamb and walk out of the door. Of course the joke often was that someone hearing of what was being prepared would purposely walk in the door and stick the penknife in the joint, when perhaps they were not wanted to.

(3) Mr. F. J. Snell, in his “ Book of Exmoor,” describes a variation of this superstition in the following picturesque custom, in which the maiden is frequently joined by the young man. The table having been laid for supper, the doors are thrown open, and those keeping vigil wait until the clock strikes twelve. At the witching hour there enters a shadowy form (two, if the young man be present), which consumes the supper and vanishes. Where two ghosts appear they are, of course, male and female.

(4) Boil an egg hard and take it upstairs with a glass of water, walking backwards. Place both on a chair or table by your bedside. Now get into bed backwards, saying :—

It's not this egg I mean to eat,  
But my true love's heart I mean to seek,  
In his apparel and array,  
As he wears it every day.

If this is done properly on Midsummer-eve your lover should come and drink the water in the glass.

(5) On Midsummer-eve a maiden desirous of learning the initials of her destined spouse puts under her bed a basin of water, in which are the letters of the alphabet, floating face downwards. She goes to sleep, and the next morning on awaking examines the basin, where, if she be lucky, she will find two or three of the letters turned over, the first letters of the future bridegroom's Christian name and surname.

(6) If a flower of the St. John's Wort is picked

on Midsummer-eve and carried to the church door, the future husband (or wife) will be seen to pass into the church. Many maidens on this night, instead of carrying the flower to the church door place it under their pillows in the belief that by so doing they will see their future husbands in their dreams. It is also believed that St. John's Wort growing round a house will prevent it from being invaded either by witches or the devil.

(7) Mr. F. J. Snell, in his "Book of Exmoor," speaks of the "ghas'ly and horrible custom of spirit-watching," and tells us that this custom is observed on Midsummer-eve, when churches are narrowly watched. In the case of some, the ghosts of all in the parish, not excluding the parson and the clerk, have been seen to enter, but it does not follow that evil consequences will ensue, except as regards those whose apparitions remain in the building. Such luckless wights will, it is believed, most certainly die, and one instance is recorded where a father became insane on remarking that his daughter's phantom stayed behind in the sacred edifice. About 20 years ago a correspondent informed us that it was firmly believed by many people in Creech at that time that on the Eve of St. John the Baptist the wraith or spirit of the person in the parish to die the following year would pass through the north door of the church and could be seen by those who would take the trouble to watch for it. Several parishioners declared that the spirits of their friends had been seen to pass through and that they all died within a year after. We believe that about 20 years ago the Vicar of Creech wrote a poem on the subject.

(8) The Rev. James Street, in his "Mynster of the Ile," says:—"Old traditions as to Midsummer-eve tell that after fasting the folk would go to the church porch to see who should die in that parish during the year following; for the spirits of such, in the order of their dying, would come one after another and knock at the church door. And if one gathered fern seed on that night the spirits whisked by his ears like bullets, and sometimes struck his hat and other parts of him, and when he got a quantity in a box, it was found empty on reaching home."

(9) Several superstitions were formerly current in Somerset with regard to the Orpine or Livelong (*sedum telephium*), which is the largest British stonewort and is (or was) known in some parts of the country by the name of "Midsummer-men." Lyte, in his translation of Dodon's "Herbal," says of the Orpyne, "The people of the countrey delight much to set it in pots and shelles on Midsummer-even, or upon timber, slattes, or trenchers, daubed with clay, and so

to set or hang it up in their houses, where as it remaineth greene a long season, and groweth if it be sometimes oversprinkled with water." Ann Pratt, in her "Flowering Plants of Great Britain," adds, "Many foolish and superstitious practices were connected with it, for it was a kind of love charm; and they appear to have been sometimes used in even the later days, for Hannah More relates of a young country girl, that she would never go to bed on Midsummer-eve without putting up in her room a piece of the plant called Midsummer-men, as the bending of the leaves to the right or to the left would indicate the constancy or faithlessness of the object of her thoughts."

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## JUNE 24.—MIDSUMMER DAY.

### CLIPPING THE TOWER.

FATHER ROBERT PARSONS  
BORN, 1546.

Midsummer-day (St. John's-day) falls at the time of the summer solstice, the last of the three days which mark the culmination of the sun's ascension in the heavens. The St. John's Fires, which used to be lighted, symbolised the celestial fire, the sun. These fires were kindled at the very moment the year began, for the first of all years and the most ancient began at the month of June. When, after a long train of years, the year ceased to begin at this solstice, the custom of making fires was not discontinued.

The following Somerset Churches are dedicated to St. John the Baptist :—Axbridge, Batheaston, Bedminster, South Brewham, Carhampton, North Cheriton, Farrington Gurney, Hatch Beauchamp, Frome, Hinton Charterhouse, Horsington, Ilchester, Keynsham, Midsomer Norton, Pawlet, Pitney, Wellington, and Yeovil.

### CLIPPING THE TOWER.

A very ancient custom used to be practised at Wellington on Midsummer-day, known as "Clipping the Tower." Once every year the people met in the churchyard and formed a ring round the church. They advanced towards the church, and on the side opposite the door the ring broke, and the two leaders—something in the style of the dance "Sir Roger de Coverley"—went straight to the wall, and were followed by the others. Then they made their way back to the entrance to the churchyard, and when they got there they gave three shouts. This was also an Easter Monday custom in some parts of the country. Perhaps—says Andrews—this was one of the highest types of games in a churchyard to be found, and in the days when the custom was

instituted it must have been both a pretty and interesting sight to see the children hand in hand each Easter Monday surrounding and supporting the church.

#### WEATHER LORE.

The weather lore for St. John's-day is interesting. If it rains on this day we may expect a wet harvest. Previous to St. John's-day we dare not praise barley—that every old Somerset farmer knew right well. The Shepherds' Calendar tells us that if Midsummer-day be never so little rainy, the hazel and walnut will be scarce, corn smitten in many places, but apples, pears, and plums will not be hurt. So if we have disappointments from one direction, there are pleasures to be found in another.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

Midsummer rain spoils hay and grain.

\* \* \*

The best hay is made before Midsummer.

\* \* \*

Previous to St. John's Day we dare not praise barley.

\* \* \*

Rain on St. John's Day and we may expect a wet harvest.

\* \* \*

Cut your thistles before St. John,  
And you'll have two instead of one.

\* \* \*

A terrible frost in England on Midsummer-day in 1035 is said to have destroyed the fruits of the earth.

\* \* \*

An old remedy for many of the ills afflicting cows consisted in pouring holy water down the beast's throat on Midsummer-day and singing the Athanasian Creed over it in Latin.

\* \* \*

Mr. F. W. Mathews kindly reminds us that the Abbey of Old Cleeve was founded on June 24th, 1100. An interesting and popular description of this Abbey is given in the "Homeland" Guide to Minehead.

\* \* \*

Glow-worms are occasionally called St. John's worms, from their supposed appearance about the feast of St. John. A saying familiar in Somerset is

\* \* \*

When the glow-worm lights her lamp,  
Then the air is always damp.

\* \* \*

If a West Country girl wishes to know which of her lovers is true, she picks a rose on Mid-

summer day, and wears it on her breast to church on Christmas-day, and he will be sure to come and take it from her bosom, and she may trust him ever after.

\* \* \*

Mr. S. G. Jarman, in his "History of Bridgwater," 1889, says:—"For a great number of years Bridgwater was famous for its cloth fair at Midsummer, which was attended by all the weavers and dealers of the West of England. The 'standings' used to line the Cornhill, and frequently also stretched from George-street to St. Mary's Church. This has occurred within the last half century."

\* \* \*

The Rev. James Street, in his "Mynster of the Ile," quotes as a Midsummer-night superstition the following story from Rd. Bovey's "Pandemonium or the Devil's Cloyster" (1684):—"A Combe St. Nicholas man, riding home one night, saw what seemed to be a great company from a fair—"shoe-makers, pedlars with all kinds of trinkets, fruit and drinking boethes, as at an ordinary fair. He rode in amongst the fairies, and when he got to the place he could see nothing, only it seemed to be crowded. On reaching home a lameness seized him, which never left him. Many others of Coombe had seen the fairies fair-keeping.

\* \* \*

### GOOSEBERRIES AND THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN.

It is not generally supposed that there is any connection between the name of the gooseberry and the Feast of St. John. Mr. Fox Talbot, however, says:—"Gooseberries are called in German, *Johannis-beerin*, that is John's berries, because they ripen about the feast of St. John. St. John is called in Holland *St. Jan*, and the fruit is there called *Jansberren*. Now this word has been—centuries ago—corrupted into *Gaus-bee.en*, of which our English word gooseberries is a literal translation; *Gaus* in German signifying a goose." This is an explanation at which dictionary makers look askance.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

### FATHER ROBERT PARSONS.

The celebrated Jesuit, Robert Parsons, or Persons, the son of a blacksmith, was born at Nether Stowey in 1546. From Taunton he passed to Oxford, rising to distinction at Balliol College. He resigned his offices in 1574, and going abroad entered the Society of Jesus the following year at Rome. In 1578 he became a priest, and in 1580, with Edmund Campion,



landed at Dover on a secret mission for his Order. For a year he astounded Protestants and Catholics alike by his ability, activity, and success. Campion was captured and executed, but Parsons escaped to the Continent. For nearly thirty years his labours were untiring and his influence great. Popes and Kings alike were guided by him. Political intrigues, the organisation of seminaries for priests in France, Spain, and Portugal, the writing of numerous polemical works present phases of his busy life. He fell short, however, of his ambition for a Cardinal's hat. Protestant writers, Kingsley among them, have tarnished somewhat the name of Robert Parsons. Nevertheless it was the cause rather than the man which led to all his more ambitious aims and schemes being abortive. He died suddenly at Rome April 15th, 1610.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

#### AN OLD MIDSUMMER CUSTOM.

When the Somersetshire Archæological Society visited Langford Budville in 1892, Professor Boyd Dawkins said he had been told by the President (Mr. W. A. Sanford, of Nynehead Court, of a singular custom observed by the people of the parish from the remotest time until the days of a former Vicar (Mr. Dickenson). It appeared that once a year the people met in the Churchyard and formed a ring round the church. They advanced towards the church, and on the side opposite the door the ring broke and the two leaders—something after the style in the dance Sir Roger de Coverley—went straight to the wall and were followed by the others. Then they made their way back to the entrance to the churchyard, and when they got there they gave three shouts. These three shouts were to frighten the devil from Langford; and were not only to do that, but to frighten him to the neighbouring village—or parish, for there is not much of a village—of Thorne St. Margaret. It seemed, however, that if they frightened him to Thorne, he did not stay there, inasmuch as the custom was observed every year. It was, the Professor understood, discontinued, on account of the drinking, &c., which came to be associated with it.

Mr. F. T. Elworthy, who was present, said this practice was well-known as “clipping the tower”; that it used to be done at Wellington on St. John's-day and at Langford on St. Peter's. It was an old Midsummer custom, and had nothing to do with the saints whose names happened to be near the solstice.

What I have written so far is known to a good many people, but what follows is not so well

known. At the Somerset Quarter Sessions held at Bridgwater in October, 1649, as the Court was informed "that through the greate confluence of people of all sorts frequenting meetings in this county commonly called revells or wakes, manie abuses are donn and committed and diverse quarrells, mutinies and contentions doe arise, tending to the disturbance of the publike peace, this Court doth declare that all such meetings called revells or wakes are unlawfull and in themselves are noe other unlawfull assenblyes," and it was ordered that from henceforth there be no more revells or wakes to be used or frequented within the county by any person or persons whatsoever. The next summer Thomas Gorges, a Justice of the Peace, tried to stop the revells at Langford Budville, held about Midsummer, and sent Thomas Chapell, tithingman, with assistance for that purpose. He found a crowd of some sixty persons on the green by the church, playing at "squayles" and cudgel playing; and on reading his warrant, one player demanded what he had to do with it, and said they had come to fight, and fight they would, and that they would come again to-morrow and keep revel when the tithingman was hanged; and he and his assistants were set upon and beaten.

The records show that Langford Budville was not the only place in the county where the orders of the Quarter Sessions were set at defiance.

—WELLINGTON.

### JUNE 25.—SHEEP SHEARING.

Like other rural customs, the sheep-shearing festivities—including always a good supper—in Somerset are dying out! Sadly the times have changed, and are still further changing! Different feelings characterise the farmer and the farm worker to-day, and one would not like to declare the changes are any great improvement. In Tusser's days, at the time of sheep-shearing, the farmer said:

Wife, make us a dinner, spare flesh neither come,  
Make wafers and cakes, for our sheepe must be  
shorne;

At sheep shearing, neighbours none other things  
crave

But good cheere and welcome like neighbours  
to have.

Then Dyer, in his poem called "The Fleece," reminds us that

At shearing time, along the lively vales,  
Rural festivities are often heard:  
Beneath each blooming arbor all is joy  
And lusty merriment.

Thomson, too, in his "Seasons," sing of sheep-shearing time, of the driving of the sheep to the

“ mazy-running brook,” which forms a deep pool, the washing of the fleeces, then the shearing scene duels, during which is seen the men sitting and whetting “ the sounding shears,” and

The housewife waits to roll her fleecy stores,  
With all her gay-drest maids attending round ;  
One, chief, in gracious dignity enthron'd,  
Shines o'er the rest the past'ral Queen, and rays  
Her smiles, sweet beaming on her Shepherd-King.

This appears as if there were not only May Queens in rural England in the past, but Shearing Queens as well. But, as I have remarked, times have changed. Walter Raymond—the most delightful writer of Somerset rural life the county has ever produced—refers to sheep-shearing in his charming book, “ The Idler Out of Doors.” Formerly, he says, it was the custom for all the neighbours to make up a gang of staidish men and spry young chaps to go from farm to farm and shear the flocks. They did not work for hire, but were all friends together, and welcome wherever they went. The feasting then began in early morn. Right in the middle of the breakfast board there stood a beechen bowl of furnuty—wheat boiled in milk, with figs and chips of cinnamon. And there was sweetest wheaten bread, home-baked, and ale home-brewed, and plenty of the best of everything belonging to the land. Then all day long on the barn's floor they sheared, each listening to the snip of the blades next to him, and eager to do quicker than the rest. The yellow fleeces lay upon the ground. One by one each ewe, new shorn and white, with shear marks straight and true, ran startled back to the familiar oak, where she could scarcely recognise her friends. Then there was feast at noon and feast at night. And in the dimmet, after work was done, in the home field around the Welsh-nut tree, they turned to games and sports till dark, and then went in the house to dance and sing till morn. That revel never ended till the daylight came ; and the next day began another at the neighbouring farm.

Here is a traditional sheep-shearing song from “ The Charm of the West Country ”:—

How delightful to see,  
In those evenings in spring,  
The sheep going home to the fold :  
The master doth sing,  
As he views everything,  
And his dog goes before him where told.  
The sixth month of the year,  
In the month called June,  
When the weatler's too hot to be borne,  
The master does say,

As he goes on his way,  
 To-morrow my sheep shall be shorn.  
 Now as for those sheep,  
 They're delightful to see;  
 They're a blessing to man on his farm.  
 For their flesh it is good,  
 It's the best of a'll food,  
 And the wool it will clothe us up warm.  
 Now the sheep they're all shorn,  
 And the wool carried home,  
 Here's a health to our master and flock;  
 And if we should stay  
 Till the last goes away,  
 I'm afraid 'twill be past twelve o'clock.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

We think it well to add to Mr. Watson's interesting article the following notes by Miss Alice King, which appeared in the "Argosy" in October, 1884:—"Many of the west country customs are very pretty and suggestive, and have a touch of real poetry about them. The sheep-shearing is always a festival in an Exmoor farm-house. The daughters of the family, after having displayed their highest art as cooks in the preparation of the supper, adorn themselves in all their gayest finery, and then do all that they can to ensure their lovers and brothers being suitable partners for them in the dance which is to come by and bye. Before the door of the house is placed a large tub full of fresh water, in which are floating all kinds of sweet aromatic herbs, and close to this is a primitive toilette table, which is well provided with brush and comb and glass. Here the young village dandies made themselves gay and spruce before they seek the fair presence of their lady-loves."

### JUNE 26.—DUKE of MONMOUTH at NOR- TON ST. PHILIP, 1685.

The Duke of Monmouth slept here on the night of the 26th June, 1685, and the next day the rebel troops got the better of the Royalist advanced guard in a cavalry skirmish, and were able, in consequence, to make their entrance into Frome. It is reported that the Duke was shot at as he stood at a window of the George Inn, the shooter hoping to get the reward offered for his life, but according to a ballad the Duke

"Gently turned him round  
 And said 'My man you've missed your mark  
 And lost your thousand pounds.'"

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**JUNE 27.—ALIENATION of the HOSPITAL of  
WHITEHALL, ILCHESTER, 1600.  
SAMUEL, VISCOUNT HOOD DIED,  
1816.**

Some time between the years 1216 and 1220, William Daens, or Dennis, gave certain lands in or near Ilchester for the purpose of founding a Hospital to the honour of the Blessed Trinity, for the reception and entertainment of poor travellers and pilgrims, and in behalf of other sacred objects. The Hospital, it is thought, derived its name from a mansion called White Hall. Later it became a house of Augustinian Nuns, under the rule of a Prioress. Next it became a Free Chapel, then followed its sale and final alienation on this day in the year 1600.

**WEATHER LORE.**

One rhymester has put it on record that if it rains on June 27th it will rain for seven weeks. Someone evidently in by-gone days tried to rival St. Swithin, but whoever it may have been, he has failed to make his weather lore so popular as the Wessex Bishop of Winchester.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

Samuel Viscount Hood, a famous member of a notable naval family, died at Bath this day 1816 at the age of 91. As captain and admiral he fought under many of our most distinguished commanders, Rodney among them, and did good service against De Grasse. In 1793 he directed the English operations off the French coast and occupied Toulon.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**JUNE 28.—HOTTEST DAY, 1826.**

In the famous "Droughty Year" of 1826, when the prevailing wind was north, the grass was dried up and corn ceased to grow; this day was the hottest of the year in England, the thermometer standing at 90 degrees in the shade.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**JUNE 29.—ST. PETER'S DAY.  
LANGFORD REVEL.  
BATH PRIORY SURRENDERED,  
1539.**

On June 29th, 1033, an almost total eclipse of the sun occurred between ten and eleven in the morning. It had many observers, and the sun is said to have appeared of a sapphire hue.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

The old weather lore taught us that if it rains on St. Peter's-day the bakers will have to carry double flour and single water; if dry, they will carry single flour and double water.

The Somerset Churches dedicated to the Apostle are:—South Barrow, Bleadon, Camerton, St. Decumans, Evercreech, Exton, Freshford, Goat-hill, Hornblotton, Marksbury, Milton Puddimore, Redlinch, Shepton Montague, Staple Fitzpaine, and Treborough.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

On June 29th, 1539, Bath Priory surrendered to the King. Harrington tells us that after its suppression the commissioners "in reverence and compassion of the place did so far strayne their commission that they offered to sell the whole Church to the towne under 500 marks; but the townsmen, fearing they might be thought to cosen the King if they bought it so cheape, or that it might after (as many things were) be found conceal'd, utterly refused. Whereupon certain me.chants bought all the glass, iron, bells and lead; of which lead alone was accompted for (as I have credible heard) 480 tonne, worth at this day £4,800."

#### LANGFORD REVEL.

This was the day of the revel at Langford Budville, near Wellington. Like all the old village revels, it was characterised by sports of rather rougher description than those common at festive gatherings of the present day. A very old inhabitant who remembered the revels, and whose memory went back to the days of Trafalgar and Waterloo, gave me some vivid descriptions of the day's doings at "Peter's Revel." There was a service at the church, which was dedicated to St. Peter, and this being over, the whole available population of the parish joined hands in an immense ring round the church, "clipping the tower," they called this. Then the ring was broken near the gate, and in a zig-zag line, "threading the needle," the whole company went off to the common. There the ring was again formed, and a great shout was given, "to drive the devil out of the parish." With this laudable object achieved, a return was made to the village for the sports, but seemingly precautions against the return of the expelled one were omitted.

Wrestling was a great feature of the sports, and those who have heard of the style of the west country wrestling will not be anxious to see a return of that particular mode.

Cudgel-playing was another favourite item of the day's programme, and my old friend

re-called memories of men jumping up on to the platform, bruised and in no handsome guise, challenging all comers to single-stick contests, in which a broken head was the almost inevitable end.

The day often ended in a free fight among men of Langford and Milverton, between whom there was an old-standing feud, and, my friend assured me, it nearly always resulted in the Milverton men being driven ignominiously away, and forced to hide in the woods. Yet, mingled with my dear old friend's proud re-call of the prowess of the fellow-parishioners of those old days, there was always the thought that they were well gone and done with, for the recital ended with—"But 'twas rough old times, sure enough!"

—F. W. MATHEWS.

In addition to the foregoing notes, for which we are indebted to Mr. Mathews, we think it well to reproduce here the following interesting account of the day's proceedings, which he obtained some years ago from an old lady who in her younger days had taken part in the quaint ceremony, which he was good enough to write up for these columns some seven years ago:—  
 "In the morning, after service, all the parishioners joined hands, and made a big ring round the church, and danced around for some time, then, at a signal from the leader of the revel, the ring broke, and the whole line raced off down the village street, "threading the needle," that is the end person darted in between the next pair, zig-zagged through the next pair in front, and so from side to side till he reached the front. But immediately he had left the rear the successor in the position took up the same action as the one just gone, and so the madly-rushing procession, still joining hands, went up on to the Common, and, there standing on the plain by the old 'French-nut' tree (now departed), they all joined hands again. Then they gave three mighty 'hollers,' and went back to the village again for the sports, wrestling, basket-stick, and so on. 'And what was it all for—this 'clipping the tower,' and the 'threading the needle,' and the shouting?' I asked 'Oh, 'twas to chase the devil out of the parish,' she said, and the hollering was to frighten 'em away, and drive on to Thorne' (Thorne St. Margaret). 'Bad for the Thorne folk,' I remarked. 'That didn't matter,' was the rejoinder; 'We'd got rid of 'em, and the Thorne people could do the same, if they wanted to.'"

Our readers will also find a reference to Langford revel under the heading "An Old Midsummer Custom" under the date June 24th.

**JUNE 30.—ECLIPSE OF THE MOON, 1349.**

On this date in 1349 there was a total eclipse of the moon visible in Somerset. Archdeacon Churton, in his "History of the Early English Church," has connected with this eclipse a story of Thomas Bradwardine, who for a year 1348-9 was Archbishop of Canterbury. Churton says:—"The worthy Abp. Bradwardine . . . . tells a story of a witch who was attempting to impose on the simple people of the time. It was a fine summer night, and the moon was suddenly eclipsed. 'Make me good amends,' said she, 'for old wrongs, or I will bid the sun also to withdraw his light from you.' Bradwardine, who had studied the Arabian astronomers, was more than a match for this simple trick, without calling in the aid of the Saxon law. 'Tell me,' he said, 'at what time you will do this, and we will believe you; or if you will not tell me, I will tell you when the sun or the moon will next be darkened.'" It may be mentioned that less than two months later Bradwardine died of the Black Death.

EDWARD VIVIAN.





# JULY.

Hail! of Seasons the delightful Queen!  
Beautiful Summer! in luxurious robes  
Of glorious green, with radiant roses set  
In elegant profusion. —GREGORY.

Summer at last is come upon us. We have entered the seventh month of the year. According to ancient reckoning it was the fifth, and called Quintilis, until Mark Antony denominated it July, in compliment to Caius Cæsar, the Roman dictator, whose surname was Julius, who improved the calendar and was born in this month. July was called by the Saxons *henmonath*, which probably expressed the meaning of the German word *hain*, signifying wood or trees; and hence *henmonath* might mean foliage month. They likewise called it *heymonath*, or hay-month, "because," says Verstegan, "therein they usually mowed and made their hay-harvest," and they also denominated it *Lida-aft-era*, meaning the second "Lida" or second month after the sun's descent. Yes, summer is come at last. July is the hottest month of the year. The direct influence of the sun, indeed, is continually diminishing after the summer solstice; but the earth and air have been so thoroughly heated that the warmth which they retain more than compensates, for a time, for the diminution of solar rays. Now the trees have reached the middle term of their annual life; the hills and plains have now put off the bright green livery of spring, and have changed it "for one dyed in almost as many colours as a harlequin's coat." How beautiful is the country-side. The wheat and barley and oats are in sober colours, but look at the patches of brilliant emerald which now begins to spring afresh on the late-mown meadows, the rich dark green of the turnip fields, and sweeps here and there brilliant with "charlocks, yellow as the sun," with its large cross-shaped flowers. Then a patch of scarlet poppies gleaming in the sun, and on chalk soils particularly there is the blue succory with its large stars seated on its stem in pairs. But whoever would taste all the sweetness of July, says William Howitt, "let him go, in pleasant company, if possible, into heaths and woods; it is

there in her uncultured haunts that summer now holds her court. The bellheath, the most beautiful of our indigenous species, is now in bloom, and has converted the brown bosom of the waste with one wide sea of crimson; the air is charged with its honeyed odour; the dry elastic turf glows, not only with its flowers, but with those of wild thyme, the clear blue milkwort, the yellow asphodel, and that curious plant, the sundew, with its drops of inexhaustible liquor sparkling in the fiercest sun like diamonds. There wave the cotton-rush, the tall fox-glove and the tuler golden mullein; there grows the classical grass of Parnassus, the elegant favourite of every poet; there creep the various species of heathberries, cranberries, bilberries, &c., furnishing the poor with a source of profit and the rich of simple luxury. What a pleasure it is to throw ourselves down beneath the verdant screen of the beautiful fern, or in the shade of a venerable oak, in such a scene, and listen to the summer sound of bees, grasshoppers, and ten thousand other insects, mingled with the more remote and solitary cry of the peewit and curlew!" And where can be found a county in this favoured land of ours which can rival our beautiful "Land of Summer," for scenes such as Howitt has described? We offer all those charms to the student of nature, to the tired traveller, to the seeker after health, to the holiday maker, and we offer more, a county second to none for its natural beauties, second to none in historical interest, a county steeped in the most interesting folk lore, the most wonderful legends and romances.

We want fair weather in July. There is a delightful old rhyme which runs:—

July, God send thee calm and fayre,  
That happy harvest we may see,  
With guyet tyme and healthsome ayre,  
And man to God may thankful bee.

It is not wise to trust a July sky we are told, and further advice tells us to "shear" our eye this month. A shower or two is all right, for

A shower of rain in July when the corn begins  
to fill  
Is worth a plough of oxen, and all belongs there-  
till.

If on the 1st July it be rainy weather, it will rain, more or less, for four weeks together.

\* \* \*

We are indebted to Mr. Edward Vivian for the following notes on July:—

The usual derivation of the name of this month is from Julius Cæsar, in whose honour it is sup-

posed to be so named. Some, however, have believed that long before his time it was known as Jule, derived from huil, a wheel, the symbol of the summer solstice which occurred at this season. Icelandic spellings are hiul, huil, hjol, iul, &c., and the Scandinavians used several of these forms. It is only fair to say that most philologists deny this connection with "wheel," and derive Yule from the Icelandic iol or jol, in Saxon geol, or gehol, meaning Yule or December, our Christmas. But it is sufficiently curious that the December Yule or Christmas was at the winter solstice, and possessed these coincidences of phenomena and allusion.

The old writer H. Crompton says:—

A green goose serves Easter with gooseberries  
drest;  
And July affords us a dish of green peason;  
A collar of brawn is new year's tides feast,  
But sack is for ever and ever in season.

#### WEATHER (AND OTHER) LORE FOR JULY.

Ne'er trust a July sky.

\* \* \*

As July, so the next January.

\* \* \*

In July the cuckoo will fly.

\* \* \*

As many mists as ye have in March so many  
frosts in July (very old).

\* \* \*

A dry summer never made a dear peck.

\* \* \*

Drought never bred dearth in England.

\* \* \*

Bow-wow, dandy fly,

Brew no beer in July.

\* \* \*

If the first of July it be rainy weather,  
It will rain more or less for four weeks together.

\* \* \*

No tempest, good July,

Lest corn come but ruelly.

\* \* \*

A swarm of bees in July

Idden wo'th a fly.

\* \* \*

A shower of rain in July when the corn begins  
to fill,

Is worth a plough of gold and all belongs theretill.

**JULY 1.—MONMOUTH'S FOLLOWERS AT  
WELLS, 1685.  
TAUNTON RAILWAY STATION  
OPENED, 1842.**

Baffled in his designs on Bath and Bristol, and hearing that the Somerset men were gathering at Bridgwater to uphold his cause, Monmouth marched back to Wells, which he reached on July 1st. Here his disappointed followers indulged their hatred to the Church by doing their best to spoil the Cathedral. They tore off the lead of the roof and melted it into bullets, hurled down the corner statues of the west front, and seem to have amused themselves by shooting at those that were out of their reach, for the mutilated image of the Lord which crowns the long ranges of sculpture still bear the marks of bullets. Inside the church they did much mischief, and would have desecrated the altar itself if Lord Grey, one of their leaders, had not defended it with his drawn sword. A note in the Chapter book, made by Holt, the Chancellor, in the afternoon of July 1st, records some of their misdeeds:—"The civil war still grows. This Cathedral Church has suffered very grievously from the rebel fanatics, who have this very morning laid hands upon the furniture thereof, have almost utterly destroyed the organ, and turned the sacred building into a stable for horses."

**TAUNTON RAILWAY STATION OPENED.**

July 1st, 1842, seventy-eight years ago, was a red-letter day for Taunton and the surrounding district, for that was the day on which the railway brought the county town of Taunton into closer touch with Bristol and London. The opening of a main line railway was no small matter, and was fittingly celebrated, as will be seen from the following extract from the *Taunton Courier* of July 6th, 1842:—

**TAUNTON OPENING OF THE BRISTOL AND EXETER  
RAILWAY.**

On Friday last, the 15th inst., the line of the Bristol and Exeter Railway was opened to this town, on which occasion much excitement prevailed, the line now connecting this town with Bristol, Bath, and London. The arrival of the expected train from Bristol was anticipated with great interest by vast numbers of spectators, who lined the road to the whole extent between this town and Bridgwater, particularly at the Taunton Station, which was thronged by a dense body of individuals—among whom were a great number of ladies and gentlemen from the adjacent towns and neighbourhood. The Directors, in carriages, with their friends, left Temple Meads, Bristol, at

nine o'clock, and reached the Taunton Station at a few minutes before eleven o'clock, having completed the journey from Bridgwater—11½ miles—in exactly 21 minutes. The engines were richly decorated with various banners, and the day being bright, the spectacle was one of no less novelty than of wonder-exciting interest. Refreshments having been provided at the Station Hotel, about 100 gentlemen sat down to an elegantly spread cold collation, with dessert, wines and ices, all of which were excellently supplied.

The chair was ably filled by C. Ricketts, Esq.

Various toasts having been honoured and reported at some length, the report concludes:—

“Mr. Brunel, who had been actively engaged all the morning on the railway, having joined the assembly, was greeted with cheers, and his health having been drunk, he thanked the company in brief and courteous terms.

“The meeting soon after separated. Not the slightest accident occurred, and the trains have from that day continued to perform their journeys with undeviating punctuality.”

## JULY 2.—APPLE TIME.

The apples are growing in the “Land of Summer.” The orchards have undergone a wonderful change since May, when they presented scenes of pink and pearly white of the most beautiful description. To-day the trees are bearing fruit, green and hard. But it will not be for long. Nature will see to that. And when the Good Mother has completed her work, the orchards will once more be visions of loveliness, the pink and white, and, later, the green of fruit and leaves, will give place to red and burnished gold, and through the valleys and on the slopes of the hills and the uplands the apple trees, with their weight of bending fruit, will provide pictures which can best be seen and appreciated in beautiful Somerset. The vale which leads down to the Severn Sea will be a dream of beauty. It is the Isle of the Blessed, of which we read in Keltic traditions.

The island valley of Avilion,

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,

Nor even wind blows loudly; but it lies

Deep meadow'd, happy, fair, with orchard lawns

And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea.

It is here the orchards will call to the natives, and arouse in them the desire to again take the homeward road when the apple trees are laden with fruit, which with gold irradiate and vermilion shines.

What years have passed since Somerset became

famous for its orchards and its cider! Perhaps the delectable beverage was known before the Severn Sea ceased to lap the oases of the islands of the mere. Golden apples smiled in every wood of the Isle of Avilion in very early days—that mystic isle to which Joseph of Arimathea brought the Holy Grail, planted the Holy Thorn, and sowed the seed of Christianity in this country. Who can say that the dwellers of the wattle and daub habitations on the margin of the large oozy estuary which covered miles of the Land of Summer could not include cider-making among their arts as well as that of workers in metal and pottery? These early Britons knew how to spin and weave; they were skilful agriculturists. Why should they also not have slaked their thirst with the juice of the apple? Apple wine, or cider, may not have been known to the early Hebrews—poor Hebrews!—but the Romans had a partiality for apples. Still farther back we go—to the very creation of the world. An apple tempted Eve to sin. It may not have been a Red Streak or a Kingston Pippin, or an Orange Pippin, as we know them, but if it were a specimen of the fruit which comes to perfection in Somerset, poor Eve had some excuse for succumbing to the temptation of taking a bite. From Eve onwards apples have occupied a place in history, mystical and otherwise. Aphrodite bears it in her hand as well as Eve. The serpent guards it, and the dragon watches it. Even the all-wise Solomon spoke well of the fruit—the healing fruit of the Arabian tales. Ulysses longs for it in the gardens of Alcinous, and Tantalus grasps vainly for it in Hades. Gods and goddesses have been tempted to their deaths by apples, and Atlanta, the swiftest of all mortals, lost the race because of an apple. It may have been a golden specimen, but there will be thousands and thousands of golden apples this autumn in the Land of Summer, and Iduna can fill her box with fruit, guaranteed to renew the beauty of heroes and to prolong youth. Go down the Vale of Glaston, or into the district including the sweet little villages of Kingsbury, or Barrington, or Shepton Beauchamp, or Puckington, or the Lambrooks, and there, later in the year, the sight will be charmed with

The fragrant stores, the wide projected heaps  
Of apples, which the lusty handed year,  
Innumerable, o'er the blushing orchard shakes.

The apple and its wine have led our poets to some of their better efforts. John Phillips, early in the eighteenth century, wrote an ode in two books to cider in imitation of Virgil's *Georgics*, and it is said to be his greatest work. He drew

excellent lessons from the fruit—lessons which apply with great force to-day. Never judge people by outward appearances. The coat does not make the man. The apple may be of beautiful form, and pleasing to the sight, but “to the tongue inelegant and flat.” Philips promises tenfold reward to the grower of apples. “Thy garner, thence with store surcharged shall burst; thy press with purest juice shall flow.” Juice, indeed; famed down through the mist of ages, appreciated by the Roman, Saxon, and Norman, as they came in succession to Britain, forming even a tenure of lands held of the King, over 700 years ago, in one place, the payment being 200 Pearnains and four hogsheads of cider or wine made of Pearnains into the Exchequer at the Feast of St. Michael yearly. And as through the years the praise of the wine of the West Country was sung, none will be surprised to find the learned Dr. Beale, in 1637, declaring cider as the richest, strongest, and the most pleasant and lasting wine that England yet yields or is ever likely to yield. According as it is managed, he says, it proves strong Rhenish, Barrack, yea, pleasant Canary, sugared of itself or as rough as the fiercest Greek wine, holding one, two, or three years, so that no mortal can say at what age it is past the best. This we can say—we have kept it until it burns as quickly as sack, draws the flame like naphtha, and fires the stomach like aqua vitæ. The learned doctor had evidently tasted some of the best brew from the famed cider districts which abound in Somerset, where the genuine nectar can still be obtained.

It was prophesied years ago—not by Joel—that cider should please all tastes and triumph o’er the vine. But that has not yet been fulfilled, not because of any faults due to Mother Nature, but because man, prone to fall into temptation, and for the sake of filthy lucre, does not hesitate to imperil his reputation for honest dealing. But go into some of the retiring villages and gain the heart of the farmer, and the two-handled cup which will be passed round to cement the friendship, if not containing “Cocky Gee,” the King of Cider, from the Land of Summer, will be full of a native liquor which will triumph over the produce of many a vine in sunny France or Spain. Then think of the medicinal properties of the apple. There is an old Somerset rhyme:—

Eat an apple going to bed,  
Makes the doctor beg his bread.

Cider is a well-proved blood purifier, and it is claimed that “gout and rheumatism fly before the liquor if it is pure.” The malic acid neutralises any excess of chalky matter engendered by eating too much meat, and there are scores of

physicians who "swear by cider." A local writer also sings its praises in this direction:—

Wold Zam could never goe vur long  
 Wi'out his jar or virkin:  
 A used the zider zame's twur ile,  
 To keep his jint's vrim quirken.

Then the apple is useful as a revealer of the secrets of the future. Many a girl has thrown the peel of an apple over her head to see what letter it will shape, and by the initial she traces her future husband among her admirers. Some girls count the pips in the apple in the same way as the children in Somerset pick the seeds from flowering grass to discover whether they will marry a tinker, tailor, soldier, or a sailor. But woe betide the person who, in cutting the apple, severs a pip, for the course of love will not run smooth. Be sure and pick apples when the moon is waning if you want them to keep. The trees will, of course, bear better fruit if they be wassailed on Christmas-eve—or, at least, that was popularly believed in Somerset by our grandfathers. It is a pity the old custom has died out, for it, no doubt, perpetuated the Roman custom of honouring Pomona, the goddess of fruit trees. Yes, Somerset is a favoured and famous land, whether it be for the charming variety of its scenery, the bravery of its sons, its moors, its meres, its combes, its valleys, its maidens with cheeks like autumn pippins, or the orchard lawns of the island valley of Avilion, where sleeps Arthur Rex quondam, Rex que futurus.

#### W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

Mr. Willis Watson's most interesting article in your issue of July 24th recalls other items of West Somerset "Apple and Cider lore."

In early June, when the growth of foliage hides the newly-forming apples, doubts are often expressed as to the failure of the crop, and the knowing West Somerset farmer's reply is always to the effect "Don't you trouble, there'll be a crop right enough, they be only gone *sheep-shearing*." Then in October, when the apples for keeping, the "hoard apples," as they are always called, have been picked in (as distinct from the cider fruit, which are simply heaped up in the orchard), the small and imperfect fruit are left in the trees, and are called the "pixy hoarding," *i.e.* they have been left there for the "pixies" or "little folk" to put by for *their* winter store. Then in this connection it is a very usual West Somerset assurance that the truth is being told. "It be right enough, as sure as God made little apples."

*Oak Apple Cider.*—There is a little villag near Taunton called Oake, which has been lon



noted for the superior quality of the cider made from the fruit grown there, a special favourite being the "Kingston Black apple." It is a frequent joke for a farmer (or other West Somerset host) who is entertaining a visitor, to give him as a privilege a glass of this special cider (if he is fortunate enough to possess any), and on his visitor expressing appreciation, as he is almost certain to do, he is told "Yes, that's oak apple cider, good stuff, isn't it?" The visitor, acquainted only with the name oak apples as applied to the galls growing on oak trees, naturally expresses surprise that these should be used for making cider, and sometimes may give his opinion that it tastes better than cider made from ordinary apples. The pun is, of course, afterwards good-naturedly explained and the visitor put at his ease.

—W.S.P.

\* \* \*

#### MONMOUTH RETURNED TO BRIDGWATER, 1685.

On Thursday, July 2nd, Monmouth again entered Bridgwater in circumstances far less cheering than those in which he entered the town the previous week; and he was further dismayed to find the forces he expected there to be comparatively small.

#### JULY 3.—DOG DAYS.

##### SECOND SIEGE OF TAUNTON.

Soon's dog days come in, laziness begin.

\* \* \*

The month of July is pictured by our old poets as "sweet summer time when the leaves are green and long." The Dog Days are upon us—that is if we follow the Roman superstition. They conceive that the warmth of July, and the diseases and other calamities flowing from it, were somehow connected with the rising and setting of the star Canicula—the Little Dog—in coincidence with the sun. They accordingly conferred the name of Dog Days upon the period between the 3rd July and the 11th August. The baselessness of the Roman superstition has been well shown by the ordinary processes of nature, for Canicula does not now rise in coincidence with the sun till October; while, of course, the days between the 3rd July and 11th August are what they have ever been. Dr. Hutton, remarking how the heliacal rising of Canicula is getting later and later every year in all latitudes, says that on the Roman principle the star may in turn come to be charged with bringing frost and snow. Yet the Dog Days continue to be a popular

phrase in Somerset, as elsewhere, and probably will remain so.

Dog Days bright and clear.  
 Indicate a happy year ;  
 But when accompanied by rain,  
 For better times our hopes are vain.

As the Dog Days commence so they end, for if it rains on the first Dog Day, it will rain for 40 days after.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

## SECOND SIEGE OF TAUNTON RAISED, 1645.

Ere the gladness and triumph of the Taunton people in their great deliverance of the 11th of May, 1645, could subside, or they could recover from the distresses of the siege, they were again attacked and reduced to new extremities. Before the end of May the King's forces, under Goring, Hopton, Berkeley, and Grenville, about 10,000 in all, joined together, engaged with Colonel Weldon's brigade, and over-powering them with numbers, obliged them to retreat into the town, which thus was again closely besieged. The Governor, Colonel Robert Blake, made a gallant defence, and parties of his garrison gained the advantage over the Royal troops in several sallies, but the siege continued for five weeks, until it was relieved by Sir THOMAS FAIRFAX on July 3rd.

\* \* \*

## LETTING THE PUXTON DOLEMOORS.

We believe the remarkable custom formerly connected with the letting of the Dolemoors at Congresbury and Fuxton, described by Mr. Willis Watson under the date of June 19th, took place, as a matter of fact, on the Saturday before *Old* Midsummer Day (July 7th). The ceremony was fully described by a writer in the *Globe* of July 9th, 1910.

## JULY 4.—FAIRFAX at CREWKERNE, 1645.

King John visited Bridgwater on July 4th, 1204.

\* \* \*

The "speedy peace" promised not having materialised, Lord Fairfax brought an army into the West in 1645 for the purpose of relieving Taunton and Plymouth, and for subduing that part of the kingdom to the Parliament. Accordingly on the 4th July the General found himself at Beaminster. The town was in a deplorable plight on account of the fire of the previous year, the unsettled state of affairs preventing anything like attention to its re-building. He sent his

horse into Crewkerne, when they fell upon the enemy, and took a lieutenant and divers others of Sir Robert Welche's troops beyond their rear. On Saturday, the 5th July, intelligence having been brought that the enemy was marching towards Somerton, Fairfax marched with the whole body towards Crewkerne, having sent early in the morning a party of 2,000 horse and dragoons, under the command of Colonel Fleetwood, to discover the enemy's motion and take advantage of his rear, if it were given. This party marched to South Petherton, alarmed the enemy, and drove them first over Petherton Bridge, then to Long Load, and so over that bridge, which made the enemy face about and bring up their Foot, who, with the advantage of some works formerly cast up, made good the bridge against the horse and dragoons. After this a brigade of foot was commanded to march to their quarters assigned at Crewkerne, which they obeyed most cheerfully, and advanced as far as Petherton, but they being extremely weary, and the night coming on, strong guards were placed at the bridge, and the almost tired horse drawn into their quarters, it being a country so full of straight passages that it was very hard to engage an unwilling enemy, especially with forces so harassed after six days' continual marches. In this chase about ten prisoners of the enemy were taken, among whom a Cornet of Dragoons. On the 6th July the head-quarters of Fairfax were at Crewkerne, and being a Sunday, the army rested.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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Jeboult, in his description of West Somerset, under the heading of Langford Budville, says "A revel was formerly held on the first Sunday after St. Peter's Day, at which time some strange old customs took place, among others that of 'Clipping the Tower,' as it was locally called; in other words, all bystanders held hand by hand until there were sufficient to enclose the building."

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#### FIRST LONDON OMNIBUSES, 1829.

Mr. Shillibeer, in his evidence before the Board of Health, stated that on July 4th, 1829, he started the first pair of omnibuses in the Metropolis, from the Bank of England to the Yorkshire Slingo, New-road. Each of Shillibeer's vehicles carried 22 passengers inside, but only the driver outside; each omnibus was drawn by three horses abreast. The fare was 1s for the whole journey and 6d for half the distance, and for some time the passengers were provided with periodicals to read on the way. The first omnibuses were called "Shillibeers."

**JULY 5.—BATTLE of LANSDOWN, 1643.  
GREAT FIRE AT MINEHEAD,  
1791.**

On the 5th July, 1643, was fought the battle of Lansdown, in which the Royalists, with great loss to themselves, defeated Waller, who retired to Bath. The attack was made by Lord Hopton, a Somerset man, his father's seat being at Stratton, between Wells and Frome. Hopton's force was checked by a sweeping rush of Parliamentary horse soldiers. But the Royalist force soon rallied and drove the enemy from the hill. In the night the Parliamentary army retired, leaving behind them a great store of arms and ammunition. The triumph of the Royalists was dearly purchased in the death of Sir Bevil Grenville, felled by a stroke on the head from an axe while valiantly opposing a charge of the Parliamentary cavalry. It was on the Gloucestershire side of Lansdown that Grenville died, and there a monument was erected to his memory, in 1720, by his kinsman, Lord Lansdown. Clarendon, in his "History of the Rebellion," says in this battle, on the King's part, were more officers and gentlemen of quality slain than private men.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**THE GREAT FIRE OF MINEHEAD.**

Like many places in the West of England, Minehead has in its time suffered grievously from fire. Worst of all, perhaps, was that of July 5th, 1791, which laid the greater part of the town in ashes. It originated in the centre of Lower Town, near what is now Wellington Square, a miller's carelessness in burning pitch causing the outbreak. There being a high wind, and the houses being mostly thatched, the fire spread with great rapidity and fury, and before the next morning upwards of 72 houses, comprising almost the whole of Middle or Lower Town, were reduced to blackened ruins. Nearly 500 people were rendered homeless, and damage amounting to about £18,000 was done. There were two fire engines in the town, but not having been used for many years they were useless, and the fire practically took its own course. Only one life was lost—that of a poor imbecile—who, one account states, was chained up in the house. At any rate, he was so confined that it was difficult to effect his rescue. Southey, who visited Minehead not long after the fire, recorded in his diary this incident of the one victim of the fire, and says :—"He might have been saved, but his mother said 'Let 'un stay! Let 'un stay! What shall us do wi' 'un if we do save 'un?'" A

heartless view to take of the situation, but not unreasonable, perhaps, in the minds of folks of those days. It is as well to record here that back in May of this year, when trenches for gas mains were being dug in the centre of the town, the workmen, at a depth of about three feet, cut through a strata of burnt matter. It consisted of stone and other materials run together in one mass, and those lumps broken out with the pick were found to be bristling with the old-fashioned brass pins. It was suggested that a shop stood on this site, and that the stock of pins had been melted into the *debris* of the building, but it is believed that a pin factory, of which there were one or two in Minehead, might have stood at that spot. It is more reasonable to suppose this, as the pins existed in this strata in very great numbers.

—H. W. KILLE.

### JULY 6.—OLD MIDSUMMER DAY.

**KING JOHN at WEDMORE, 1204.**

**BATTLE of SEDGEMOOR, 1685.**

**DUKE of MONMOUTH FUGITIVE  
at DOWNSIDE, 1685.**

### SOUTH PETHERTON FAIR.

Somerset will long be famous because it was the scene of the last battle fought on English soil—the Battle of Sedgemoor. So much has been written about this grim struggle between the labourers of our country armed with picks and scythes against an English Army—Macaulay has dealt fully with it in his "History of England"—that little more than a passing reference to it need be given in this Calendar, and those who are especially interested in the event can still see a few relics of the fight preserved in Taunton Museum, such as battered weapons, spent cannon balls, and discarded military equipment. There, too, is the medal struck in honour of the victory by the merciless and triumphant King, the spy glass used by the scouts on Chedzoy Church, the large dish of "Persian" ware which adorned Feversham's mess table at Weston Zoyland, and, most pathetic of all, the buckle of the tail-tale ribbon of blue which Monmouth threw round the neck of a child when he exchanged his spent horse at Chedzoy for a fresh mount as he hurried from the stricken field. It was a terrible *mêlée*. Conan Doyle, in "Micah Clarke," gives a very vivid description of the scene of the carnage which followed: "As the cannon roared out, men were mowed down as though death with his scythe were among us. . . ."

Men of Devon, of Dorset, and of Somerset, trodden down by horse, slashed by dragoons, dropped by scores under the rain of bullets, still fought with a dogged and desperate courage for a ruined cause and a man who had deserted them.

And all the time, whilst they struggled and fought, blackened by powder and parched with thirst, and spilling their blood like water, the man who called himself their King was spurring over the country-side with a loose rein and a quaking heart, his thoughts centred solely on saving his own neck." Monmouth left Bridgwater the night before the battle a beaten man. He was sad and down-cast. And no wonder. The rhines were full of water, and the marsh fog lay so thick on Sedgemoor that no object could be discerned there at the distance of fifty paces. Silently the troops marched to the Moor. Feversham was at Weston Zoyland with the Royal cavalry; Pembroke was in command of the Wiltshire Militia at Middlezoy; at Chedzoy was a detachment of the Regular Infantry, under Major Churchill. And against those troops Monmouth had but a band of farmers' lads mounted on cart horses, and armed, for the most part, with bill hooks and scythes. Monmouth had a scheme, but that scheme miscarried. He believed the Royalist troops were undisciplined and had been drinking heavily of Zoyland cider. He had no opinion of Feversham's capacity as a leader, and he hoped a night attack would prove successful. He successfully crossed two of the rhines, but was not aware of the Bussex Rhine ahead. When within a short distance of the Royalist troops, a pistol was accidentally discharged, and the Royal Horse Guards gave the alarm by firing their carbines. But the rebel cavalry were already so close to the third trench—the Bussex Rhine—that conversation was possible between the opposing officers. "For whom are you?" asked one of Feversham's officers. "For the King" was the reply; and when the next question came, "For which King?" Monmouth's cavalry answered with the shout, "For King Monmouth!" Then the battle started, and the rebel army turned and fled, the probable reason being that their horses, not being trained, took fright at the report of firearms. The Somerset infantry lined the rhine and behaved splendidly, and many a tribute has been paid to their courage. Monmouth encouraged his men, but he was too well acquainted with affairs not to know that all was over. At dawn of day Monmouth mounted and rode away from the field. Macaulay says more than a thousand men lay dead on the field, but in a manuscript account of the battle preserved in Weston Zoyland Church, it is stated that but three hundred perished in the fight,

though many more died of their wounds. Those who fell were buried under a great heap of sand that has long since disappeared, though even now—says Hutton—bones and skulls are turned up from under the green grass of "The Grave Ground." "They were happy, who perished in fair fight," he adds, "and knew not the cruelty of Colonel Kirke and the devilish barbarity of Jeffreys, who, in Somerset alone, is said to have sentenced more people to death than she who is hardly known as Bloody Mary saw led to the scaffold or the stake." Monmouth is said to have slept at Catcott the night before the battle in an old house in the Churchyard field. Poole says "Of course it is haunted and, connected with the same story, a man's figure is said to be often seen walking about, without a head, in a field about a quarter of a mile from this place and adjoining Edington."

#### DUKE OF MONMOUTH, A FUGITIVE, AT DOWNSIDE, 1685.

After the terrible battle of Sedgemoor, Monmouth fled towards Shepton Mallet. His trusty friend, Edward Strode, at the risk of life and fortune, received the unfortunate fugitive and gave him lodging for the night at his mansion at Downside. For thus aiding the Duke, the Strodes had a narrow escape, but at length a pardon was obtained on the 25th March, 1687.

#### SOUTH PETHERTON FAIR.

The charter for South Petherton Fair was obtained by William Daubeney from Henry VI. It was to be held yearly on the eve, day, and morrow of the nativity of St. John Baptist, and the three days next ensuing. St. John Baptist's feast is on Midsummer-day, June 24th. In the year 1752 the "style," as it is called, was altered, and by the arrangement—founded on astronomical data—then adopted, eleven days are wiped out of the calendar, and subsequently, in the year 1800, another day, so that July 6th became "Old Midsummer-day," and although the feast of St. John Baptist remained with the 24th June, yet South Petherton Fair, adopting the new style, was thenceforward held on the first-named day, namely, July 6th. The fair is now a matter of history. The choice of St. John Baptist's feast for the fair day was doubtless made by William Daubeney in honour of the Saint to whom the free charity or chapel in South Petherton Church, specially appertaining to the manor, was dedicated, and serves to show in what high reverence that Saint was held by the family.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## OLD MIDSUMMER DAY.

If you hear the cuckoo after Old Midsummer Day you will not live to hear another.

\* \* \*

If you hear the cuckoo after Old Midsammer Day, Ere the end of the year your death dues you'll pay.

\* \* \*

As many times as you hear the cuckoo after Old Midsummer Day, so many shillings will wheat be per bushel.

\* \* \*

On the sixth morning of July go into the garden and pick a full-blown crimson rose. At night put it under your pillow, and in your dreams you will see your future husband. But before going to sleep you must repeat these lines :—

In my dreams I hope to see  
The lad who is to marry me.

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**JULY 7.—BATTLE NEAR SOUTH PETHER-  
TON, 1645.**

**ST. BOTOLPH'S FAIR, TAUNTON.  
ST. THOMAS a BECKET.**

Dr. Turner, Dean of Wells, father of English botany, died July 7th, 1568.

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By four o'clock on this morning, 1645, the drums were beating at Crewkerne, and by six o'clock the main body of Fairfax's army was drawn up in the fields on the Petherton-road, about a mile from Crewkerne. Fairfax, with Lieut-General Cromwell, and a strong escort, advanced to Long Load in order to examine the enemy's position along the banks of the river from Langport and Ilchester to Yeovil. During this examination several skirmishes took place in the meadows between small parties, and a general engagement appeared to be imminent. "A Council of War was called on the field to consider what course to take to engage the enemy, who, keeping himself beyond the river, and having the garrisons of Ilchester, Langport, Borough-bridge, and Bridgwater, there was no possible coming over upon that side. To force our passage in that place, where the enemy stood in good order on the other side of the river to receive us, was a business of exceeding difficulty, it being also a moorish ground." It was ultimately resolved, however, to make the attempt, fixing the spot on the extreme right of the enemy's position at Yeovil, and leaving detachments to guard the passes at Load Bridge and Ilchester,



and to engage Goring's troops if they attempted to cross. Accordingly the main body of the army at Crewkerne were rapidly marched to Yeovil, and got possession of the bridge there without opposition. The unstable Goring had given up all hope of maintaining the line of the river, and that same night, as soon as he heard that Yeovil bridge had been repaired, he evacuated Long Sutton and Ilchester—thus leaving two more bridges over the Yeo free for Fairfax to cross at his pleasure. Colonel Phillips, the governor of Ilchester, on quitting the town left the works standing undemolished with the exception of the fortified Bridewell, which he set on fire, but the flames were quickly quenched by the inhabitants.

#### ST. BOTOLPH'S FAIR, TAUNTON.

The fair which was annually held on St. Botolph's-day (July 7th) annually has practically disappeared. In the olden days garlic for sale was floated up the Tone as far as Taunton Bridge. The garlic was supposed to make those who ate thereof "strong winded"—says a correspondent in "Notes and Queries" 22 years ago. St. Botolph, an Anglo-Saxon, appears to have been the patron saint of sailors and boatmen. The fair was originally held within the borough, but of late years it was identified with North Town, which before 1832 was outside the borough of Taunton. During the fair beadles were stationed at each of the four entrances to the town in order to uphold and enforce the rights of the lord of the Manor during the time of the fair.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

North Town Fair took place at Taunton on July 7th, and it lasted several days. At the time when markets were only held once a month the fair was an important occasion. On the first days horses and cattle were sold. Then came the pleasure fair, to which nearly everyone went. Among the amusements were climbing greasy poles for prizes, running in sacks, and trying to bite hot rolls and treacle hanging on a string. Donkey races, pushing wheelbarrows blindfolded, and women running races for a mock, were also to be seen. During the last fifty years the fair gradually declined, until it became little more than a few gingerbread stalls.

—C.S.W.

An old Tauntonian writes:—"I have very pleasant recollections of this fair, and can readily re-call the various matters of interest referred to by your correspondents (C.S.W. and Mr. W. G. Willis Watson)—the sale of garlic, the beadles with their weapons, the gingerbread stalls, the races, &c. The greasy-pole occupied the site

upon which the huge telegraph pole has recently been placed opposite the King's Arms Inn. It was on an open space there also that the roll and treacle bobbing business also took place. The blindfold racing was rendered specially diverting because of the open ditch that there ran along the side of the road, into which the competitors often went, to the great delight of the spectators. The pleasure fair was greatly appreciated by the juveniles, who spent their coppers freely with the vendors of fruit and gingerbread. Wrestling and other games were also much in vogue at such times, and "the fun of the fair" was freely indulged in by crowds of people. I am under the impression that the garlic was eaten to the accompaniment of certain strong drinks at the inns in North Town, which were usually adorned with green boughs at fair time, and did a roaring trade in more ways than one.

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The Rev. W. H. P. Greswell, in his "Land of Quantock," referring to the martyrdom of Thomas à Becket, says:—"In the Quantock country there was no day more sacred in the farmers' calendar than July 7th, the day of the canonisation of St. Thomas à Becket. Seed sown upon that day drew down, so it was said, the blessing of the martyr."

### JULY 8.—KING JOHN AT ILCHESTER AND STOKE, 1204.

BLAKE CAPTURED TAUNTON,  
1644.

BATTLE NEAR ILMINSTER, 1645.  
DEATH of SIR W. E. PARRY, 1855.

Among the many places in Somerset held by the Royalists, Taunton was one. It was unfortified and the garrison small; but it was the point upon which all the main roads of the county diverged, it commanded the lines of communication, and had thus a peculiar strategic importance. Blake, who had been promoted after his brilliant defence of Lyme, and given an independent command, in company with Sir Robert Pye, suddenly threw himself on Taunton on the 8th July, 1644. It was held only by 80 men, who made no opposition; and in Blake's hands the place "became a sharp thorn in the sides of all that populous country." Pieces of ordnance, food, munitions, &c., were taken in the Castle. Reeve, being court-martialled at Bristol for his slack defence of Taunton, was condemned to death, but escaped to the Parliamentarians.

## BATTLE NEAR ILMINSTER, 1645.

On Tuesday, the 8th July, 1645, both armies were on the same side of the River Parret. It was thought that Goring, who had drawn a great part of his army towards Taunton, intended surprising the town, whereupon Fairfax sent Major-General Massey after Goring with his own brigade of horse and a considerable strength of horse and dragoons of his own Army. It was not long before Massey came up with the royal forces. He found the royal horses grazing in some meadows near Iminster, and took them completely by surprise. Some of the Royalist soldiers were asleep, some were bathing, and the rest strolling about the fields. About 500 of them were captured, including Lieut.-General Porter, who had commanded a division of infantry at Marston Moor, and who, on being taken to London, and probably foreseeing the end, threw up his loyalty and joined the winning side. Goring himself was nearly captured. He received a sword cut on his ear, and only with desperate riding contrived to escape to Langport.

## DEATH OF SIR W. E. PARRY, 1855.

William Edward Parry, one of the most famous of Arctic navigators, was born at Bath, December 19th, 1799. He joined the Navy in his 13th year, and, at the age of 29, reached the rank of lieutenant. When an expedition was being fitted out for discovering the North West Passage, with an attempt to reach the North Pole, Parry offered his services, and received an appointment as captain of the *Alexander*, under the command of Captain Ross, whose ship was the *Isabella*. The expedition failed. Next year another was sent out with Parry in command. He sailed straight for Lancaster Sound, passed through it from one end to the other, and discovered a number of islands which to-day bear his name. His further progress was stopped by ice, and, reluctantly, he returned to England, where he was honoured by being raised to the rank of Commander. For years he continued his explorations, adding considerably to the sum of our knowledge of the Arctic regions. In one of his voyages he made a gallant and determined attempt to reach the Pole across the ice. George IV. rewarded his services by conferring a knighthood upon him; and among other honours was the degree of D.C.L. given to him by Oxford University. He reached the rank of Admiral, and in his old age was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Greenwich Hospital, which position he held until his death in 1855.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**JULY 9.—FAIRFAX ON THE MARCH, 1645.  
COLONEL KIRKE AT TAUNTON,  
1685.**

Fairfax, on this day, marched from Ilchester to Long Sutton. The resistance was poor, and before night the Royalists had been forced back to a position a little to the right of Langport, between High and Low Ham.

**COLONEL KIRKE AT TAUNTON, 1685.**

Following the battle of Sedgemoor, the direct troubles followed in Somerset. Colonel Kirke and his lambs were sent to Taunton to strike terror into the inhabitants, and full well did they obey their orders. Colonel Percy Kirke was a soldier who had served for some years at Tangier, and he was put in command of some troops at the battle of Sedgemoor. After the defeat of Monmouth Kirke and his troops, who were known as "Kirke's Lambs," committed fearful atrocities in the West of England against the followers of Monmouth, and anyone who was suspected of complicity in the rebellions. Some of his atrocities are almost incredible. Many of his victims he hanged without trial. It is said that men were executed on the sign-post of the inn in which he and his officers were staying, and that the death of a victim accompanied every health they drank. When the dying men were seized with their last convulsions he would order the drums to be beaten, that, as he used to say, they might have music to their dancing. Upwards of a hundred captives are believed to have been put to death by him in the week following the battle. Money alone softened Kirke's heart. For a bribe of £30 or £40 he enabled his prisoners to flee the country without molestation. Even this equivocal leniency called down on him the censure of the King. And yet, on the other hand, it is alleged that his atrocities are fictitious or exaggerated. May not—one writer says—the ferocity of Kirke's Lambs at Taunton have been due to a not altogether surprising indignation at finding Englishmen in rebellion against the English Government, for which they (the "Lambs") had been for years sacrificing their lives in Tangier. Doubtless they understood nothing of English politics, and to them the Somerset rebels, under Monmouth, were on a par with the Moorish enemies of England at Tangier, and they treated the former as they would have treated the latter. Not only, however, were Taunton people butchered, but the "Lambs" went to South Petherton and to Whitelackington House. One interesting story is recorded. After the battle of Sedgemoor

many of the men and officers of the Royal Army conducted themselves with extreme license towards the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. One, an ill-bred ruffian, entered the family house of the Bridges, which had been recently the headquarters of his general. The intruder hastened through the great hall to the parlour where the ladies were assembled, not having recovered from the fright created by the continual sound of the great guns. After having made use of the most ungentlemanlike expressions, he proceeded to offer a gross insult to the lady of the mansion, when her daughter, Miss Mary Bridge, only 12 years of age, drew his sword and stabbed him to the heart. She was brought before Colonel Kirke, and tried by a court-martial, when she was not only honourably acquitted, but also received an order that the sword should be given to her, and that it should descend to the future Mary Bridges of her family. This relic was held by Mrs. Dobree, of the Priory, Wellington, daughter of the late Dr. Bridge, of that town, who, as heiress-at-law, succeeded to estates in the parish of South Petherton, that have been in the possession of the family for upwards of a century.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**JULY 10.—BATTLE OF LANGPORT, 1645.  
ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SHOW  
AT TAUNTON, 1875.  
GOOSEBERRY FAIR.**

Fairfax having discovered that Goring had drawn up his army in a strong position, about a mile in advance of Langport, on a hill sloping down to Pisbury Bottom—a small marshy valley through which a little stream runs into the Yeo—indulged in some skirmishing, but it was not until the morning of the 10th July, 1645, that Fairfax advanced with his army to force the position. The lane along which Fairfax's Horse would have to pass, to avoid the marshy ground on either side, led across the little stream by a deep but narrow ford; while the hedges on the slope of the hill beyond were lined by Goring's Musketeers. Yet strong as the ground was, Fairfax had scarcely any choice but to fight, and he did not know that the conditions were more favourable to him than they appeared to be. For Goring had already sent off to Bridgewater his baggage and the whole of the artillery except two guns. The battle began by a brisk fire from the Parliamentary artillery posted on the crest of the slope on the eastern side of the

stream. Goring's two guns were soon silenced, and musketeers were then sent down to clear the hedges on either side of the ford. A cavalry charge proved successful. Fairfax's musketeers followed this up by pouring a galling fire upon the enemy. The Royalists, Horse and Foot alike, thereupon turned and fled. Of their horse some fled through Langport, setting fire to the town as they passed to cover their retreat. But Cromwell, charging through the burning street, fell upon them as they hurried across the bridge, where most of the fugitives were captured or slain. The larger part of the Cavalier Army retreated by the northern bank of the Parrett. Though they made a stand at Aller Drove, they durst not await an attack from their pursuers. Goring's Foot, entangled in the thickets of the moor, surrendered. His army, as an instrument capable of waging war, ceased to exist, and on the 11th July, scantily attended, he retired to Barnstaple. After the battle the victorious army marched to Middlezoy on the way to Bridgwater. Fairfax made his headquarters at Audry, within a mile of Chedzoy, a house belonging to the Dean of Wells, his Lieutenant-General, Cromwell, General of the Horse, quartering at Aller, where he was joined by Major-General Massey. The result of the battle of Langport was an important step in the progress of the Parliament cause, and the rashness of its venture by Lord Goring was at once seen and regretted by his own party.

#### ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SHOW AT TAUNTON, 1875.

The Royal Agricultural Show was held at Taunton from July 10th (Saturday), for viewing implements and entries of stock, to July 16th (Friday), 1875, on the same site as the Bath and West of England and Southern Counties' Show was subsequently held in 1895. Viscount Bridport was president that year, and opened the show on the Monday. The weather was very fine until Tuesday evening, from which time the rain poured incessantly until Thursday morning, and on Thursday and Friday there were cold winds and many continuous showers. On Tuesday the Prince Christian attended the show. The town was gaily decorated.

#### WEATHER LORE.

If it rains on July 10th it will rain for seven weeks!

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### GOOSEBERRY FAIR.

We are indebted to Miss Massey for the information that gooseberry and cherry fairs were formerly

very numerous in Somerset, and always held on Sundays. Until comparatively recently there was a cherry fair at Axminster in June. Goosebery fair at Hinton St. George was held on the first Sunday after Old Midsummer Day, which this year would have fallen on July 10th.

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**JULY 12.—EARTHQUAKE AT TAUNTON,  
1747.**

**MRS. WYNDHAM'S "LOVE  
TOKEN" TO CROMWELL, 1645.  
TWO SUNS at CHARD, 1662.**

Bath Grammar School was founded by King Edward VI. on July 12, 1553.

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THE MANOR of Wellington, which up to that time had been ecclesiastical, was granted by Edward VI. to the Duke of Somerset on July 12th, 1540.

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We have a record that on July 12th, 1747 the people who were sitting talking or supping in Taunton felt their seats move under them, and those who were in bed were awakened. We can find no reference to the matter in the local papers for that year, but newspapers in those days devoted very little space to local events as a rule.

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**MRS. WYNDHAM'S "LOVE TOKEN" TO  
CROMWELL, 1645.**

On Saturday, July 12th, Bridgwater was "viewed" by Cromwell and Fairfax (the former of whom conducted the subsequent siege), was approached as closely as possible to take note of the preparations for defence. It is related that Mrs. Wyndham, the wife of the Governor, fired a gun at Cromwell, whilst he was near the works, and killed an officer who stood by his side. Mrs. Wyndham afterwards sent a message to the General to ask if he had received her "love token," adding that if he were a courtier he would return the compliment!

\* \* \*

**TWO SUNS AT CHARD.**

The year 1662 has been described as *Mirabilis Annus*, or the Year of Prodigies or Wonders. In work bearing this title it is recorded that about two miles from Chard . . . on the 12th July, 1662, being Saturday, towards the evening, were seen by many credible persons, two suns

together in the firmament. They were both so high that they could not discern which was the false sun, till after it had for a while continued, it disappeared, and the true sun went on its course.

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**JULY 13.—BOROUGHBRIDGE SURRENDERED, 1645.**

Boroughbridge has been conjectured the seat of Alfred's stronghold rather than the lower height of Athelney. From its top there is a fine view towards Glastonbury. At its foot is the confluence of the Parrett and the Tone. It was fortified up to the time of the Civil Wars, when the Royalist garrison surrendered on July 13th, 1645. Goring garrisoned the church with 120 men, but they struck their colours after their leader's rout on Aller Moor. The church was destroyed in the conflict.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**JULY 14.—THREE MOONS near CHARD, 1662**

On or about this date three moons were seen in the sky at one time, about 10 p. m., near Chard.

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**JULY 15.—ST. SWITHIN.**

**KING JOHN AT BRIDGWATER  
AND GLASTONBURY, 1204.**

**KING CHARLES I. AT BATH,  
1644.**

**DUKE OF MONMOUTH EXE-  
CUTED, 1685.**

**SIR HENRY COLE BORN, 1808.**

A few sprigs of Wych elm should be placed in vases indoors on July 15th to prevent a curse from St. Swithin.

\* \* \*

**SIR HENRY COLE BORN 1808.**

On this day Sir Henry Cole was born at Bath in 1808. He became the Assistant Keeper of the Records, was Chairman of the Society of Arts, and was founder and director of the South Kensington Museum. Cole wrote much, including 20 books for children, which were published under the pen name of Felix Summerly. He died April 18th, 1882.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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To-day is St. Swithin's Day. Poor Saint Swithin! He is, perhaps, the best libelled Saint in the Calendar of the Church. The majority



of people know nothing about him beyond the reputation that he, in some miraculous manner, controls the weather. Should it rain to-day he will be he'd responsible for any and every downpour which takes place within forty days of to-day. Should it be fine, we may look forward to a six weeks' drought. Every child is taught to believe

St. Swithin's Day if thou dost rain  
 For forty days it will remain;  
 St. Swithin's Day, if thou be fair,  
 For forty days 'twill rain nee mair.

If the 15th July should be wet poor St. Swithin is anathematised by all and sundry. Why is it? He does not seem to have had any closer connection with rain than the other Saints. Looked at generally, taking the various incidents of his life which have been handed down to us, Swithin, on the contrary, would appear to have been a man of a particularly sunny disposition. He certainly possessed a strong desire to assist others and make them happy, and rain and gloomy skies would scarce'y appeal to him. But there is the legend. If he is maligned he is, perhaps, the best remembered in the whole category of Saints, and, after all, this is something to have lived for. Saint Swithin was a Wessex man. He was born of noble parents. At least it is said so. Whether this be a fact or fiction, he clearly basked in the sunshine of royalty. And Egbert, the father of our Alfred, had a high opinion of him, and to him he entrusted the education of his son Ethelwulf, King of the West Saxons. When Ethelwulf became King he made Swithin Bishop of Winchester. A picturesque little story is associated with apples on this day. It is said

Till St. Swithin's Day be past  
 The app'es be not fit to taste.

It is necessary that St. Swithin should christen the apples in order to make them whole-some and so that they may be kept through the winter. There are other stories told of this Wessex Saint, but the above must suffice. One fact, however, should be added. It is that statistics have shown that a dry St. Swithin's Day is very frequently followed by more or less rain, that Swithin is a much maligned Saint, and that he has no more association with rain than St. George has with the slaying of a dragon.

The churches in Somerset dedicated to St. Swithin are Bathford and Walcot.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON

### KING JOHN AT BRIDGWATER, 1204.

King John visited Bridgwater on this day. It was he who gave leave to William de Briwere to build a new Castle, which was to become so famous, upon the west side of the Parrett, and to the south of it he began, if he did not complete, the bridge of three or four arches over the river, which was finished by a certain Triveth of Devon.

### KING CHARLES I. AT BATH, 1644.

During 1644 the Royalists held possession of Somerset. But the hopes raised by the coming of Lord Essex were checked by the determination of Charles to follow personally westward. The King, accompanied by Prince Charles, left Badmington on Monday, the 15th July, passed through Marshfield, and so over Lensdown to Bath. He had with him, including Hopton's contingent, about 9,000 men, horse and foot, intending to march for Devon, there to get Lord Essex between himself and Prince Maurice, and so crush him before any aid could come, or before any force could advance near enough to hinder his plan. After resting two nights at Bath, His Majesty went on Wednesday, the 17th July, to Sir John Horner's house at Mells, his troop being quartered at Kimersdon.

### DUKE OF MONMOUTH EXECUTED 1685.

After the battle of Sedgemoor the fugitive Monmouth passed along the side of Polden Hill, went across the Mendips to near Sneyton Mallet, where, at Downside House, he and his friends were sheltered for a night by its owner, Mr. Edward Strode. Thence he went to Giffingham, Shaftesbury, and Woodyates Inn, to Heath, near Wimborne, where his capture was effected, and he was conveyed to London. "This day (July 15th) the late Duke of Monmouth, being attainted of High Treason by Act of Parliament, was beheaded on a scaffold for that purpose erected on Tower Hill." So the papers of that day recorded the death of this man. His execution was one of the most horrible on record. Monmouth gave the hangman six guineas, and observed as he did so "Do not hack me as you did my Lord Russell. I have heard you struck him three or four times. My servant will give you some more gold if you do the work well?" These remarks so unnerved the executioner that, after repeated attempts to sever the head, he threw down the axe, exclaiming: "I cannot do it, my heart fails me." Afraid of the vengeance of the mob, who were infuriated at this butchery, he again addressed himself to the task, and after two more blows completed his awful work. It

is also recorded that the executioner "not being able to finish the work, he was fain to draw forth his knife and with it to cut off the remaining part of his neck."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

### ST. SWITHIN.

Since Taunton formed originally a part of the Bishop of Winchester's estate, the town has some claim to St. Swithin, Bishop of Winchester, the tutor of good King Alfred and Chancellor of England. An old name of this Saint, used in connection with the prophecy of 40 days' rain, was St. Sithe. The story that is usually told in connection with this superstition is as follows:— In the year 862, Swithin, Bishop of Winchester, dying, was canonised by the then Pop. He was, at his own request, buried in the churchyard, that "the drops of rain might wet his grave, thinking that no vault was so good to cover his grave as the vault of heaven," but the monks, thinking it disgraceful for the saint to lie in open ground, resolved to remove his body into the choir, which was to have been done with solemn procession on July 15th. It rained, however, on that day, and on the 40 succeeding days so violently, as had hardly ever been known, and this made the monks abandon their intention to remove the body, and instead they erected a chapel over the grave. The *Observer* recently printed the following interesting notes with reference to the popular belief connected with St. Swithin:—

"If the year 862 actually had forty consecutive days of rain it stands by itself in the annals of meteorology. So far as accurate meteorological records are available, no such phenomenon has ever since occurred. It is true that July and August, which embrace the St. Swithin forty-day period, are exceptionally wet months, but the average number of wet days in the whole two months is only twenty-seven. Examination of the Greenwich records for the last eighty years shows that in only one year has there been more than thirty rainy days between July 15th and August 24th. That was in 1895, when the number of wet days was thirty-four—and St. Swithin's Day was dry! On an average, seventeen of the fateful forty days are wet, and once in four years we may expect more than twenty such days, and when that happens there is rarely rain on the Saint's day itself.

In the last fifteen years rain has fallen six times on St. Swithin's Day, and in these six years the number of rainy days in the forty

days immediately following has varied from eleven to twenty-eight. To sum up, the cold facts of accurate meteorological statistics are dead against the St. Swithin proverb: not only has there never been forty consecutive wet days after a wet St. Swithin's Day, but when there has been most rain in the forty days, none has fallen on St. Swithin's Day.

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**JULY 17.—KING JOHN AT WELLS AND  
BRISTOL, 1204.**

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**JULY 18.—KING CHARLES I. AT MELLS,  
1644.**

**PRINCE CHARLES at WITHAM,  
1644.**

**“REFORM BILL” FESTIVAL  
AT TAUNTON, 1832.**

Mr. C. S. Whittaker reminds us that after the “Reform Bill” was passed in 1832 a festival was held in Taunton. Members of the various trades walked in procession through the town, carrying the emblems of their callings. Afterwards they dined on the Parade. Our files of the local papers for that year devote several columns to a report of the procession and subsequent proceedings, and we shall hope to quote some interesting particulars in an early issue.

\* \* \*

King Charles, after the terrible battle of Marston Moor, marched to Bath, and on the 18th July, 1644, was at Mells Park, then the seat of Sir John Horner, where he held his Court. On that day he addressed a letter to the Corporation of Wells asking for a loan of £500, which he promised to pay “when God enabled him to do so!” The citizens had been so impoverished by the plundering taxation and levies of both Cavaliers and Roundheads that the money could not be raised. They sent to the King £100 in cash as a “free gift,” together with 200 pairs of shoes for the Army.

**PRINCE CHARLES AT WITHAM, 1644.**

Prince Charles died with Lord Hopton at Witham on July 18th, 1644, and the following day left for Mells, the general rendezvous of the Royalist troops being at Nuncy.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**JULY 19.—KING JOHN AT BRISTOL, 1216.  
KING CHARLES I. at BRUTON,  
1644.**

**TWO SUNS AT CHARD, 1662.**

After leaving Wells, the King marched to Bruton and quartered at the Abbey. There he stayed two nights, his troops resting at Lamyatt.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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If we are to believe "Mirabilis Annus," the phenomenon of two suns in the sky seen near Chard on July 12th, 1662, was again witnessed at Chard exactly a week later—July 19th, 1662.

**JULY 20.—KING CHARLES I. at ILCHESTER,  
1644.**

**ST. MARGARET'S DAY.**

**REMARKABLE APPEARANCE at  
CHILLINGTON, 1662.**

His Majesty stayed here three days waiting for recruits, and on the 23rd a "mighty confluence of people came flocking from all parts of Somerset, and there saluted the King with shouts and acclamations, and followed him from place to place." But no recruits were forthcoming, and it was soon clear that all the apparent admiration was curiosity and not affection, no King having been seen in these parts for years.

**ST. MARGARET'S DAY.**

So much rain frequently falls about this day that people often speak of "Margaret's Flood." The rain will also, it is said, destroy all kinds of nuts.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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Six of our Somerset churches are dedicated to St. Margaret, viz., Babbington, Middle Chinnock, Queen's Carlton, Spaxton, Thorne St. Margaret, and Tattinshull.

\* \* \*

The following story appears in the "Mirabilis Annus, or Year of Prodiges or Wonders":—  
"On the 20th July, 1662, about an hour after sunset, several persons, inhabitants of Chillington . . . saw towards the west a very long cloud of an extraordinary azure colour, and immediately out of the cloud came forth the form of a man with a rod in his hand, and on the top of it there was a thing like a brush; he held it forward in his hand for a little while, and vanished, and then

issued forth of the same cloud a man on horse-back, having a sword in his hand, and one of his arms set by his side; he had also a flat round bonnet on his head, and something hanging down behind him like a feather. After which they saw several companies of horse and foot marching two in a rank, and then vanishing, and immediately others successively appearing in their rooms; they plainly discerned the footmen to be armed with musquets, and the horses to march very stately, touching their breasts with their noses. Two parties of them, one from the east and the other from the west, did charge each other with great fierceness, then all disappeared. This whole relation is testified by the spectators themselves."

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### **JULY 21.—HONITON FAIR.**

The recognised day for sowing cabbage seed in some parts of West Somerset is Honiton Fair day, which is the first Wednesday after July 19th.

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It is said that the first news of the sailing of the Spanish Armada was brought to England by a ship reaching Bridgwater on July 21st, 1588.

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### **JULY 22.—ST. MARY MAGDALENE.**

When it rains towards the end of July it is said that St. Mary Magdalene is washing her handkerchief to go to her cousin, St. James' fair (July 25th). It is also said that roses begin to fade on St. Mary Magdalene's day.

—C. S. WHITTAKER.

Notwithstanding the fact that the festival of St. Mary Magdalene has been banished from among the major feasts of the Church, no less than 150 of our Somerset churches are dedicated to her, viz., Barwick, Caewion Mendip, Cricket Mallierbie, Ditcheat, Exford, Langridge, Sparkford, Stowell, Stocklinch, St. Mary Magdalene, Over Stowey, Taunton St. Mary Magdalene, Upton Noble, Winsford, Withiel Florey, and Writhlington.

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### **JULY 23.—SURRENDER OF BRIDGWATER, 1645.**

In the early morning of July 21st, 1645, Fairfax made an attack on the quarter of Bridgwater lying on the east of the Parret. The conquest of Eastover was accomplished. By the morning of Tuesday, 22nd July, the place was, with the exception of three or four houses, reduced to ashes. Fairfax summoned the town to surrender, but the offer was rejected. The attack was

suspended until the women and children had been sent beyond the reach of danger. Then Fairfax's cannon began to play upon the town with grenades and slugs of hot iron. The frightened citizens allowed the Governor no peace until he consented to surrender, and at eight o'clock on the morning of Wednesday, the 23rd July, Fairfax was in possession of a fortress which the Royalists had believed capable of prolonged resistance. Terms of surrender were declared. About 1,000 officers and soldiers, besides gentlemen and "malignant clergy," marched out as prisoners. There were taken in the town 41 barrels of powder, 1,500 arms, 44 pieces of ordnance, 4 cwt. of match, besides goods of great value.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### JULY 24.—KING CHARLES at CHARD, 1644.

#### "CRYING MURTHUR" at OLD CLEEVE.

The King arrived at Chard on this day, and stayed at the house of Mr. Bancroft, a merchant of London, his troops going to Sir Robert Bert's, at Whitestaunton. The next day he left Chard for Honiton, and so passed out of the county.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### \* \* \* "CRYING MURTHUR" AT OLD CLEEVE.

In the year 1744 there was found in the church chest of East Harling in Norfolk four tattered printed leaves, which on being perused were found to tell a ghastly story of a Somerset murder, for which the criminals were executed on the above date.

The title was as follows:—"The Crying Murthur: Contayning the cruell and most horrible Butchery of Mr. Trat, Curate of Old Cleeve: who was first murdered as he travailed upon the high way, then was brought home to his house, and there was quartered and imbowed: his quarters and bowels being afterwards perboyld and salted up, in a most strange and feare full manner. For this fact the Judgement of my Lord Chiefe Baron Tanfield, young Peter Smethwicke, Andrew Baker, Cyrill Austen, and Alice Walker, were executed this last Summer Assizes, the 24th of July, at Stone Gallowes, neere Taunton, in Summersetshire. At London: Printed by Edw. Allde for Nathaniell Butter, 1624."

One of the leaves gives a rude wooden cut of four persons, i.e., one young man ripping up a naked person's body or trunk (only one leg being left on it), another elderly person holding

up a man's head in his left and a cleaver in his right hand, a third having a man's leg in his left and a knife in his right hand, and a woman stooping to a powdering tub.

Extracts from the tract are as follows:—

"Gentle reader . . . thou seest here a spectacle represented unto thy view, horrid and bloody beyond all comparison and scarce to be pardoned, except it be by the very Canibals and men-eating Tartars . . . no murder could be more bloody, and by consequence more crying than that of Mr. Trat, it being parricide in the highest nature and degree. . . . Among more horrible presidents (precedents) none have been more notoriously noted and infamous than those three assassinations committed within these few years in Summersetshire . . . the first of Thresher kil'd at St. Adries, by his own wife and her adultrous lover; the second of Robert Seaman, of Norton, butchered at Otterhampton by his brother-in-law Legge and his wife. And the last (which is the tragical subject to the present discourse) is the cruell and unheard of murder of Mr. Tratte, curate of Old Cleeve . . . The motives which did incite these men were . . . first, Mr. Trat's libertie of speech in his usuall and publicke rebuking of some of that Society of some suspected passages of sinne whereunto they were thought to be over-weaningly addicted and accustomed. The next was the vindication of that reproach and infamie which they suffered by offering violence unto an honest woman . . . But the last motive which was not the least was the chiefest of all . . . was this. Mr. Brigandine . . . took a resolution to resigne his incumbencie of Old Cleeve unto his Curate, who before had bought the patronage of it from him (Mr. Trat). (Then follows a long story of the sale of a living). . . . What heart can be so inhumanly inhumane and obduratly hardened, which would not sigh at the remembrance of this cruell and scarlet-colour'd assassination? For these bloodsuckers having murdered this harmless Leuite Mr. Trat upon the Wednesday next after Midsommer day in the yeare of our Lord God 1624 journeying from his owne house to his mothers . . . brought him back the same night thus murdered as he was, with two mortall wounds in the breast, into his owne dwelling house againe, where he lived solitarie and alone."

Here the story continues with an account of the manner in which the "murtherers" cut up the body of the curate and disposed of it, and how, Mr. Trat's absence causing a search, their



house was broken into by the officers of the law, who found the "aforesaid bodie all saving the head and members disposed in this manner and forme following. His armes, legges, thighes, and bowels were powdred up into two earthen steenes or pots in a lower roome of the house . . . the bulk of his carkeise was plac'd in a fatte (vat) or tubb." There is a long account of how, on the day of the murder, one accomplice, to prove the innocence of all in the case of detection, impersonated the curate, and subsequently, according to the story, there was an inquest, and a trial of the murderers, who eventually "were conveyed from the Towne of Taunton unto Stoane Gallows about eleven of the clocke in the forenoone where . . . they suffered by the hand of Justice, dyed obstinate and unrepenting sinners."

There is reason to believe that this horrible story is founded on fact, for in the records of a Somerset visitation which took place in 1624 it is stated that Peter Smethwick, of Old Cleeve, was in trouble, being in prison awaiting trial.

—H. W. KILLE.

**JULY 25.—KING JOHN at GLASTONBURY,  
1204.**

**EARTHQUAKE IN SOMERSET,  
1122.**

**ST. JAMES' DAY.**

**TRIAL: NOTTIDGE v. PRINCE,  
1860.**

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* states that on the night of July 25th, 1122, there was a very great earthquake over all Somerset and in Gloucestershire.

**ST. JAMES' DAY.**

There was a popular superstition that on St. James' Day (old style) oysters came in season in London, and that whoever ate the bivalve on this day would never want money for the rest of the year. We in Somerset were taught to believe that oysters were only good to eat when there was an R in the month. Apples were blessed on this day by the priest. There is a special form for blessing them in the manual of the Church of Sarum.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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Till James's Day be come and gone,  
You may have hops or you may have none.

The Somerset Churches dedicated to St. James are Ashwick, Bath, St. James, Beerercombe,

Cameley, Chillington, Curry Mallet, East Cranmore, Fitzhead, Forscote, Halse, Lambrook, Milton Clevedon, South Stoke, Taunton St. James, and Upton.

**TRIAL: NOTTIDGE v. PRINCE, 1860.**

An extraordinary trial took place on this day, when the brother of Miss Louisa Jane Nottidge who had died nearly two years before, claimed her property from Henry James Prince, of Charlilich, near Bridgwater. Prince, who was born at Bath in 1811, and had taken holy orders, was the founder of the celebrated religious establishment, the Agapemone, and finally claimed to be an incarnation of the Deity. In spite of this he lost his case on this occasion, and Mr. Nottidge recovered £5,728. Prince died in 1899.



**JULY 26.—PARLIAMENTARY ARMY AT MARTOCK, 1645.**

**DR. RALPH CUDWORTH DIED, 1688.**

After Bridgwater had fallen into the hands of Fairfax and Cromwell, on the 23rd July, 1645, a council of war was held, and it was resolved to return to Martock in order to curb Goring, or rather, to hinder his further action. Accordingly, on July 26th, the Parliamentary Army marched to Martock, where, resting on the Lord's Day (July 27th), there was a thanksgiving for the success in the taking of Bridgwater. Spigg, in his "Anglia Rediviva," says Cromwell's soldiers seem to have done something more than simply worshipped God. Tradition says the Parliamentary troopers, while stationed in the town, amused themselves by setting free small birds in the body of the church and then trying to shoot them with their firelocks. The Rev. Preb. Salmon, who was vicar of Martock, has recorded that when the church was restored the carved interior work of the nave roof was found full of the slugs or shots of the period, and skeletons of birds in its hollow parts, coated, and thus preserved, by the dust of ages, as if the birds had been wounded and had died in these corners.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**DR. RALPH CUDWORTH DIED 1688.**

Dr. Ralph Cudworth, renowned as the chief of the Cambridge "Platonists," was a native of Somerset, being born at Aller in 1617. Fellow of Emmanuel College, he became in 1645 Master of Clare Hall, and Regius Professor of Hebrew. Five years later he was collated to the living of

North Cadbury, and in 1654 became Master of Christ's College. After the restoration he obtained in 1662 the rectory of Ashwell, Herts, and in 1678 the prebendary of Gloucester. His greatest work, the "True Intellectual System of the Universe," intended to refute atheism and freethinking, appeared in the latter year, erudite and discursive, and as full of wisdom as of tolerance. These characteristics brought down upon him many charges: Arianism, Socinianism, Deism, and Atheism were among the many epithets his contemporaries used of his opinions. Many of his later works, therefore, are still left in manuscript. Cudworth was one of the most typical of the best Latitudinarians, and an upright, straightforward, and tolerant thinker. He died at Christ's College, Cambridge, July 26th, 1688.

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### JULY 27.—CONNOP THIRLWALL DIED 1875.

Connop Thirlwall died on this day in 1875 at Bath, and though not a native of Somerset is connected with the county by that fact. Thirlwall was a man indeed of whom a county might be proud. Born at Steppney January 11th, 1797, and educated at Cambridge, he was elected to a Fellowship of Trinity. He was called to the Bar, but afterwards took orders. His broad-mindedness, then and later, led to much trouble for him. Accepting the York-shire living of Kirby-Underdale, he there wrote his monumental "History of Greece," superseding even the excellent history by Mitford, but in which in turn a few years later was to be surpassed by Grote's masterly work. In 1810 Thirlwall was raised to the Bishopric of St. David's, and there for four-and-thirty years he diligently devoted himself to the care of his diocese. He resigned his see in 1871, and died the following year, aged seventy-eight.

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On July 27th, 1868, there were great rejoicings at Bridgwater in consequence of a local Volunteer, Lieutenant J. B. Carslake, having won the much coveted Queen's prize at Wimbledon, and brought it to the town. A full account of the proceedings is given in Mr. Jarman's "History of Bridgwater."

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### JULY 28.—TAUNTON VOLUNTEERS, 1794.

A meeting of the Taunton Volunteer Committee formed during the anxious days of 126 years ago took place at the Market Hall on this day, when the Right Hon. Earl Poulett was thanked for his "polite attention to the requests of the corps and for the assistance in carrying

their resolution into effect." The Countess Poulett gave a stand of Colours to the corps, while the ladies of Taunton and the neighbourhood gave a similar stand of Colours. Mr. Thomas was appointed Lieutenant to Major Corfield, Mr. Clitstone to Captain Blundell, and Mr. Finchard to Captain Whitmarsh. Mr. Richard Cave was recommended to His Majesty as Adjutant, Mr. Samuel Drake was appointed Quartermaster, and Messrs. Richard Youens, George Granger, and Francis Doman Sergeants. The Assize Hall was offered for the use of the Volunteers, and there meetings were arranged and rules drawn up. When in uniform the Volunteers had to appear with their hair powdered, and they were to wear black silk stocks.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### JULY 29.—BATH CAPTURED, 1645.

On this day Colonel Nathaniel Rich, facing Bath with a party of Horse and Dragoons, which Fairfax had seized from Wells, surrounded the town, but the Governor refused to surrender. Towards evening the Dragoons, under Colonel John Okey, afterwards a Regicide, drawn up near the bridge, "crept on their bellies over it to the gate, seized on the small end of the Royalists' muskets, which they had put through the loopholes of the gate, and cried to the enemy to take quarter." The garrison, which was a weak one, and in disaccord with the citizens, upon the firing of the gate and capture of the bridge by Okey, surrendered. The common soldiers, to the number of about 140, were made prisoners, and the officers were allowed to march away to what garrison they pleased. There were captured in the town, the works and wall of which were strong and in good order, six pieces of ordnance, 400 arms, and 12 barrels of powder.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### JULY 30.—BURMESE MEMORIAL (TAUNTON) UNVEILED, 1889.

Mr. W. C. Baker informs us that a common belief is that cabbage seed for spring cutting should be sown on the first full moon after St. Swithun's Day—not when the moon is new or growing or they will bolt to seed in the spring.

#### BURMESE MEMORIAL UNVEILED.

On Tuesday, July 31st, 1889, Lord Mark Kerr, C.B., late commander of the Western District, visited Taunton to unveil a memorial to the officers, non-commissioned officers, and

men of the Somerset Regiment who fell in the Burmese War. The memorial consists of a handsomely wrought Runic Cross of Portland stone, 29ft. high, elevated on three degrees, placed at the end of the Market-place, facing East-street. A detachment of 100 men from Leign Camp, under the command of Lord Hinton, marched down to the town to take part in the ceremony, and nearly 2,000 Volunteers of the 2nd Battalion, under the command of Brigadier Patton, in line marching order, were also present. The Mayor and Corporation attended in state, and the ceremony was witnessed by some thousands of the assembled inhabitants. Lord Mark Kerr was attended by Sir Howel Elphinstone, the High Sheriff of the County (M. C. E. D. Esq.), Major-General Loft, V.C., C.B., Colonel England, Colonel Henley, and a brilliant staff of officers, and the windows of the West Somerset Club and the adjoining shops and even the roofs were crowded with spectators. The Cross bears the name of the men who fell in the Burmah and various battles in which the Regiment had been engaged. It is also decorated with the badge of the Regiment and the Arms of the Borough.

Lord Mark Kerr, in unveiling the memorial, said: The idea of this memorial originated in the 2nd Battalion of the Regiment to commemorate their great endurance and gallantry in many very serious actions and their heavy losses in killed, wounded, and deaths from climate in the last Burmese War, heavier losses than in any other Regiment in Burmah. . . . I have a personal feeling in this unveiling, for as I look back on the 200 years I have spoken of I call to mind the splendid courage of the men of Taunton and the yeoman and peasantry of Somersetshire, and forty years after the heroic defence of the citadel and city of Taunton by one of the greatest men who ever lived, the illustrious Blake, also a Somersetshire man, a great soldier, and a great admiral—courage, I repeat, never surpassed in history, was exerted in the cause of my ancestor, the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth, whose wife, the Princess of the house of Buccleuch, was my great grandmother. The Duke of Monmouth and Buccleuch was proclaimed King just before his defeat at Sedgemoor on the very place you are now standing on in the Market-square of Taunton. In unveiling at this moment the Cross and pointing to the word Burmah which you all see, and which is the great cause of this Memorial Cross, and calling your attention to the mural crown, and the "illustrious garrison" of Jobab, I wish to point out to you also the name Azibwah,

where the traditional courage of the Somersetshire men achieved an unparalleled victory—a victory unique in history, as the historian of the Indian Mutiny describes it, a victory over an overwhelming ambuscade, and the only instance in all history of an army of any size, large or small, ever escaping from an ambuscade, much less being victorious. You, I may say we, because I was with you, men of Taunton and Somersetshire did this. . . .

The Mayor (Mr. H. Spiller) accepted the memorial on behalf of the town, and the Rev. W. H. Askwith, vicar of Taunton, said a special prayer. After the unveiling the troops presented arms and the band played.



## AUGUST.

The corn, oh the corn, and the yellow, mellow  
corn!

Here's to the corn, with the cups upon the  
board!

We've been reaping all the day, and we'll reap  
again the morn.

And fetch it home to mow-yard, and then  
we'll thank the Lord.

—EXMOOR HARVEST SONG.

August is the eighth month of the year. It was called *Sextilis* by the Romans, from its being the sixth month in their calendar, until the senate complimented the Emperor Augustus by naming it after him, and through them it is by us demonstrated as August. Our Saxon ancestors called it "Arunonath (more rightly barn-month), intending thereby the then filling of their barns with corn." *Arn* is the Saxon word for harvest. According to some they also called it *Woodmonath*, as they likewise called June.

"August is that debateable ground of the year" —says "The Mirror of Months" —"which is situated exactly upon the confines of summer and autumn; and it is difficult to say which has the better claim to it. It is dressed in half the flowers of the one and half the fruits of the other; and it has a sky and temperature all its own, and which vie in beauty with those of the spring. May itself can offer nothing so sweet to the senses, so enchanting to the imagination, and so soothing to the heart, as that genial influence which arises from the sights, the sounds, and the associations connected with an August evening in the country, when the occupations and pleasures of the day are done, and when all, even the busiest, are fain to give way to that 'wise passiveness,' one hour of which is rife with more real enjoyment than a whole season of revelry."

It is in August that harvest is commenced; it is the time for the in-gathering of the fruits of the earth. In due time the barns will be replenished; the hum of the threshing machine will be heard in the land. Nature will soon be changing her dress, and on all sides signs will be seen that she is preparing for her repose.

But the conclusion of harvest is not associated with the hearty old customs in which our forefathers in Somerset participated—more's the pity. Puritanism wiped out of existence rather than improved the associations of "Harvest Home." And what Puritanism failed to accomplish, sections of men of the present day have accomplished. The workers have lost the sense of natural pleasures. They look for artificial amusements. They must have jollity aroused in them by artificial means instead of bursting into an enthusiasm of joy over work honestly completed. Our ancestors used to celebrate the end of harvest because the land was giving of its fatness, because they saw a splendid return for their toil and their labour. They crowned the wheat sheaves with flowers, they sang, they shouted, they danced, they invited each other or met to feast, as at Christmas, in the halls of rich houses. What should more gladden the heart than to see the long-expected products of the year, which have been the cause of so much anxiety, now safely housed, and beyond the reach of injury.

Inwardly smiling, the proud farmer views  
The rising pyramids that grace his yard,  
And counts his large increase; his barns are  
stored,  
And groaning staddles bend beneath their load.

I wonder how much happier people are for the changes which have been brought about. And what have we instead of these rural festivities? The cheap excursion to the seaside, or even to some distant city or town, was a poor compensation for the circle of feasts and pastimes, now almost forgotten, which formerly enlivened the rural year. And not even these are now vouchsafed to us, owing to a variety of circumstances which need not be entered into here. Harvest thanksgiving services in our churches and chapels have become general. But they are a modern innovation. It is no longer ago than the year 1861 that these festivals were brought before Convocation. Even to-day the Prayer-book makes no provision for such a service. Convocation, however, approved of the idea, and a Somerset Bishop—the Bishop of Bath and Wells—was one of the first leading Church dignitaries to sanction the introduction of annual harvest festivals into the parochial system. How heartily His Lordship was supported by the revered old Archdeacon of East Brent, those who know of Archdeacon Denison are fully aware. He held his first service of the kind just over 60 years ago, and some 12 years before Convocation gave approval of the services. One might well ask why the custom of publicly thanking the



Giver of all good gifts at the close of the harvest ever fell into desuetude in this country. There were harvest festivals in the earliest days. The Romans held a feast in honour of Ceres, and paid the goddess great adoration. Virgil refers to it in his first *Georgic* :—

Before the sickles touch the rip'ning wheat,  
On Ceres call; and let the lab'ring hind  
With oaken wreaths his hollow temples bind;  
On Ceres let him call, and Ceres praise,  
With uncouth dances, and with country lays.

The story of the daughter of Saturn and Vesta must always be interesting. We know how she fought to regain her daughter Proserpine, who was carried away by Pluto. We know the picturesque story of how, when night came, she lighted two torches in the flames of Mount *Ætna* to continue her search by night all over the world for her wayward child. All the time the search was prosecuted the cultivation of the earth was neglected, and the ground became barren. But Ceres, realising what had occurred, went to *Attica*, which was becoming the most desolate country in the world, and instructed *Triptolemus* of *Eleusis* in everything which concerned agriculture. She taught him how to plough the ground, to sow and reap corn, to make bread, and to take particular care of fruit trees. After these instructions she gave him her chariot and commanded him to travel all over the world, and communicate his knowledge of agriculture to the rude inhabitants, who hitherto lived upon acorns and the roots of the earth. What wonder that the story being believed, Ceres was respected and that sacrifices were offered to her honour. We find the *Israelites* keeping the Feast of *Tabernacles* under green trees or arbours in memory of their dwelling in tents in their passage through the wilderness. The feast was celebrated after harvest—on the 16th day of the month *Tisri*, which answers to our month of September. It continued eight days, but the first day and the last were the most solemn. Herein they returned thanks to God for the fruits of the earth they had then gathered in. They acted under strict injunction: "Thou shalt observe the Feast of *Tabernacles* seven days after thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine; and thou shalt rejoice in thy corn feast, thou and thy son and thy daughter, and thy manservant and thy maidservant, and the Levite, and the stranger, and the fatherless and the widow, that are within thy gates." (*Deut.* xvi., 13). The Jews not only rejoiced, but feasted at the getting in of the harvest. The heathens imitated them, and the *Druids* held their harvest festival. And so have the people of all nations. And when old Arch-

deacon Denison inaugurated his " Harvest Home " at East Brent, the company, after attending church, proceeded to a tent, where dinner was laid, where flowers were arranged in profusion, where banners and flags were displayed, and where the guests made right merry—master and man, squire and labourer. This is as it should be in every country town and village, especially in those which are intimately associated with agriculture. Let us recall to mind some of the days spent in our dear old county of Somerset after the harvest had been gathered in. What was more picturesque than the bringing home of the last load, on which the Harvest Queen was placed—a figure representing Ceres—apparelled in bright colours, crowned with flowers, a sheaf of corn placed under her arm, and a sickle in her hand? Round about and following the cart were the labourers, a happy group, with their wives and children, cheery and full of happiness, in anticipation of the harvest supper which they knew would be awaiting them as soon as the last load reached the barn's door. And what a supper! And what a welcome! How the rafters of the old homestead kitchen rang with laughter as the guests told their tales. How young and old cheered when the song was sung, and with what heartiness the company joined in the old " ditty " :—

Here's a health to our good measter,  
 The founder of the feast,  
 An' I hope to God, wi' all my heart,  
 That his soul in heaven mid rest ;  
 That everything mid prosper,  
 That ever he takes in han',  
 For we be all his servants,  
 To work to his command.

Then the cups went round, and kindly thoughts the one for the other possessed all present. When the tables were cleared away, the fiddler, perched in one corner, fiddled for all he was worth, and the farmer and his wife, the man and the maid, footed it right merrily, for everyone was happy because the last load had been drawn home. Nowhere was the harvest suppers more full of genuine enjoyment than in our county of Somerset. True it is the people followed Tusser's advice :—

In harvest time harvest folke, servants and all,  
 Should make, altogether, good cheere in the hall,  
 And fill out the black bol of bleith to their song,  
 And let them be merrie at harvest time long.  
 Once ended thy harvest, let none be begild,  
 Please such as did please thee, man, woman, and  
 child,  
 Thus doing, with always suche helpe as they can,  
 Thou winnest the praise of the labouring man.

The generous feelings between employer and employed do not obtain to the same extent as they did when the harvest homes were more general, and when there was a closer fellowship between master and man. Such festivals as our forefathers indulged in included, perhaps, some objectionable practices. They were often carried to excess, and excess is generally baneful. But they also possessed features of considerable merit, and so far were the means of conferring pleasure and adding to the social well-being of the community. It is meet that a song of thanksgiving should be raised by the people generally at the ingathering of the harvest. But the merry-making which used to be followed in Somerset in the olden days might well be revived, especially bearing in mind the trend of the times, for nowhere can friendships be cemented more thoroughly and good fellowship between master and man fostered better than at a feast in honour of Ceres, when all should meet together full of the spirit of the prayer contained in John Hobson Matthew's ballad:—

God hold the grange through winter,  
 And warm the seeds in spring;  
 Saint Walstan have the hayricks safe,  
 Saint George defend our King,  
 Our Lady of the Harvest  
 Show us the Holy Face  
 Of Him who chose to be the Son  
 Of May full of Grace.

—W. G. WILLIS WALSON.

August is supposed to witness the absolute termination of the cuckoo's annual visit to this country, as evidenced by the following rhyme, current for many years past in West Somerset:—

In May he sings all day,  
 In June he changes his tune,  
 In July away he'll fly,  
 In August go he must.

—W.S.P.

An old Somerset saying is "When the gookoo do goo zummer do zoom volly a'der."

\* \* \*

We are indebted to Mr. F. W. Mathews for the following notes on August:—

An old Somerset saying for the harvest time:

Put a winn-sheet on hay and corn  
 When the old donkey blows his horn.

In 918 A.D. the month of August saw considerable fighting in Somerset between Edward, son of the great Alfred, and the Danes. The Army (that is the Northmen) were defeated by the men of Hereford and Gloucester, and driven south. Edward placed guards against them on the south side of Severn-mouth, west from

Wales, eastward to the mouth of the Avon, so that they durst nowhere seek the land on that side. Nevertheless, they eluded them at night, by stealing up twice; at one time to the east of Watchet and at another time at Porlock. There was a great slaughter each time; so that few of them came away, except those only who swam out to the ships. Then set they outward on an island, called the Flat Helms, till they were very short of meat, and many men died of hunger because they could not reach any meat. Thence went they to Dimmet, and thence out to Ireland. *This was in harvest.*"

We have been bemoaning the continuous rains of June, July, or August in this year of grace, 1920, but England was in worse case in the days gone by, when the home-grown corn was all that could be depended on. In the *A.S. Chronicle*, under date 1116, we read:—"This was a very vexatious and destructive year with respect to the fruits of the earth, through the immoderate rains that fell soon after the beginning of August, harassing and perplexing men till Candlemas-day." And for 1117, "This was a very blighted year for corn, through the rains that scarcely ceased for nearly all the year."

Many of the years about this troublous time were apparently most unseasonable, and many startling natural phenomena were observed and recorded. Of 1122 A.D., among other things, "The eighth night before the calends of August there was a very violent earthquake all over Somers tshire and in Gloucestershire; soon after on the 6th day before the ides of September, which was on the festival of St. Mary, there was a very violent wind from the fore part of the day to the depth of the night."

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#### WEATHER (AND OTHER) LORE FOR AUGUST.

August ripens, September gathers in,  
August bears the burden, September the fruit.

\* \* \*

As August so the next February.

\* \* \*

Dry August and warm  
Doth harvest no harm.

\* \* \*

If weather be fair and tidy thy grain,  
Make speedy carriage for fear of rain.

\* \* \*

August rain gives honey, wine, and saffron.

\* \* \*

August sunshine and bright nights ripen the grapes.

None in August should over the land,  
In December none over the sea.

\* \* \*

A fog in August indicates a severe winter and  
plenty of snow.

\* \* \*

He was born in August (said of a skilful person).

\* \* \*

So many August fogs, so many winter mists.

\* \* \*

Be the first week of August warm.  
The winter will be white and long.

\* \* \*

A frosty winter, and a dusty March,  
And a rain about April;  
And another about the Lammas-time,  
When the corn begins to fill;  
Is worth a plough of gold,  
And all her pins theretill.

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#### WELSH INVASION OF MINEHEAD.

On the Sunday before August 4th, 1265, when Simon Montfort perished at the battle of Evesham—the precise date is not available—Minehead suffered an invasion by Welshmen of a less peaceful and profitable nature than is the case nowadays. As the chronicler Rishanger tells the story: "A multitude of Welshmen, having as their Captain William de Berkeley, a knight of noble birth but of infamous character, landed at Minehead, and proceeded to rob and harry. They were, however, met by the Governor of Dunster Castle, Adam Gordon, who slew great numbers of them and put the rest to flight, together with their chief, a great many being drowned in their flight." —H.W.K.

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#### BATTLE OF KINGWESTON, 1549.

Mr. Edward Vivian kindly writes us as follows:—"There were several risings in England against the innovations forced upon the people during the Reformation. One of the most determined of these rebellions was in 1549 in the western counties. In August a force of the rebels, under the leadership of Mr. Coffin, was completely defeated at Kingweston by the Government levies. I regret that not one of the books I have consulted gives the exact date."—Murray's Handbook of Somerset simply states that the rebels of Devonshire were signally defeated at Kingweston by Sir Hugh Powlet, 1549.

## GATHERING WHORTLEBERRIES.

Miss Alice King, in an article on "Exmoor and its People," which appeared in the "Argosy" in October, 1884, spoke of "the whortleberry gatherers, who, at this season, come from all the neighbouring villages both of hill and valley to pick the fruit which grows on a little stiff bush in among the heath, during the period when the whortleberries are ripe, which is August and September. Every village school round about Dunkery and Exmoor is closed, for the simple reason that, if it were kept open, not a single child would set foot within its doors. They were all sent out whortleberry picking by their parents, dressed in their very oldest and most dilapidated clothes; for the occupation naturally involves many a soil and many a tear, and the thrifty West Country mother knows better than to allow best garments to be exposed to such dangers. The profit made by whortleberry gathering is often considerable. Carts come round to the different villages to buy the fruit, which is carried off to our large manufacturing towns, and there used to make a rich purple dye. Small quantities of it are also sold for the table—whortleberry tart and clotted cream being a dish highly appreciated by West Country men and women. A hill country child will often earn her Sunday costume for the whole year by her whortleberry gathering, and one small parish last season calculated that the total gains of the boys and girls of the village amounted to above £30. The whortleberry is sweet and mild in taste. The lips of profane strangers sometimes pronounce it insipid, but this is rank heresy in a West Country house, and the visitor who holds such an opinion had best keep it to himself."

**AUGUST 1.—ST. PETER AD VINCULA.****LAMMAS DAY.****CIVIL WAR COMMENCED IN SOMERSET, 1642.****FAIRFAX'S ARMY at WELLS, 1645.**

Lammes-day, the 1st of August, otherwise called the Gule of Yule of August, may be a corruption of the British word "Gwyl Awst," signifying the Feast of August. There are many ideas as to why a Feast was held on this day, and antiquaries are divided also in their opinions concerning the origin of the word Lam, or Lamb-mass. Some suppose it is called Lammes-day, *quasi* Lamb-masse, because on that day the tenants who held lands of the Cathedral Church

in York, which is dedicated to St. Peter ad Vincula, were bound by their tenure to bring a live lamb into the church at high mass. Others, according to Blount, suppose it to have been derived from a Saxon word, *Haf-Masse*, meaning loaf masse or bread masse, so named as a feast of thanksgiving to God for the first fruits of the corn. It seems to have been observed with bread of new wheat; and accordingly it is a usage in some places for tenants to be bound to bring in wheat of that year to their lord on or before the 1st August. We used to be told in Somerset that after Lammas corn ripens as much by night as by day, and "If the first week in August be unusually warm, the winter will be white and long."

#### CIVIL WAR COMMENCED IN SOMERSET, 1642.

The civil war commenced in Somerset on this day with an affair at Shepton Mallet, in which Mr. William Strode, of Barrington, one of the Parliamentary Deputy-Lieutenants, was attacked by Hopton, Gorges, and other Cavaliers. The Somerset Committee had given directions for a meeting at Shepton to issue warrants to several hundreds for the preservation of the peace, requiring them not to obey the Commission of Array; and, according to Hopton, had agreed to send several fat bucks thither therewith to entertain the said meeting. On the previous day a petition from the Royalists in Shepton was delivered to Hertford praying for protection; and Hopton, accompanied by Sir Ferdinando Gorges, the latter's son-in-law, Thomas Smith, of Ashton, with his troop, and as many volunteers as would go, were desired to proceed to that town. When they arrived, Hopton and his retinue proceeded to the High Cross in the Market-place, where, having alighted from their horses, "sate calling the towne to them, to examine the business of the Peticion." Presently Mr. Strode rode up and demanded the reason of the tumult. Hopton declares that Strode had with him eight or ten horse, very well mounted and armed, but the Commissioners say he was attended only by his son and his servants, in all but four armed horse and two unarmed. Be this as it may, Hopton and his company required Strode to alight and hear a petition read. He replied that he came not to hear petitions but to suppress insurrections. Hopton endeavoured to pull Strode from his horse; Gorges struck at him with a halbert, and other cavaliers, drawing their swords, held the points towards his body and forced him to alight. Strode was handed over to the Constable that he might be taken to the Marquis of Hertford at Wells, but word was

brought Sir Ralph Hopton that the country people were coming in upon him, at which he took horse and rode out of the town. The constable was compelled by the people to release Mr. Storde or lose his own life. Shepton Mallet was thus cleared of the Royalists.

#### FAIRFAX'S ARMY AT WELLS, 1645.

On this day Fairfax's army marched from Wells to Queen Camel, but Fairfax himself rode with a few horse to Sherborne, viewed the works and Castle, and quartered there that night.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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After Lammas, corn ripens as much by night as by day.

Meadows which were the property of the parish in many places were from Lammas Day to Candlemas thrown open to the villagers as pasture, having previously been enclosed and laid up for the hay crop. From this custom they took the name of Lammas-meads. Another name they sometimes bore was Dole-meads, because of their being let by a fixed price for a specified portion, the acre.

#### "GULE OF AUGUST."

In the Wellington Manor Roll the 1st of August is called by this name, from a legend of a miraculous cure effected on that day.

The daughter of Quirinus, a tribune, was afflicted with a diseased throat (gula) and went to Pope Alexander VI. and obtained his permission to kiss the chains with which Nero had bound St. Peter.

Immediately on performing the act of osculation the throat became well, and a permanent cure was effected.

F. W. MATHEWS.

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#### NORTH CURRY FAIR.

As far back as A.D. 1206 King John granted to North Curry a charter, which conferred, amongst other privileges, the right to hold a market every Wednesday and a fair on the 1st of August. The market is said to have been continued until 1811, and the fair day was altered in 1790 to the first Tuesday in September, on which day it has been held ever since.

#### ACT FOR BURYING IN WOOLLEN.

In August of the 30th year of Charles II.'s reign there was passed the "Act for Burying in Woollen," a measure intended to promote the welfare of the woollen industry, but very unpopular. After the 1st of August of that year it was provided that "no corpse of any person was to be buried in any stuffe or thing other



than what is made of sheep's wool only. Penally £5. Register to be provided at the cost of the parish." It was stipulated that "the Act shall be publicly read upon the first Sunday after the Feast of St. Bartholomew every year for seven years next following after Divine Service." In the registers of Minchial Parish Church is an entry to the effect at this time that "the Cryer is paid to give notice to the p'ishoners to come to the Church," and a note recording the purchase of a register for burials of persons in woolen. After the passing of the Act in 1667 the law was frequently evaded, and accordingly it was made more stringent in the following year. The clergy were directed to make an entry in the register that an affidavit had been made to them, within eight days after the burial, certifying that the requirements of the law had been complied with. If this was not so, an information was laid before a Justice of the Peace, and the executors of the deceased had to pay a fine of £5—50s to the poor of the parish and 50s to the informer. Thus there occurs in the register of Dunster Church in 1689 the entry "Upon burying of Francis ye wife of Thomas Watts on ye 29th of November Ano. Dom. 1689 50s was paid because she was buried in linen and thus disbursed." Then follows a list of one hundred poor persons who each received sixpence. It is recorded also in the register that fifty shillings was paid in respect of Francis Luttrell on 4th August, 1690, because he was buried in linen. —H.W.K.

### AUGUST 2.—SKIRMISH at MARSHALL'S ELM, 1642.

On August 2nd, 1642—20 days before the King raised his standard at Nottingham—600 Parliamentary infantry, while marching to capture a small body of Royalist horse, were ambushed by 80 cavaliers at Marshall's Elm, near Street, and completely routed, with a loss of 25 killed.

### AUGUST 3.—HISTORICAL MEETING OF BISHOPS at GLASTONBURY, 1377.

#### CHEDDAR VALLEY RAIL- WAY OPENED, 1869.

On the 3rd August, 1877, there was an historical meeting of Bishops and clergy at Glastonbury! About 100 of the Anglican Bishops, who had been attending the Lambeth Conference, visited the ancient Abbey, and, together with 500 or 600 clergy, and a choir consisting of from 150

to 200 voices, attended a service in the ruins. The procession, which included the Mayor and Corporation of Glastonbury, numbered upwards of 1,000 persons, and was witnessed by huge crowds of people. There had been no such service since the Suppression of the Monasteries by Henry VIII.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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Mr. Frank Knight, in his "Heart of Mendip," says:—The railway, known as the Cheddar Valley Branch, was opened as far as this village (Cheddar) on the 3rd of August, 1869, when those who would were allowed to travel up and down the line without payment. Most amusing scenes were witnessed at the various stations, not a few of that day's passengers never before having seen a train at close quarters."

#### AUGUST 4.—CIVIL WAR. FIRST BLOOD-SHED IN SOMERSET, 1642.

#### HANNAH MORE'S SUNDAY SCHOOL TREAT, 1791.

The events of the 1st. August, 1642, at Shepton Mallet developed rapidly. The Marquis of Hertford, on the side of the King, found, when he reached Wells, after a cool reception at Bath, that he was in the midst of an armed enemy covering the whole of Somerset. He was plainly told he would be opposed if he put the Commission of Array into execution, and his first surprise was the Shepton Mallet meeting. The increasing assemblages around Wells caused him anxiety. He ordered the keys of the magazine to be given up to Sir Francis Dodington, he disarmed the "well affected" to the Parliament and all stragglers, and warrants were issued under his hand jointly with the Lord Poulet and Lord Trowbridge for "bringing in armed men," and patrols were sent out to guard the city from surprise. On Thursday, 4th August, one of these patrols, numbering Royalists' account says, about 60, other party says 120 to 140, horse, under Sir John S owell, Sir John Paulet, and Colonel Lunsford, guarding the western side, and "ranging" about to bring in horses, met a party estimated to be 500 strong, coming from Bridgwater and parts adjacent Glastonbury. Seeing they were outnumbered, Lunsford placed himself in ambush in a pit by the roadside with 20 troopers armed with carbines, while the remainder advanced a little towards the Parliamentarians, which had now approached to within musket shot, and sent them a message by Mr. Saunders, of Petherton, demanding their inten-

tions. Words followed, then preparations for an encounter. The ambush fired on the Parliamentarians, which caused them to throw down their arms and fly. Two were killed, and next day two were found dead in some corn close by; 14 more were wounded, and Captain Preston was taken prisoner, together with 15 horse, 30 muskets, and other ammunition of no great value. Wells was in great distress from the exactions of the Royalists within and beset on all sides from without. Sir Francis Popham ordered some shots to be fired against the Bishop's Palace, which the Royalists had made their headquarters, and on Friday, the 5th August, Lord Hertford sent a message to Chewton asking if the peace of the county might not yet be preserved. The following day the Parliament Committee produced their answer and sent it to Wells. The Marquis gained some time by parlying, made a sally as if to go to Glastonbury, but suddenly changing his front marched for Sherborne, exchanging some shots with the Taunton Deane horsemen. The Mayor and citizens of Wells sent messengers to Chewton announcing the fact, and to petition that the soldiers may not come down, nor attempt anything against them, but the Mendip men entered the city with "great expressions of joy." They tore down the painted glass in the Cathedral and sacked the Bishop's Palace. Wells thus passed into the hands of new masters.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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Most of our readers will know something of the magnificent work done for the poor and ignorant inhabitants of Cheddar and the surrounding villages by Hannah More and her sister Martha. The work, which has been referred to on a number of occasions in these columns, commenced in 1789, and the sisters encountered the bitterest opposition from many of the clergy, farmers, and others from whom they might have hoped to obtain sympathy and help. The success of their work may be gauged from the fact that within a year or two of their commencing at Cheddar the Parish Church, which had previously been attended by an average of 20 persons, was packed with a congregation of 500 at each service. On August 4th, 1791, the sisters, assisted by six clergymen, gave a school treat on the top of Callow, at which 517 children and about 300 of their relatives were entertained with beef and bread, plum-pudding, and cake, and a great cask of cider. Such a treat was something almost unheard of in those days, and aroused a vast amount of interest and curiosity.

## AUGUST 5.—TROOPS on the MENDIPS, 1642.

A. W. KINGLAKE BORN, 1809.

On the first appearance of the Royalists at Wells and Shepton Mallet posts were sent to Sir John Horner, Mr. Popham, and others, especially Mr. John Ashe, certifying that the cavaliers were coming to destroy them, which caused a great stir and combustion in the country, "whereupon every man armed and made ready for their coming. On the Mendip Hills, above Chewton, was appointed as the place of meeting to oppose these men," who had gone into Shepton and broken into honest men's houses and plundered them, and made their owners with their wives hide themselves for feare, and accordingly people flocked from every house, stuffed with so many doubts and fears, that they thought if they did not "now play the man," they would be "utterly undone for ever," and they presently assembled all that quarter of the shire. Sir John Horner brought to Chewton a regiment called the Bath Regiment, numbering 1,000 men completely armed; Sir Edward Hungerford lent arms to 200 volunteers, and from his quarter came also 200 or 300 horsemen, some of them well armed, the rest only with a sword or pistol. Altogether, upward of 40,000 men and women, 15,000 being from Somerset, and the others from Wilts and Dorset, Gloucester, and Bristol. Two waggon loads of powder, bullet, and match, and four six-pounders were sent from Bristol. This force marched, on Friday, 5th August, 1642, to the top of the hill above Wells, where they lay that night.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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The distinguished historian, Alexander William Kinglake, was born at Wilton House, Taunton, on August 5th, 1809. He was the son of William Kinglake, a banker and solicitor. From Eton he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was the friend of Thackeray and Tennyson. He went to Syria, and enriched literature with his impressions of the East in the classic "Eothen." After commencing his career as a barrister, he determined to devote the rest of his life to literature and politics. When the Crimean War broke out he accompanied the British troops, and was present at the battle of the Alma in 1854. When Lord Raglan, the British commander, died outside Sebastopol in the following year his widow requested Kinglake to write the history of the campaign. Helped by Lord Raglan's notes, Kinglake wrote his famous work, "The Invasion of the Crimea," which ranks as one of the most interesting histories produced in the 19th Century. For 24 years

the volumes appeared at intervals, lucid, animated, polished to the last degree. He represented Bridgwater in Parliament from 1857 to 1868, and died in 1891. Within Parliament and without he ever championed the cause of the oppressed, and exhibited as much patience in dying of cancer as in writing his history.

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The phenomenon of two suns in the sky at the same time seen at Chard on July 12th and 19th, 1662, is said to have been witnessed at Frome on August 5th of the same year.

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#### AN ALMSHOUSE ROMANCE.

Lying just off the main street at Minehead in a lane leading behind the new Market House is a row of old-fashioned cottages occupied by aged inhabitants, and visitors who chance to stray this way may notice above the door of the centre cottage a brass tablet, which reads:—“Robert Quirke, sonne of James Quirke, built this Howse Ano. 1630, and doth give it to the use of the Poore of this Parish for ever and for better maintenance I doe give my two Inner Sellers at the Inner end of the key and cursed bee that man that shall convert it to any other use than for the use of the Poore 1630.” Under these words is engraved a ship with the inscription beneath,

God's Providence  
Is my Inheritance.  
R.E.Q.

Among the Dunster Castle muniments exists an indenture made August 5th, 1629, recording the grant by the Lord of the Manor to Robert Quirke of “a piece or parcel of the waste land of the manor of Mynehed. . . . lying near the cross in the Markett Place in Mynehed . . . . upon which he intends by God's permission to build an Almshouse and to use the same for the relief, succour, and comfort of the poor distressed persons of the parish.” In his will, dated 4th July, 1648, Robert Quirke wrote:—“And whereas it has pleased God that I have built an almshouse in the town of Minehead aforesaid, containing several dwelling-houses, I do give the said houses unto the poor of town of Minehead aforesaid for ever.” The Quirk family, who were well-to-do shipowners in these days, have long since died out, but the charity continues, thanks to the generosity of a not-long-deceased resident of Minehead, who bequeathed a considerable amount to the trustees. In the ship engraved on the plate and the couplet inscribed beneath it there is the suggestion of a foundation for a tradition which has been

preserved anent the causes which led to the building of these almshouses. As related by an old Minehead inhabitant quite recently, it was to the effect that Robert Quirk, with his brother, while crossing the Mediterranean in one of their vessels were caught in a terrible storm. Being men of a very pious mind they prayed for their safety, promising that if they should come through safely they would give the ship and the cargo to the poor of Minehead. Their prayers were answered, the sea became calm, and they reached the port of Minehead unscathed. Although safe again on dry land, however, they did not forget their promise, but redeemed it by selling the cargo, breaking up the ship, and using the timber, with other materials, in building the almshouses, and the ship's bell was mounted in a wooden frame on one of the cottages. There is at this present day an old bell hanging in a turret which strides the roof of one of the cottages, and up to fifty years ago, and even later, it was used as a fire alarm for the town. In the records which exist respecting the foundation of the almshouses there is, however, no mention of the bell or any reference which would go to confirm the pretty tradition above related.

—II. W. KILLE.

### AUGUST 7.—ROBERT BLAKE DIED, 1657.

The date of the death of Robert Blake is frequently given as August 7th, 1657, and perhaps equally often as August 17th. Both the Rev. A. H. Powell and Mr. S. G. Jarman in their Histories of Bridgwater give August 7th, and this date is also recorded in the inscription beneath the stained glass window in St. Margaret's, Westminster. Mr. Willis Watson—following many of the best authorities—has thought it better to treat the death as having occurred on August 17th, and the admirable account of Blake's life and death which he has been good enough to send us will appear under that date. It is simply in order to anticipate any question in the mind of any of our readers that we insert this note under to-day's date, and we think it well to quote here the inscription beneath the memorial window placed in St. Margaret's, Westminster, about 30 years ago:—

TO . THE . GLORY . OF . GOD . AND . TO . THE  
MEMORY . OF . COLONEL . ROBERT . BLAKE .  
ADMIRAL . AT . SEA . AND . CHIEF . FOUNDER . OF .  
ENGLAND'S . NAVAL . SUPREMACY . DIED . AUGUST  
7TH . 1657 . EJECTED . FROM . HIS . GRAVE . IN  
THE . ABBEY . AND . BURIED . IN . ST. MARGARET'S  
CHURCH . 1661.

### AUGUST 9.—STAG HUNTING.

Stag hunting commences in Somerset the second week in August, and lasts to about April. The first two months—says Page in "An Exploration of Exmoor"—are devoted exclusively to hunting the stag; the remainder of the season being given to the hinds—which again may not be hunted at any age, not, indeed, till they are at least three years old. The hills of Exmoor have from time immemorial been associated with the traditions of the chase. Norman William is said to have loved the red deer as if he had been their father. Exmoor then had three foresters, but there is no mention of Exmoor itself in Doomsday. Edward II., on one occasion, ordered 20 stags to be taken from its preserves; but beyond the regular visits of the Forest Justices there seems to have been little Royal interference with it until the reign of James I. The Crown seems always to have held Exmoor in small esteem. It was leased by the Tudor monarchs, and was sold outright by the Commonwealth to one James Boeve, the son of a Huguenot fugitive from Flanders, who settled at Simonsbath. Exmoor was originally a forest. It was, probably, a Royal preserve in Saxon times. King John, at any rate, made extensive encroachments upon it from his hunting lodge at Axbridge, while in the seventh year of Edward I. a perambulation of its boundaries was made by a Royal Commission. Under the Normans Exmoor had become amenable to the notorious forest laws of those days—laws administered on barbarous principles, with barbarous penalties, chiefly in the King's interests, by a body known as the Forest Courts. In 1202, however, King John was moved to pass a "Charter of the Forest," which exempted Devon from these odious laws "up to the metes and bounds of the ancient regards of Dartmoor and Exmoor." Strictly speaking, therefore, Exmoor has never been part of Devon. A hundred and fifty years later the forestership passed by purchase from the family of Roger de Beauchamp to that of Roger de Mortimer, Earl of March, and thence by marriage, in 1424, to the Royal Duke of York. But it was not till the reign of Henry VII. that hunting on Exmoor came into fashion. The King was an ardent stag hunter, whereas Henry VIII., on the contrary, cared little about the sport, and settled the forest, with all its rights, upon his wife, Katherine of Aragon, who, in turn, leased it to the family of Anne Boleyn. The last named seems never to have succeeded to Exmoor, which was settled upon Lady Jane Seymour, from whom it reverted to the Crown. Like Henry VIII., Elizabeth cared more for shooting

at the deer with crossbows than hunting them. James I., following the example of Henry VIII., settled Exmoor on his wife, Anne of Denmark, whose lease to the Earl of Pembroke was renewed by Charles I. During the civil war and restoration the Exmoor deer suffered so much that on ascending the throne Charles II. forbade the killing of a single animal for five years. Thereafter the forest passed into the hands of James Butler, Marquis of Ormonde, and subsequently to the Acland family. In 1814 the lease was not renewed by Parliament, and the Forest of Exmoor ceased to be a Royal possession. In point of configuration, population, and nomenclature, Exmoor of the present day differs surprisingly little from Exmoor of the Domesday Book. The wild red deer have played a very large part in the history of Exmoor. The Exmoor stag has frequented his native haunts from time immemorial, and is a direct descendant of those great herds which centuries ago roamed over England. He is as wild now as he was then. And it was these same red deer which gave Exmoor the status—not wholly desirable at that time—of a Royal preserve.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### MINEHEAD PUNCH BOWLS.

At one time there belonged to the Manor of Minehead three punch bowls which on festive occasions were used for solemn libations. These bowls were kept in at the Plume of Feathers Hotel, there being in existence at Dunster Castle a receipt by the then proprietor, dated Jan. 13th, 1760, which states that the said bowls are handed into his keeping "in custody for the borough of Minehead." An account, bearing the date August 9th, 1765, shows that at "ye feast at ye Plume of Feathers, kept by G. Squier," the cost for filling the bowls with punch was as follows:—

"Sir Jacob," £2 2s.

"My Lady's bowl," £1 1s.

Another large bowl, 14s.

Sir Jacob was, of course, Sir Jacob Bancks, for nine successive years M.P. for Minehead, and a relative by marriage of the Luttrell family. His bowl is now preserved at Dunster Castle.

—H.W.K.

#### EGYPTIAN DAYS.

From Saxon times there have been known three days in the year termed Egyptian or unlucky days. This—always placed on the second Monday in August—is the second one of the year, the first being on the last Monday in April. In a Saxon MS. in the British Museum runs the following:—"Three days there are in



the year which we call *Egyptian days*." In the Exeter Kalendar, a MS. of about the time of Henry II., these Egyptian days are increased to twenty-four, but the smaller number is quite sufficient for reasonable people.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

### AUGUST 10.—ST. LAWRENCE.

#### GERAINT KILLED at LANG- PORT, 522.

This is St. Lawrence's-day, to which Saint the churches of Cucklington, East Harptree, Road, Stanton Prior, Wick, and Woolverton are dedicated. The old saying was that if on St. Lawrence's-day the weather be fine, fair autumn and good wine may be hoped for.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

To Mr. Watson's list of churches dedicated to this Saint we would take the liberty of adding Lydeard St. Lawrence, Priddy, and Westbury, as given in the "Bath and Wells Diocesan Kalendar." Mr. Jeboult, in his work on West Somerset, states that a revel or fair was formerly held at Lydeard St. Lawrence on 10th August.

#### ST. GERAINT.

In the "Elegy upon Geraint ab Erbyn," by the Prince-Poet Llywarch Hén, Geraint, the Prince of Dyvnaint, is represented as having been slain at the battle of Llongborth. And the date has been recorded as August 10th, 522. Sixty-seven years ago—less a month—the Rev. William Arthur Jones, M.A., read a paper at the meeting of the Somerset Archæological and Natural History Society, held at Yeovil, dealing with the point whether or not Llongborth was Langport, and his learned treatise must be always looked upon as most conclusive evidence that this battle, in which the British forces were commanded by Arthur, under the title of Emperor, and in which it is believed Cerdic—who gave his name to the town of Chard—was the leader of the Saxon army, was fought in our Somerset town of Langport. The site of the battle has, by some, been assigned to Portsmouth, but Mr. Jones, with all due deference to high authorities, submitted in his paper that there are considerations of great weight derived from the physical characteristics of the locality, from incidents mentioned in the poem—which, by the way, seems to have been written by one present at the engagement and witnessed the death of his friend and fellow warrior—and from the knowledge we have of the relative position sustained, about that time by the Cymri and the Saxons, which go far to prove that the battle celebrated by Llywarch Hén, was fought at Langport, not

at Portsmouth. The story is, however, very much based on legend, and Major, in his "Early Wars in Wessex," describes the claim by Somerset enthusiasts that the battle sung of by the Welsh Bard was fought at Langport as untenable.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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### AUGUST 12.—S. CLARA.

#### ROBERT SOUTHEY BORN, 1774

Robert Southey, poet laureate and biographer of Nelson, was born in Bristol on this day, 1774. His connection with the county is close, his father being a native of Somerset.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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Plant strawberry runners with Grouse on August 12th. Plant daffodils between Grouse and Partridge (September 1st).

—W. C. BAKER.

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### AUGUST 13.—GREAT FIRE at BRUTON, 1647

In the Bruton registers for the year 1647 appears the following poetical record:—

By furious flames this 13th day of Agaste,  
Brewton was like to be consumed to dust,  
But God in mercy quenched those flames indeed,  
As then so allwayes hees our help at need.

—E.D.

\* \* \*

Friday is considered an unlucky day, because of the Crucifixion; and when, as in this month, the 13th day falls on a Friday, it is thought to be doubly unfortunate for business or speculation, while to move into a new home on such a date is asking for trouble.

—C. S. WHITTAKER.

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### AUGUST 14.—ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, 733.

An eclipse interesting to natives of Somerset is recorded this year. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under the date A.D. 733 says:—"In this year Æthelbald captured Somerton; and the sun was eclipsed, and all the sun's disc was like a black shield; and Aeca was driven from his bishopric." The Rev. S. J. Johnson, in his comprehensive work on "Historical and Future Eclipses," supplies the date of this eclipse as August 11th, and time at about 8.15 a.m. Schmurrer puts it five days later, but is probably mistaken.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

## AUGUST 15.—S. MARY.

## ASSUMPTION of the VIRGIN.

On Saint Mary's Day sunshine  
Brings much good wine.

To-day was celebrated a festival established in the seventh century in honour of the assumption of the Virgin Mary, it being a matter of faith that the soul and body of the Holy Mother was carried up to heaven by Christ and the angels. The Assumption is the seventh of the Joys of Mary, the preceding six being (1) the annunciation (2) the visitation (3) the nativity (4) the adoration of the wise men (5) the presentation in the temple (6) finding Christ among the doctors.

But in this part of England at least the joys were generally given as twelve, and differ greatly from those enumerated. The following are fragment of an old rhyme which I often heard from a dweller in Somerset in my early childhood. I am unaware if they are well or widely known:—

The first girt joy that Mary had,

It wer the joy of one,

To see her own son Jesus,

To zuck a turlrace bone,

(To suck at her breast bone).

The next girt joy that Mary had

It wer the joy of two,

To see her own son Jesus,

To make the lame to go(o).

The next girt joy that Mary had,

It were the joy of three,

To see her own son Jesus,

To make the blind to zee.

The next girt joy that Mary had,

It were the joy of five,

To see her own son Jesus,

To make the dead alive.

Or

To bring the dead to life.

(The latter version more commonly).

The next girt joy that Mary had,

It wer the joy of seven,

To see her own son Jesus,

Throw open the doors (gates) of heaven.

The next girt joy that Mary had,

It wer the joy of nine,

To see her own son Jesus,

Turn water into wine.

The next girt joy that Mary had,

It wer the joy of ten,

To see her own son Jesus,

To give his life for men.

Or

To die for his fellow men.

The next girt joy that Mary had,  
 It wer the joy of (e)leven,  
 To see her own son Jesus,  
 To enter the doors (gates) of heaven.  
 The last girt joy that Mary had,  
 It wer the joy of twelve, &c.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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**AUGUST 15.—DE QUINCEY BORN, 1785.**

Thomas de Quincey, author of "Confessions of an Opium Eater," was born on this date. It is worth noting in this column for the reason that de Quincey was one of that coterie of intellectuals who were the guests at Nether Stowey of Tom Poole, the literary tanner. At Tom Poole's humble cottage here Coleridge met de Quincey for the first time in 1807.

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**AUGUST 17.—DEATH OF ROBERT BLAKE,  
 1657.**

**SIR H. STAFFORD EXECUTED  
 AT BRIDGWATER, 1470.**

To-day is the 263rd anniversary of the death of Robert Blake, a man of whom all Somerset people are proud, for he was a man whose memory will ever live in the pages of history. The West has bred many a sea dog, and their names will never be forgotten. Drake, Grenville, Raleigh, Frobisher, Hawkins—the list might be extended. Navigators, explorers, discoverers, buccaneers, poets, historians, all rolled into one, seemed to possess these brave fellows, who did their part—and a large part, too—in making Great Britain what she is to-day. And cheek by jowl with the names I have mentioned is that of Robert Blake, of Bridgwater, a man of many parts, Admiral as well as General, reckless, daring, brave, a West Country dog, who, when he once fastened his teeth, never let go until he obtained the mastery, as the brilliant Van Tromp discovered to his cost. There are no more attractive pages in history than those with which Blake and Van Tromp are associated. There is no more picturesque incident—legend it may be—in Naval warfare, than the story of the great Tromp sailing up and down the Channel with the broom at his mast head suggestive of his sweeping the British Fleet from off the seas. There is no more stirring story than the bloody battle which was fought when Blake hauled down that broom and whipped the Dutchman for his insolent suggestion. Can one find recorded braver deeds done by any General than those associated with Blake, who so gallantly defended Lyme Regis,

and vowed that he would rather eat his boots than surrender Taunton? Blake, we know, was not called upon to make the indigestible meal. Where can a more chivalrous character be found? Not in the pages of history. It is refreshing to-day, when we see miserable specimens of humanity, men who prefer the foreigner to the Englishman, men who preach sedition, men who foment class hatred, men who would cheerfully ruin their country if they thought they could derive a little personal benefit, when selfishness is rampant, to turn to the actions of a man like Blake and think of his unselfish patriotism. Before everything the object of this noble son of Somerset was to uphold the honour and the interests of England. It is said that when urged to declare against Cromwell's assumption of supreme power, he replied "It is not for us to mind State affairs, but to keep foreigners from fooling us." And Blake ever kept this principle before him. The King of Portugal realised it. So did the King of France. So did the Dutch nation.

Blake was a born General, a born Admiral, and a born fighter. He received a good education at the Bridgwater Grammar School, and, subsequently, at Wadham College, from which so many West of England men have gone forth to fame and fortune. The family circumstances were chequered. But Robert Blake appears to have weathered the storms, and his career as a merchant placed him in easy circumstances. He was returned M.P. for Bridgwater in 1640. Then he lost his seat. In 1645 he was back again to the House of Commons. But war was in the air, and Blake joined the Army raised by Sir John Horner—another Somerset man—in 1642. In July, 1643, he was commanding an important Parliamentary post in Bristol. Although the city surrendered to the Royalists, no fault was attachable to Blake. He came out with clean hands, determined to rub off any spots which might have attached to his escutcheon. His opportunity came soon. The Royalists, after the fall of Bristol, were sweeping the West of England. But that tiny little fishing village, Lyme Regis, was one of the few places to distinguish itself. When Blake reached Lyme, he threw up a few earth-works. Prince Rupert sent in a peremptory demand to the place to surrender. He reckoned without his host. Blake was behind the entrenchments, and did not propose to give up without a struggle. But the Somerset General stiffened his back and set to work. As the days increased in number, so the defences strengthened, and "after Prince Rupert had lain before it a month, it was much more likely to hold out than it was the first day he came before it."

Next we find Blake taking Taunton from the

Royalists—and sticking to it; for he recognised its strategic importance. He had a difficult job, but bravery and a sense of humour saved the situation. His troops were on short commons. One pig remained. Blake utilised the animal to a purpose. He had the poor thing taken to all the outposts. At each point it was well thrashed until its squeals rang out over a wide area. The besiegers were led to believe Blake was well provided with bacon. They relaxed their efforts, and Taunton was relieved on the 11th of May. To this day the song is sung:—

Let Taunton men be mindful then,

In keeping of this day,

We'll give good praise, with joy always,

Upon the eleventh of May.

After his military successes Blake was appointed to a Naval command. He was 50 years of age when he went to sea; he was only 57 when he died. And yet how many bold actions were crowded in these seven years, how many brave struggles, how many acts of strategy. Blake was destined to strike such blows as placed the Naval supremacy of this country above all doubt and for all time. He met his old opponent, Prince Rupert, on sea, and thrashed him as he did on land. The King of Portugal interfered. But Blake would permit no foreigner to fool him, and "went for" the King. So the story goes on. Tromp declined to salute a British man o' war. The Son of Somerset sent a shot across the Dutchman's bows to teach him manners. Van Tromp had 42 ships at command; Blake had 15. But that didn't matter to the brave Bridgwater man. At it he went, hammer and tongs, and the Somerset dog came out on top. Once the Dutch Admiral succeeded in checking the Somerset Admiral. But it was only for a time; Blake was not the man to take a licking quietly. He bided his time, came to grips with his old enemy, fought him for three days, captured 11 war ships and 30 merchant men from the Dutch, and in doing so had only one ship sunk. He turned his attention to others, and blockaded the Spanish Fleet in Cadiz. Then the following year Blake accomplished one of the most brilliant Naval exploits on record. While the Spanish Plate Fleet was lying at anchor in the Bay of Santa Cruz, under the protection of powerful batteries, Blake sailed straight into the bay and destroyed the lot.

Blake's life teaches us what great deeds a resolute man may perform. He offers an example of loyalty, and shows the spirit of the true Englishman. Just a little story in conclusion. He was at Magdala in 1645. An English seaman had committed a grievous offence. The Governor

dealt with the man. Complaint was made to Blake. The characteristics of our Somerset hero asserted themselves. "If complaint had been made to me," said Blake, "the man should have been punished, but I will have you know, and the whole world know, that none but an Englishman shall chastise an Englishman!" The name of Blake will live for ever with those other West of England heroes who helped to build up this great Empire. Of Blake the poet has sung:—

Thy name  
Was heard in thunder through th' affrighted  
shores  
Of pale Iberia, of submissive Gaul,  
And Tagus, trembling to his utmost source.  
O, ever faithful, vigilant, and brave,  
Thou bold asserter of Britannia's fame,  
Unconquerable Blake.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

(See also note under Aug. 7th).

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#### SIR H. STAFFORD EXECUTED, 1470.

Sir Humphrey Stafford, Earl of Devon, was decapitated at Bridgwater on this day in the 9th year of the reign of Edward IV. (1470), having been captured at a village within Brent Marsh. His body was buried at Glastonbury, in an arch of the south cross of the Abbey Church there. The Earl, with the Earl of Pembroke and Earl Rivers, fought with the King's troops at Edgecote and were beaten. All three were executed later by orders of the Duke of Clarence.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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#### AUGUST 21.—PRIDDY FAIR.

Everybody in the Mendip district knows the saying, "The first rain after Priddy Fair is the first rain of winter." This fair, which is famous all through this part of Somerset, has been held at Priddy on August 21st for over 500 years. It is said that it was held at Wells until 1348, but it was then removed to the more salubrious heights of Priddy, and never returned to the Cathedral City. By 1352 Priddy Fair was known far and wide, and in that year it was chosen as the first place in Somerset for the publication of the new Weights and Measures Act, which compelled all tradesmen to adopt in their dealings with their customers a uniform standard of measurement.

**AUGUST 22.—KING HENRY VII. AND HIS  
QUEEN AT BRISLINGTON,  
1502.**

**QUEEN ELIZABETH at BATH,  
1574.**

On the 22nd August, 1502, King Henry VII. rode from Bristol with the Queen, and both paid their devotions at the shrine of St. Anne, which stood in the wood not far from Keynsham, but in the parish of Brislington. The chapel was founded by Roger, first Lord de la Warre, in the end of the 13th century, and was a notable place even then. Henry VII. visited it in 1502.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**AUGUST 23.—A MIRACLE AT PORLOCK,  
1499.**

A strange story of a miracle at Porlock is preserved among the records at Wells. It concerns a commission which was issued by Bishop Oliver King to enquire into a curious happening at Porlock on this date in 1499. One John Strange was occupied in hewing wood, and, on stopping for his mid-day meal, observed on cutting his bread that blood flowed from the incision. It made such an impression upon him, and upon sundry others whose attention he drew to the occurrence, that an official enquiry and an examination of witnesses ultimately took place. It is not officially stated in the commission's report, although it may have been suspected, that John Strange cut more than he could eat, viz., his finger, from whence flowed the blood.

—H.W.K.

**AUGUST 24.—ST. BARTHOLOMEW.  
THE FIRST YEOVIL FAIR.  
SOMERSET CLERGY DIS-  
PLACED, 1662.**

This is St. Bartholomew's-day. The following Somerset churches are dedicated to this saint:—Crewkerne, West Cranmore, Ling, Ubley, and Yeovilton. It is commonly said St. Bartholomew preached in the Indies, and was flayed alive by order of Astyages, brother to Palemon, King of Armenia. The day has been called "Black Bartholomew"; it may be on account of the massacre of the Protestants commenced on this day in France in the reign of Charles IX. (1572). There is much weather lore associated with this day. Should the morning begin with a hoar frost, the cold weather can be soon expected and



a hard winter. St. Bartholomew's mantle wipes dry "all the tears that St. Swithin can cry."

If the 24th of August be fair and clear,  
Then hope for a prosperous autumn that yea'.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

Saint Bartholomew,  
Brings the cold dew.

\* \* \*

As St. Bart.'s Day, so the autumn.

\* \* \*

By a deed dated 1279 King Edward granted a Fair at Axbridge on St. Bartholomew's Day to Reginald, Bishop of Bath and Wells. The importance of the grant is shown by the fact that the deed is witnessed by the Earls of Gloucester, Lincoln, and Essex, by the Archdeacons of Durham and Coventry, and others. This charter was renewed by Queen Elizabeth, who also granted three other fairs for the town. But the Fair of St. Bartholomew was the most important, as it was also the most ancient, of all: and it is a curious fact that whilst the three less important fairs are still held each year, the great Fair of St. Bartholomew has long been discontinued, and an attempt made to revive it in 1790 or 1792 proved unsuccessful.

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#### THE FIRST YEOVIL FAIR.

The first fair was held at Yeovil because the King's beloved in Christ, Elizabeth, abbess of the monastery of the Holy Saviour and of Saints Mary the Virgin and Brigitt, wanted her convent to have a larger income than it had in the year 1402. So the King (Henry IV.) signed a charter containing these words:—"We, of our special grace, have granted to our beloved in Christ, Elizabeth, the abbess, and the convent of the Monastery of the Holy Saviour and of Saints Mary the Virgin and Brigitt, of the order of St. Augustine, called of the Holy Saviour, that she and her successors for ever may have two fairs annually at the Burgh or town of Yevile, in Somerset, namely, one fair on the eve and on the feast of St. Bartholomew and for the two days next following, and the other fair on the eve and on the feast of St. Leonard and for the two days next following, so that all persons who wish to come to the said fairs to buy and sell their merchandise may do so without let or hindrance, provided that the aforesaid fairs be not to the injury of other fairs in the neighbourhood. . . . In testimony whereof we have cause these open letters to be made. Witness I myself at West-

minster on the 23rd day of February, the third year of our reign, with the authorization of Parliament."

\* \* \*

#### BLACK BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY, 1662.

Mr. Edward Vivian writes:—"On this day, 1662, 2,000 ministers—the 'Non-conformists'—were ejected from the pulpits of the Church of England. A number of these were Somerset men, and I think this an appropriate place to deal with them, though I much regret I have not the materials at hand to enable me to undertake the task, but must leave it for one of your local historians."

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#### SOMERSET CLERGY DISPLACED, 1662.

Mr. E. Vivian regrets that he has not at hand a list of the clergy who were displaced in Somerset on 24th August, 1662, by the operation of the Act of Uniformity. The following list is, I believe, approximately complete: but it is possible that a few of them may have been displaced in 1660, in order to the re-instatement of incumbents who had been deprived or "sequestrated" under the Long Parliament. (Abbreviations: R., Rector; V., Vicar; C., Curate; Ch., Chapelry; D., Donative). [2]

Angersleigh (R.), Lawrence Musgrave.  
 Ash Priors (Ch.), John Galpine.  
 Batcombe (R.), Richard Alleine, M.A.  
 Bath, George Long.  
 Bath, William Green.  
 Bicknoller (Ch.), Thomas Safford.  
 Blackdon (C. or D.), Mr. Westlock.  
 Bratton Seymour (R.), Jerome Littlejohn.  
 Bruton (C. or D.), William Parfet.  
 Buckland, Samuel Stodden.  
 Cadbury, North (R.), Samuel Craddock.  
 Cameley (R.), Richard Batchelour, B.D.  
 Charlescombe (V.), Robert Pinney.  
 Charlinch (R.), Francis Cross, M.D.  
 Cheddon (R.), Edward Warr.  
 Chedsey (R.), Henry Jeanes, M.A.  
 Clutton (R.), Matthew Allat.  
 Combe St. Nicholas (V.), Henry Backaller.  
 Combe Hay (R.), Thomas Creese.  
 Crewkerne, Matthew Tomkins.\*  
 Cricket, North (R.), John Forner.  
 Cricket St. Thomas (R.), John Langdale.  
 Crossecombe (Ch.), John Whitborne.  
 Curry Mallet (R.), John Baker.  
 Curry, North (Ch.), George Piercee.  
 Doultling (V.), Gracious Franklyn.  
 Dowlish (R.), John Hunt.  
 Downhead (Ch.), Matthew Warren.  
 Dulverton (R.), Henry Berry.  
 Donyatt, Henry Albin.

Elworthy (R.), John Hill.  
 Fivehead (V.), Mr. Fairfield.  
 Frome (V.), John Humphrey, M.A.  
 Glastonbury, Samuel Winney.  
 Heathfield (R.), Thomas Willis.  
 Hill Bishop (Ch.), Nathaniel Charlton.  
 Ilchester, Mr. Oak.\*  
 Ilminster, James Strong.\*  
 Kilmersden (V.), Thomas Grove.  
 Kingsbury (V.), Mr. Pain.  
 Langport (Ch.), John Bush.  
 Lidiard St. Lawrence (R.), John Wakeley.  
 Martock (V.), James Stevenson.  
 Melles (R.), Richard Fairclough.  
 Milburn Port (V.), William Hopkins.  
 Montacute, Samuel Oliver.  
 Montacute, Charles Darby.\*  
 Norton-sub-Hamden (R.), Benj. Collins.  
 Parret, North (?) (R.), Jeremiah French.  
 Pitminster (V.), Thomas Forward.  
 Porlock (R.), Alexander Robinson.  
 Puddimore (R.), Josiah Wyat.  
 Ruishton (Ch.), Timothy Batt.  
 Staplegrave (Ch.), John Gardner.  
 Stoke Trister (R.), John Batt.  
 Taunton, Magdalene (V.), Geo. Newton, M.A.  
 Taunton Magdalene (Asst.) Joseph Alleine,  
 B.A.  
 Taunton St. James, John Glanville.  
 Temple Combe (C. or D.), John Darby.  
 Tull, Benj. Berry.  
 Ubley (R.), William Thomas, M.A.  
 Upton Noble (Ch.), Immanuel Harford.  
 Wells, St. Andrew's, Cornelius Burgess, D.D.\*  
 Wells, St. Andrews, John Chetwind.\*  
 Wembden (V.), Tobias Andrews.  
 White Stanton (R.), Richard Smith.  
 Wilton (Ch.), George Bindon.  
 Wincanton (C. or D.), John Sacheverell.  
 Winstford, Joseph Chadwick, M.A.  
 Winsham (V.), William Ball.  
 Wiveliscombe (V.), George Day.  
 Yeovil (V.), Henry Butler, M.A.  
 Yeovil or Yeovilton, Dr. Martin.\*

To these may be added the following in the city of Bristol:—

Cathedral, John Knowles.  
 St. James (R.), John Paul.  
 St. Ewens, Matthew Hazard.  
 St. Nicholas (V.), Ralph Farmer.  
 S.S. Philip and James (V.), Edwd. Hancock.  
 Not Beneficed, Thomas Ewins and William Thomas.

Those indicated by a \* afterwards conformed.  
 We have, in addition to the above, the names of at least twelve incumbents of sequestered

benefices who were displaced in 1660 : but these cannot be fairly counted among the " Bartholomew Men."

—T. G. CRIPPEN.

Memorial Hall, E.C.

**AUGUST 25.—DUKE OF MONMOUTH AT  
WHITELACKINGTON, 1680.  
SIR FRANCIS DRAKE  
MARRIED, 1595.**

At the close of the summer of 1680, the Duke of Monmouth resolved upon his celebrated "Progresses." His reception in the West must have exceeded his most sanguine anticipations. From Longleat House, Monmouth passed over the border into Somerset. His first stoppage was at Brympton, where he visited Sir John Sydenham ; then he went on to see Mr. William Strode, of Barrington Court ; next to the Spekes at Whitelackington ; then to Ford Abbey ; into Devonshire, back to Whitelackington, and again to Longleat. While at Whitelackington, Sir John Sydenham, who was connected with the Poulett family at Hinton St. George by marriage, devised the pleasant conceit of treating the Duke to a junket feast in Hinton Park, the Lord of the domain at that time being a minor. Thousands of people were present. A strange incident occurred. From the time of Edward the Confessor, in the middle of the 11th century, to that of George I., in 1714, it was the popular belief in England that the touch of a King, like the touch of the extraordinary man who was the seventh son of a seventh son, was omnipotent for the cure of King's Evil. The father of Monmouth, Charles II., during the twelve years of his reign, touched no less than 92,107 persons, and, on the testimony of his physician, Dr. Wiseman, all were cured. To touch for the "evil," indeed, was part of the public duties of the Monarch. Elizabeth Parcet, a martyr to the dreadful complaint, was present at the junket feast, and she contrived to help herself to what it had probably never entered into Monmouth's head to give. The seventh son of a seventh son had failed to bring her relief, and she therefore seized the opportunity of testing the fountain head. On the Duke emerging from the feast, she made a rush through the crowd and seized his hand. The effect was marvellous. We have it on the testimony of one Henry Clark (a minister, of Crewkerne), of a couple of Captains, of a clergyman, and of four other witnesses, that within two days all the woman's wounds were healed, and the record thereof may be found to this day in the Library of the British Museum.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**SIR FRANCIS DRAKE MARRIED, 1595.**

Sir Francis Drake married Elizabeth Sydenham at Stogumber Church on August 25th, 1595. A well-known tradition tells us that in the days of Queen Elizabeth the Manor of Combe Sydenham was held by Geo. Sydenham, whose daughter Elizabeth was betrothed to Sir Francis Drake. Before leaving on one of his voyages Sir Francis bade his sweetheart a fond farewell, and said "Be trae, dear Bess; I may be away some years, but I will send you tokens that I am alive." Several years passed by, and as the fair Elizabeth had heard no tidings of her absent lover she assumed that he was dead, and agreed to wed another suitor, who pressed her to marry him. The wedding day was fixed, and Elizabeth Sydenham was actually leaving the house for the church to be married to her new lover, when a large stone cannon ball, 100 lbs. in weight, fell from the skies and rolled between them. Elizabeth Sydenham recognised it at once as a token from Sir Francis that he was still alive, and refused to proceed with the marriage, but awaited the return of her original lover, whom she married, as mentioned above.

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**AUGUST 26.—HELEN MATHERS BORN 1853.  
YARLINGTON FAIR.**

Ellen or Helen Buckingham Mathers was born on this day, 1853, at Misterton, Crewkerne. At the youthful age of twenty she was beginning those naive but precocious novels which have made her name famous wherever the English language is spoken. "Comin' Through the Rye" was published in 1875, and that lively story has since run through some fifty-five English editions. In the following year she married the distinguished surgeon Dr. Henry Reeves, but her marriage did not prevent her from publishing a quick succession of stories, "Cherry Ripe," 1877; "My Lady Green Sleeves," 1878; "Story of a Sin," 1879; "Eyre's Acquittal," 1881, and many others, as well as a volume of poems.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

A saying, which was formerly very familiar in East Somerset, was "The first rain after Yarlinton Fair brings winter," but, alas, Yarlinton Fair ceased to be in 1900. An advertisement in the *Western Gazette* in August of that year gave notice that this ancient chartered fair would be discontinued with the consent and approval of the Lord of the Manor. Thus was ignominiously brought to an end a fair which had been held for nearly 600 years, being granted

by Edward II. to Simon de Montacute in 1315. The charter was witnessed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops of Norwich, Bath and Wells, and Exeter; the Earls of Lancaster, Warwick and Arundell,\* and other witnesses. Old inhabitants say that at Fair time anybody in Yarlinton could sell liquor.

**AUGUST 27.—ST. DECUMAN.**

**KING JOHN AT WELLS, 1216.**

**KING JAMES II. at BRIDGE-  
WATER, 1686.**

**BLAGDON FAIR (Last Friday  
in August).**

St. Decuman was commemorated on this day. He is closely associated with Watchet, where he lived in the 7th century, near the site of the present church, which bears his name. Of him many stories are related, the principal of which is that he was drifted over from Wales on a hurdle, or, as some say, on his cloak, and landed at Watchet. He was nourished by a cow which, of her own will, followed him whithersoever he went. Not caring for the low flat shore, he scaled a hill near at hand and built there a kind of shrine for worship and a cell for his own habitation. At last he suffered for his faith. When the heathen cut off his head, they left his body dead and dishonoured, but he, not willing that his body, erewhile a living temple of the Holy Spirit, should be left in such a state, carrying his head in his hands, took it to a spring, where he cleansed it from all impurities. And there his body was found, decently laid out, by his disciples. They buried him in front of the altar in his own small chapel, and afterwards built a church over his remains on the hill where he had taught and worshipped, and for all ages it has borne the saint's name and is known as the Church of St. Decuman.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

The following extract taken from the "London Gazette" of August 30th, 1686, shows that King James visited the scene of the Battle of Sedgemoor and the town of Bridgwater on the above date :—

Bridgwater, August 27th.—His Majesty parted from Bristol about six this morning, having there, as likewise at Marlborough, touched a great number of people who had the evil. About five this afternoon His Majesty arrived here, viewing in his passage Weston Moor. The Mayor and Aldermen of this place, in their formalities,

attended His Majesty and the people followed His Majesty with continued acclamations.

\* \* \*

In olden days a prosperous fair was held at Blagdon, Taunton, on the last Friday in August, and superstition has it, in the Hill country, that the first rain after that event marked the commencement of winter. Although just at the present we are experiencing a late summer, should we have a shower of rain, according to superstition, winter will have set in.

—L.

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**AUGUST 28.—KING JOHN at BATH, 1621.**

**DAVID HARTLEY DIED, 1757.**

David Hartley was born in Yorkshire on the 30th August, 1705, the son of a clergyman. He was intended for the Church, and always remained on intimate terms with the greatest Churchmen of his time, but owing to change of views at college he abandoned his intentions, and devoted himself to medicine. He was practically the leader of the English Association school of psychologists. After practising successfully at Newark, Bury St. Edmunds, and London, he settled at Bath. Here he died two days before his fifty-second birthday, August 28th, 1757, although authorities disagree upon these dates.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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**AUGUST 29.—JOHN LOCKE BORN AT WRINGTON, 1632.**

**KING JOHN at ILCHESTER, 1205.**

To-day is the anniversary of the birth of John Locke at Wrington in 1632. Landor has described him to be the most elegant of prose writers. He was a great man, an original thinker, and a Somerset worthy of the best type. His writings may not enjoy popularity. They cannot be skimmed; he must either be read or left alone. And, therefore, he is usually left severely alone. A local biographer of Locke says it is no little thing Locke did for his generation. He awoke the spirit of free enquiry, with its habit of toleration. And it took a man who was both brave and able to do that two hundred and twenty years ago. And neither then nor at any other time in his literary career could it be said that he wrote for money. He received £30 for his "Essay Concerning Human Understanding." Writing was not a lucrative calling in the seventeenth century. John Locke's father was a

Somerset 'squire living at Belluton House, Stanton Drew, when his son was born at Wrington. It is likely enough John spent most of his boyhood at Belluton House, which he inherited after his father's death. Locke was educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford. He accepted the position of tutor to the young Ashley, who became the famous Lord Shaftesbury of Queen Anne's reign. Locke lived for six years in Holland, working steadily at his great book. James II. believed that the philosopher was among those who prompted Monmouth in the ill-fated rebellion which ended at Sedgemoor; and the English Ambassador demanded, without success, that the Dutch Government should deliver John Locke into the hands of James. Foiled in this, the King caused Locke's name to be crossed out of the books of Christ Church. Brighter days dawned when the Prince of Orange became King of England. Locke returned to England, was well received by William, and given appointments that would provide him with money and leisure for continuing his researches. Sir Thomas Masham, of High Laver, Essex, invited Locke to live at his home, and there the philosopher thought and wrote until 1704, when his health failed him, and he died on October 26th.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**AUGUST 30.—KING JOHN AT CURRY  
MALLET, 1205.**

**AUGUST 31.—JAMES LACKINGTON BORN  
AT WELLINGTON, 1746.  
KING JOHN AT TAUNTON,  
1205.**

**ADMIRAL ARTHUR PHILLIP  
DIED 1814.**

**HENRY BYAM, BORN 1580.**

Lackington, though he can scarcely be called a Somerset worthy, was an extraordinary character. He was born at Wellington in 1746 of poor parents, and he has described his life in his "Memoirs," but it is necessary to obtain a considerable grain of salt to swallow all his statement. His grandfather is said to have died in a ditch, and his father is described as a perambulating beer barrel, while his mother lived on oatmeal water and turnips. He seemed to have been full of mischief. At the age of 10 he began to earn his living by selling half-penny fruit pies from house to house. When he married he and his wife are said to have had only a half-penny to



start house-keeping on. In 1773 Lackington went to London and opened a bookstall and shoe-maker's shop. He subsequently borrowed £5 from a fund started by "Mr. Wesley's people" to assist deserving members of their society. His business increased rapidly, and in 1791 he calculated that he was selling about 100,000 volumes each year at a profit of £1,000. His well-known memoirs were first published in 1791, and clearly proved he was no longer a Methodist. In 1804 he gave up business and retired to Thornbury, Gloucestershire. He seems to have returned to the fold, for in 1805 he built a chapel for the Wesleyans at Alveston and became a local preacher. In 1806 he removed to Taunton, and built and endowed a Wesleyan Chapel there. Two years afterwards he went to Budleigh Salterton, Devon, where he also erected and endowed a chapel. He died in that town on November 22nd, 1815.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### ADMIRAL ARTHUR PHILLIP DIED 1814.

Arthur Phillip, destined to be the founder of the Australian Commonwealth, was born October 11th, 1738, in London. He entered Greenwich School at 13, and remained there two and a-half years, leaving to go to sea, December 1st, 1753. He left the Royal Navy to enter the Portuguese service, in which he served some years, rising to post-captain. This service, through no fault of his own, he was compelled to leave, and he rejoined the British Navy, and in 1781, at the age of 43, commanded a frigate. Six years later he was selected to command the force to be sent to Australia, and on April 2nd, 1787, was formally commissioned Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of New South Wales, which term then included half the Australian continent. He sailed the following month with eleven ships, which carried over one thousand souls, three-fourths of them convicts. The equipment of Phillip's fleet may be illustrated by saying that the convicts' guards were not supplied with ammunition for their muskets, and change of clothing for the 180 women convicts was left behind. Nevertheless Phillip proved admirably suited for his task; he faced famine, quelled mutiny, overcame every difficulty, and accomplished what he had been sent to do—found a penal settlement at the Antipodes. Owing to failing health he left in December, 1792, the Colony he had so ably established, and the troubles of the succeeding Governors show his own administration in bright relief. The British Government awarded him a pension of £500 a year, and promotion through the various grades of Admiral followed gradually, until on

the 4th June, 1814, he was promoted Admiral of the Blue. At that time he was entirely crippled, and he died at his house in Bath on August 31st, 1814.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

On this date in 1057 there died at Bromley, Earl Leofric, husband of the celebrated Lady Godiva, who freed the people of Coventry from their servile tenure. The Earl was succeeded by his son, Algar, Earl of Mercia, who is mentioned in *Domesday Book* as Lord of the Manor of Porlock in the reign of Edward the Confessor. Somerset has thus a certain association with the fair Lady Godiva.

—H.W.K.

#### HENRY BYAM, BORN 1580.

In 1580 the birth took place on this date at Luccombe of Henry Byam, destined to become a famous divine. When he attained manhood he had become, as Savage says, "one of the most acute and eminent preachers of the age." He came into prominence on the outbreak of the civil war when he was one of the first arrested for their loyalty, but making his escape he joined the King at Oxford, where he was created doctor in divinity. Owing to the assistance which he rendered to the King's cause, he and his family suffered much persecution, and his wife and daughter, in trying to escape to Wales, were both drowned. He died on June 16th, 1669, and was buried in Luccombe Church.

Dr. Byam's works were "Thirteen Sermons, most of them preached before His Majesty Charles II. in his exile." Among them is one entitled "A Return from Argier, preached at Minehead, 16th March, 1627, at the re-admission of a relapsed Christian into our church, on Rev. ii., part of the 5th verse." The poor lad, who appears to have been taken prisoner by the Turks and compelled to profess the Mahommedan faith, and then to have made his escape and returned to Minehead, had to endure a long discourse while standing in the church of St. Michael, clad in the Turkish costume in which he had escaped. In one part of his sermon the preacher addressed him directly in the following words:—"You whom God suffered to fall and yet of His infinite mercy vouchsafed graciously to bring home, not only to your country and kindred, but to the profession of your first faith and to the church and sacraments again, let me say to you, but in a better hour, as sometime Joshua to Achan: "Give glory to God, sing praises unto Him who hath delivered your soul from the nethermost hell. When I

think upon your Turkish attire, that emblem of apostacy and witness of your wofull fall, I do remember Adam and his figleave breeches; they could neither conceal his shame nor cover his nakedness. I do think upon David clad in Saul's armour. How could you hope in this unsanctified habit to attain Heaven?" While Dr. Byam seems to have overlooked the fact that the poor apostate probably had either to embrace his captor's faith or die, he made some allowance in his sermon for his position, and protected him against the persecutions of young Minehead of that day.

—H.W.K.



## SEPTEMBER.

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun,  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch  
eaves run.

KEATS.

This is the ninth month of the year; anciently it was the seventh, as its name imports. Our Saxon ancestors called it "Gerst-monat," because barley, which that month commonly yielded, was called gerst. The author of "The Mirror of Months" reminds us that the year is on the wane. It has reached the summit of the hill, and is not only looking, but descending, into the valley below. The year steps onward towards its temporary decay, if not so rejoicingly, even more majestically and gracefully than it does towards its revivification. And if September is not so bright with promise, and so buoyant with hope, as May, it is even more imbued with the spirit of serene repose, in which the only true, because the only continuous, enjoyment consists. Spring "never is but always to be blest;" but September is the month of consummations—the fulfiller of all promises—the fruition of all hopes—the era of all completeness. Very few flowers open in this month, and it is to the ripening fruits that we are chiefly indebted for the variegation of colour in the landscape of nature. Many birds will be off to warmer countries, and this is the month for nut gathering and cider-making—a busy and important industry in our county, the home of the finest cider in the world. How beautiful the Somerset orchards will look this month. Walter Raymond's description of the orchards through the year is delightful. He says:—Even in leafless winter their moss-clad branches, with the sunlight from a clear, frosty sky glinting between the twigs to meet the dripping rime, are full of colour. Sometimes high up there grows a bough of mistletoe, green as a bush in summer, and spangled with berries that look like pearls. Then comes the missel thrush and sings his wild song, even in the roughest wind and rain. In the first gleam of spring he builds there in the fork of the

tree. A little later the chaffinch contrives that nest of lichen and moss scarcely to be distinguished from the limb on which it rests, and blue tits creep about like mice and cling back-downwards to the branches, and at last rear ridiculously large families in holes of hollow trunks. Then the blossoms spread over everything, covering the naked trees with a mantle of loveliest pink and white, to be soon followed by the cool shade of the green leaf. Slowly the young fruit grows, and yellows and reddens, while in the autumn the whole orchard is aglow with gold and blushes. And how splendid are the ripe apples when they lie in heaps ready to be hauled to the crusher."

The golden harvest is nearing completion. The labourer has been busy in the fields, the farmer has been blessed with sunshine, and soon the songs of thanksgiving for the ingathering of the fruits of the earth will be heard ascending from all quarters of the land. Blackberries are ripening, and so are the hazel nuts. Excursions into the country will, with fine weather, have an added zest in consequence. What is more enjoyable than an afternoon's nutting or black-berrying, with tea "under the greenwood tree?" It was the old custom to go nutting on Holy Cross-day (September 14th). In an old play, 'Grim the Collier of Croydon,' are the lines:—

This day, they say, is called Holy Rood-day,  
And all the youth are now a-nutting gone.

A good nut year is said to be synonymous with a good corn year. Concerning blackberries, Somerset people believe the old adage that on Michaelmas-day the Devil puts his foot—or something else—on them, and they are no good afterwards. So gather ye blackberries while ye may. September is a lovely month, but we realise autumn is approaching. The virginia creeper and ampelopsis are changing from green to the most brilliant scarlet tints, and the leaves of the limes will soon commence to fall. But when the sun is shining brilliantly and the thermometer is standing high we can almost appreciate the suggestion that September should take its old place in the calendar and be once more the seventh month. And yet we natives of South Somerset know that the first rain after Crewkerne Fair will bring winter; for we have heard this from our cradle days, and, of course, believe it implicitly.

There is not a great deal of weather lore associated with September as a month, although individual days claim some attention. September rain is said to be much liked by the farmer. It is good for crops. If the storms in September clear off warm, all the storms of the following

winter will be warm. When a cold spell occurs and passes without a frost, a frost will not occur until the same time in October. Thunder in September indicates a good crop of grain and fruit for next year.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

WEATHER AND OTHER LORE FOR  
SEPTEMBER.

Fair on the first of September, fair for the month.

\* \* \*  
September blow soft,  
Till the fruit's in the loft.

\* \* \*  
The more thunder in May, the less in August and September.

\* \* \*  
A wet June makes a dry September.

\* \* \*  
August ripens, September gathers in,  
August bears the burden, September the fruit.

\* \* \*  
A cherry year, a merry year :  
A plum year, a dumb year.

\* \* \*  
A great haw year,  
A great cake year.

\* \* \*  
A pear year,  
A dear year.

\* \* \*  
Soon ripe, soon rotten.

\* \* \*  
Good harvests make men prodigal ; bad ones provident.

\* \* \*  
If you eat goose on Michaelmas Day you will never want money all the year round.

\* \* \*  
"Many sloes (sloes) many groans," says an old Somerset saw, and while the effect of indulgence in the tart little fruit would undoubtedly be "trouble in the interior," the real meaning seems to be that, like a plentitude of haws, a full crop of sloes presages a hard and bitter winter. If so, the scarcity of other fruit has a set off in the hedge-crop, for this year of grace 1920 will end with few "groans," for sloes are nearly as scarce as apples in most localities.

Our migrant birds are largely disappearing, leaving even mild-wintered Somerset for more southern climes, but still here and there belated young cuckoos may be seen. A popular belief

still held among us is that some cuckoos do not go away at all, but hide in a "moot" all the winter. A still more fantastic legend yet extant is that the swallows hide in the mud of river banks till the spring returning awakens them to activity.

—F. W. MATHEWS.

\* \* \*

### HARVEST CUSTOMS AND HARVEST HOMES.

There were many interesting customs in connection with the ingathering of the harvest in the good old days, and we have thought it well to give a brief account of a few of them under the general heading of September:—

The Rev. Wm. Barnes, in his "Poems of Rural Life," tells us in his delightful dialect verse something about the Harvest Home supper and what they did after supper in "the good wold merry times that be gone."

When I wer up a hardish lad,  
At harvest hwome the work-vo'k had  
Sich suppers, they wer jumpèn mad,  
Wi' feàstèn an' wi' fun.

Zoo after supper wer a-done,  
They clear'd the teäbles, an' begun  
To have a little bit o' fun.

As long as they mid stop,  
The wold woones took their pipes to smoke,  
An' tell their teäles, an' laugh an' joke,  
A-lookèn at the younger volk,  
That got up vor a hop.

Woone screäp'd away wi' merry grin,  
A fiddle stuck below his chin;  
An' woone o'm took the rollèn pin,  
An' beät the fryèn pan.

An' t'others, dancèn to the soun',  
Went in an' out, an' droo an' roun',  
An' kick'd, an' beät the tuèn down,  
A-laughèn, maïd an' man.

An' zome did drink, an' laugh, an' roar,  
An' lots o' teäles they had in store,  
O' things that happen'd years avore  
To them, or vo'k they know'd.

An' zome did joke, an' zome did zing,  
An' meäke the girt wold kitchen ring;  
Till uncle's cock, wi' flappèn wing,  
Stratch'd out his neck an' crow'd.

\* \* \*

Prior to 1835 no farmer could remove his corn from his field until it had remained there for three days, in order to give time to the Rector's agents to take a tenth stalk, unless some special arrangement between the parishioners and the Rector had been entered into.

Miss Alice King says:—"In harvest time, when the last sheaf is bound up, everyone in the field joins in a loud, ringing, joyful shout, which is meant to proclaim the news to the whole neighbourhood." In many parts of the county this joyful shout as the last corn was reaped was in the following words:—

Well cut, well bound ;  
Well shocked, well found.

\* \* \*

In connection with harvest customs the following lines, written in 1796, will probably be of interest to many readers:—"The general mode of carrying the harvest crops in the Vale of Taunton Dean is a striking object to a farmer from a different part of the kingdom—it is on horses' backs. The face of the country is indeed so generally steep as to render this custom not surprising to a spectator—even manure is conveyed to the land by single horses, in a dung pot fixed on each side of a pack-saddle. In carrying corn a large wooden crook on each side of the saddle is laden with the sheaves, and when discharged in the barn, or at the mow, the horse is ridden away to be re-laden." There are probably many men still living on Exmoor and other parts of the hill country who remember when there were no wheeled vehicles in their district, but all the crops of hay and corn, &c., were carried on the horses' backs.

\* \* \*

The Rev. James Street, in his "Mynster of the He" (1904) has the following reference to harvesting in the neighbourhood of Ilminster about the middle of last century:—"Fifty years ago a London "daily" told the world of a certain field at Cross, near Ilminster, wherein a farmer and his ten grown-up sons had been seen together reaping his harvest. He of whom we now speak is the last survivor of those sons; born about 1811. To see this fine old man by his great chimney corner, tended by a faithful grandchild, is to catch a glimpse of an older world than to-day's. He tells that when he married, over 60 years ago, a shilling would buy a loaf of bread, a quart of cider, a pound of butter. A labourer's earnings were then 1s 2d a day. Things had been much dearer; bread in 1811 was 16½d, and they grew dearer again. So far we live in better days. *But*, he tells us also, and it dwells much on his mind—perhaps the memory of the father and the ten sons in the harvest field bears upon it—"Men used to be so joyful in the harvest work then—whether reaping or mowing—they went forth as to a holiday; always with carnations in their hats, and worked as men who loved it."



The *Preb. Hancock*, in his "Wifela's Combe" (1911) wrote as follows:—Harvest Homes were much more important festivals in the last century than they generally are to-day. It was the custom at the cutting of the last field of wheat on a farm to take a handful of ears and plait the straws into a fanciful shape. This was called "the neck," and is sometimes still to be seen in West Country farm-houses, hanging from the kitchen ceiling or the bacon rack until a new one takes its place at the next harvest. The late *Mr. Luttrell* informed the writer that within his memory a "neck" was yearly hung after corn harvest at Dunster Castle. A kind of incantation was chanted to the neck, when it had been made, by a ring of reapers, one man holding it up in the field. The late *Mr. Elworthy* endeavoured to prove, in very learned fashion, that the low and plaintive cry to the neck is similar to the cry of the Egyptian reapers, who thus lamented at the end of harvest the departure of Isis, the corn spirit, and invoked her return. In the evening a great supper was held, and afterwards a dance, for which the services of the local fiddler had been engaged, was carried on with great zest. Between the dances ancient folklore songs were sung, accompanied, not unfrequently, on that remarkable musical instrument, the comb.

\* \* \*

The same author has something more to say on the subject in his "History of Minehead," where he quotes from the late *Mr. F. T. Elworthy* the following account of the West Country way of making the "neck":—"The 'neck' should be made of bearded wheat, with four lissoms of plaits, and be cried at the finishing of reaping. One man stands in the middle of the ring of reapers, holding it up. The words begun very low:—We . . . ae . . . un (twice). Wee . . . e . . . e . . . ae . . . a . . . a . . . a neck (we have a neck) (third time), crescendo throughout. Repeated three times and ending with cheers. The neck must be kept dry and put on the supper table dry. The women of the house endeavour to throw water over the man who carries the neck, and if he allows it to become wet he is not allowed anything to drink during the evening." A writer who described a very similar custom in Dorset in the "Church Family Newspaper" about 20 years ago added that each man afterwards drinks to his love over the left arm to the accompaniment of a quaint song.

## GLEANNING.

When I was a small child permission to glean in the wheat fields was generally granted by Somerset farmers to cottagers whom they knew—particularly to the wives and children of their own men. This afforded much pleasure, and often not a little profit. In those days agricultural implements were not so numerous as they are now, neither were the fields so carefully cleared after the reapers had done their work. Indeed, some of the good old-fashioned 'squires and farmers were quite willing that there should be something left for the gleaners. Consequently there was much grist for the mill at many a cottage, and the bread made from the new corn thus gathered was specially talked about and enjoyed, a loaf or a cake often being passed on to friends as a seasonable present.

G.S.

\* \* \*

## HARVEST HOME AT EAST BRENT.

A correspondent writes:—The notice of the Harvest Home at East Brent in your last issue evidently refers to its first or early period, as there were considerable alterations later on. It was found that the farm men of the parish had to leave the tent and field soon after the dinner in order to attend to their duties during the afternoon. Moreover, expenses ran up, and there were several other matters to be taken into consideration which need not now be specially referred to. So the festivities were dropped for a time, and many changes were made when they were revived. The following account was given by the Ven. Archdeacon Denison, in a letter he wrote to his niece, Miss Denison, under date 15th September, 1883:—"Harvest Home great success; rained all Sunday night and Monday to about midnight. Nevertheless, the people indefatigable as soon as huge tents had been got up in rain set to work. Vicarage and village to decorate; great work of high art; all complete by mid-day Tuesday. From early morning Tuesday up to to-day, Saturday, weather perfect, sun, air; no rain or wind; large company. Took £43 at gate; subscriptions £68; £113 in all; will pay all expenses and leave some balance. Wonderful Punch, steam merry-go-round, fortunetelling, various other amusements; teetotal drinks only; football, &c; everybody highly pleased; two grand balls; 1,000 people in tent Tuesday night, 500 Wednesday night; had food over on Tuesday enough for poor parishioners' second meal Wednesday. I think our new plan has saved us £50 or more, and left all more contented than they used to be. Very fine music,

dressing in best taste, manners and general demeanour perfect; no doubt an admirable institution; should be witnessed to be comprehended. Dancing from seven to eleven Tuesday night; to twelve Wednesday night; then I told them they were to go. They cheered and thanked, and in ten minutes teat was cleared, and all went away quietly. I am told the merry-go-round man made £20, costing me nothing; Punch cost £1 1s, and did not send round plate; and so other amusements costing me nothing but leave to be present in outer field. Your dear aunt got through all the fatigue very well, and is greatly pleased at result."

The dear old Archdeacon was seen at his best on such occasions, he had a smile and a pleasant word for everybody, and was brimming over with wit and humour. His speeches were delightful; and some of the graphic reports of the East Brent festivities in the London papers made excellent reading. I remember one in particular—"The Eagle in his Eyrie,"—that greatly interested me, as it gave ample scope for contrasting the zealous old ecclesiastical warrior, battling bravely for "the faith once delivered to the Saints" (as he understood it), and the genial fatherly parish priest who was as much beloved by his own flock as he was hated by his enemies.

#### CRYING THE NECK.

We are indebted to a correspondent for the following extract from Mr. F. T. Elworthy's splendid work on "The Dialect of West Somerset." Although it is to some extent a repetition of matter which appeared in this column last week, we think it well worth printing in full. "It is still the custom at the cutting of the last field of wheat on a farm to take a large handful of ears and plait the straws into a fanciful shape, very much like the fantastic constructions of plaited palm leaves, carried by Roman canons on Palm Sunday. This is called the *neck*, and is still to be seen in many West Country farm-houses, usually hanging to the kitchen ceiling or the bacon rack until supplanted by a new one at the next harvest. In parts of N. Devon and the Exmoor district there was quite recently a kind of ceremony at the completion of the cutting, called "crying" or "hollaring the *neck*," but in many places the *neck* is preserved, while the words and the occasion are lost and forgotten. *Neck* is no doubt *nick* or *nilch* (q.v.), a sheaf."

For the following I am indebted to the Rev. W. C. Lovebond, rector of West Down:—

"Tom Dobb, of West Down, who has cried 'neck' for more than sixty years is my informant.

The *neck* should be made of bearded wheat, with four lissoms or plaits. Size of sheaf (*neck*) big's your hand-wrist. Two rows of the lissoms at least. Cried at the finishing of reaping. One man stands in the middle of the ring of reapers, holding it up. The words begun very low. (We . . . ae . . . an) we have un (twice). We . . . e . . . e . . . ae . . . a . . . a . . . a neck (third time). (We have a neck), crescendo throughout. Repeated three times, and ending with cheers, or rather, Wooroa!

"The *neck* must be kept dry, and put on the supper table dry. The 'maids or women' of the house endeavour to 'souce water' over the one who carries the *neck*, and if he allows it to become wet, he is not allowed to have anything to drink for the rest of the evening. Tom has been 'wet droo' many a time, but someone else in the meantime slipped in with the *neck*."

\* \* \*

#### HARVEST HOME AND HARVEST FESTIVALS.

The ingathering of the harvest has long been celebrated in Somerset in a variety of ways. For generations probably, up to comparatively recent times, it was the custom of farmers to invite friends to their houses to take part in the festivities. The rounding up of the rabbits, in field after field, as the corn was cut, was a time of much excitement for masters, men, and visitors, who shared in the sport and the spoil. Then there was the joy-ride home on the last load, which was a source of great pleasure to the workers and the youngsters. In many of the good old-fashioned farm-houses this was followed by the harvest supper, when masters and men feasted sumptuously at the same great table in the spacious kitchen, after which quaint old songs were sung, tales of work and adventure were told, and old jokes were cracked and re-cracked, while an abundant supply of ale, cider, and other liquors were consumed, and much tobacco used. A standing dish at some of the houses was a "squab pie," a wonderful combination of pastry, meat, fruit, and vegetables, of which modern cooks have probably no record.

In some parishes, also, there were great gatherings, somewhat after the style of the old club festivals.

The harvest home at East Brent was one of the best examples, and was famous throughout the land, as it was often described in the London daily and weekly papers, as well as in those published in the county. It was carried on for many years under the auspices of the Vicar of the parish, the famous champion of English Churchmanship, the Ven. Archdeacon Denison. The

village was gaily decorated. Arches of ever-green were erected, on which various suitable mottoes were displayed; there was a great display of flags and flowers; and people flocked n from far and near to take part in the proceedings. There was a service at the church, eminent men from a distance occasionally taking part therein. There was a band and a procession, and a feast of good things in a huge tent, and several hundred parishioners and visitors usually partook of the good things provided. The catering was no small anxiety. This will readily be understood when it is mentioned that five to six hundred pounds of meat had to be cooked, that eighty to ninety quarters of bread were required, and that the ingredients of the plum puddings consumed on a single day weighed over four hundred pounds, in addition to the gallons of milk and bottles of brandy used for the mixing. The puddings were brought into the tent smoking hot, and as the bearers thereof, a goodly company of ladies, entered, there was a scene of great enthusiasm, and lusty cheers were given. It was intensely interesting also to witness the delight of the Archdeacon, who presided, and who occasionally gave an amusing account of the making and cooking of the puddings. There were loyal and other speeches, of course, those by the Chairman usually being very racy. Later in the day a bountiful tea was provided for the women, ladies of the parish and neighbourhood presiding at the various tables. In the evening there were games and dancing, which were kept up during several hours.

At Shepton Beauchamp, also, there were festivities of much the same character as those at East Brent, the promoters thereof being the Rev. Preb. J. S. Coles, his son, the Rev. V. S. S. Coles, and other members of their family; one of the additional attractions here being a display of fireworks as a wind-up.

Stoke St. Gregory, Paulton, and other Somerset parishes also kept high festival during September in the latter part of the last century, when the inhabitants thereof could heartily join in singing the harvest hymn:—

“ Come, ye thankful people, come,  
 Raise the song of harvest home:  
 All is safely gather'd in,  
 'Ere the winter storms begin.

\* \* \*

#### CURIOUS HARVEST HOME BALLAD.

Long ago there lived on the Polden Hills a formidable highwayman, named Poccock. Some say that he allowed his hair, beard, and nails to grow long, and that he never washed. But whether that were so or not, he was the terror

of all the rich folk around. Accompanied by his favourite horse (whose shoes were made to turn on a pivot, as occasion required, that he might not be tracked) he dwelt by day in a cave near Chilton Priory, known only to himself, but on dark nights he would mount his steed and roam abroad on the hills in search of plunder. Then woe betide the wealthy traveller who came in his way. But though the rich regarded him with terror, and spoke with awe of his daring deeds, Pockock never armed the poor, and never robbed a woman or child. Often he would lead a benighted wanderer to a place of safety, and provide him a plentiful repast; while he gave away more gold broad-pieces than all the 'squires in the neighbourhood. So the poor looked on him as their friend. But at last his cavern was discovered, and after a brave resistance the famous brigand was taken, half-dead and covered with blood, and afterwards put to death. The peasants of the Polden Hills used to sing an old ballad as they gathered in their last sheaves by the light of the harvest moon. It was:—

“ Rynne, mye boyes, ryne, the moon shines  
bryte,

Pockock's yn hys cave, his purse is lyte;

But, whenne the nighte ys myrke and darke  
Hee's offe wyth hys steede, blythe as a lark.”

\* \* \*

#### EARLY HARVEST FESTIVALS.

It is generally understood that we have to thank either the Rev. R. S. Hawker, vicar of Morwenstowe, Cornwall, or the Rev. Geo. Denison, vicar of East Brent, Somerset, for the introduction of harvest thanksgiving services. To Somerset men and women the name of the latter clergyman is the better known of the two, particularly in view of the fact that he subsequently made a name for himself as Archdeacon of Taunton. The following paragraph appeared in these columns in September, 1904:—“ The West Country is undoubtedly entitled to the credit of having instituted the harvest thanksgiving service, now almost universal in Protestant places of worship. Sixty years ago the ‘ Militant Archdeacon of Taunton ’ (as Mr. Morley calls him in his ‘ Life of Gladstone ’), the Rev. George Denison, then vicar of East Brent, Somerset, held special services to celebrate the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, and in the same year (1843), the author of ‘ The Song of the Western Men,’ the Rev. R. S. Hawker, vicar of Morwenstowe, Cornwall, began similar services. Dean Alford’s ‘ Come, ye thankful people, come,’ without which no harvest festival is now complete, was first printed in 1844, and as the Dean was a Somerset man, it is very probable

that he wrote the hymn for the service at East Brent. The decoration of churches with flowers and fruit is of later origin, and began with the general thanksgiving for harvest ordered by the late Queen in Council in 1854." *The Illustrated London News* for September 25th, 1858, contained the following reference to the subject:—"We learn from the chronicles that the practice of celebrating harvest home as a public festival has been observed in more than one place with all the accessories of a grand gala. Archdeacon Denison, a name so well known to the public, has had the merit of being the patron and conductor of one of the most successful and most original of these. The ancient character of the celebration was much altered. The proceedings commenced with services in the church, and terminated with after-dinner speeches, introducing or acknowledging toasts, which have the peculiarity of being drunk without drink of any kind."

We have searched the files of the *Taunton Courier* and other local newspapers for the year 1843, and for more than a dozen years afterwards, but have so far failed to find during that period any newspaper report of any of Archdeacon Denison's festivals, and very few references to harvest celebrations of any kind. One of the earliest reports we find suggests that the custom of celebrating the Harvest Home with a feast and a jollification was a good old English custom long before the days of Archdeacon Denison. We learn from the *Sherborne, Dorchester, and Taunton Journal* of October 5th, 1843, that on Friday, September 22nd, of that year, the whole of the labouring class of persons, including men and women and children in the parish of Butleigh Wootton, near Glastonbury, besides many others, amounting in the whole to about 200, partook of an excellent dinner of roast beef, plum pudding, &c., &c., given by Sir A. Hood, Bart., to celebrate, according to old English custom, "Harvest Home." The dinner was followed by games and sports.

The earliest harvest thanksgiving service of which we have so far found any record was reported in the *Taunton Courier* for October 20th, 1847, in the following words:—"On Thursday evening last a Thanksgiving Service was held at North St. Chapel, when the Rev. H. Quick gave a most suitable address on the occasion of the late plentiful harvest. The chapel was crowded by an attentive audience."

The only other report we find of a Harvest Thanksgiving in these early newspapers appeared in the *Sherborne, Dorchester, and Taunton Journal*, dated September 25th, 1851, and from it we learn that on September 16th of that year a tea meeting was held in the large room of the inn at Henstridge

Ash as a thanksgiving meeting for the plentiful harvest with which the country had been favoured that year. Between 300 and 400 people gathered for the tea, many of them coming from Milborne Port, Stalbridge, and the surrounding villages. After tea the meeting adjourned to the Independent Chapel, when several ministers and laymen gave addresses appropriate to the subject of Harvest. The proceeds of the tea and service were devoted to a fund for building a vestry-room at the chapel.

The *Taunton Courier* for October 1st, 1856, contained a report of a "Harvest Home" at Horningsham, a village lying just beyond the borders of Somerset, about four miles South-West of Warminster. Although the festival did not, therefore, take place in this county, we think the report worth reproducing if only for the reason that newspaper reports of such celebrations were exceedingly rare in those days, although in all probability many such festivities took place. The report tells us that one of those happy gatherings, a harvest home, was given to his labourers, 70 in number, by Mr. Thos. Pope, of Horningsham, on Thursday last. As on former occasions, the waggon-house was decorated with evergreens and flowers, which gave it an animated appearance. At the upper part was a canopy, surmounted by a crown of dahlias, on the other side V.A., at the end a sheaf of wheat, bound with flowers, inscribed over, in letters of moss, "Success to agriculture." Flags were suspended, bearing the following:—"Welcome the Harvest Home," "Speed the plough," "Honesty and Industry," &c. At five o'clock the chair was taken by Mr. Pope, supported on his right and left by the Rev. E. Strickland and Mr. Tubrook; Mr. Dunning occupying the vice-chair, and some ladies kindly assisting at the festive board. A capital band was engaged, and played at intervals during the dinner, after which the usual loyal, political, and complimentary toasts followed in succession. At nightfall the place was well illuminated by three chandeliers suspended and entwined with clematis, fuchsias, and exotic flowers. The merry dance concluded the evening's amusement.

Reverting to Archdeacon Denison's Harvest Homes at East Brent, it would appear that even these did not meet with the approval of all his parishioners or of the inhabitants of neighbouring parishes. We learn from a report in the *Western Gazette* of September 12th, 1873 (thirty years after the reverend gentleman first instituted the festival) that in Rooksbridge there were erected at the side of the turnpike road a gallows and a gibbet. From these were suspended



figures attired in what was intended to represent cassocks, and on their heads were shovel hats, attached to the figures were placards inscribed "No Priest," "No Idolatry," and "No Popery." By the side of the South Brent-road there was another gibbet, with a figure hanging therefrom, and over the cross-beam was the inscription "No Popery."

To give some idea of the extensive character of the "spread" to which the parishioners of East Brent that year sat down we may state that there was cooked for the dinner 600 lb. of beef, 200 lb. of mutton, and a sack and a-half of potatoes. For the plum puddings 108 lb. of suet, 120 lb. of flour, and 120 lb. of fruit were used; and two hogsheads of ale were supplied wherewith to wash down the solids. About four hundredweight of cake was cut up for tea.

### SEPT 1.—ST, GILES.

KING JOHN AT BRIDGWATER,  
1205.

ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, 536.

ECLIPSE OF THE MOON, 806.

The following extract from the itinerary of King John shows that he was at Taunton on August 31st, 1205:—"September 1, 1205, at Bridgwater. Account to the Bailiffs of Taunton £1 6s 7½d. which they laid out in our expenses when we were at Taunton on the eve of St. Giles" (31st August).

The churches in Somerset dedicated to St. Giles are Bradford, Cleeve Old Chapel, Knowle St. Giles, and Taurloxtou.

St. Giles is looked upon as the patron saint of Edinburgh, and the Cathedral is named after him. The saint was born at Athens in 640. He had a love for retirement and lived the greater part of his days in a cave, indulging in prayer and mortification. There is a legend that he was fed every day by a hind which had fled to him when pursued by the King of France, or, according to others, by Wamba, King of the Goths. This hind is often represented in pictures of St. Giles.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, 536.

This day there was an eclipse of the sun, 536. Some have held that this is the eclipse referred to in the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" as occurring on the 12th of the Calends of July, 510, but this is improbable.

ECLIPSE OF THE MOON, 806.

"This year," says the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" under the date of 806, "was the moon

eclipsed on the Kalends of September, and Eardwulf, King of the Northumbrians, was driven from his kingdom, and Eanberht, Bishop of Hexham, died." The eclipse was a total one, the totality lasting from thirty-seven minutes past nine in the evening till one minute to eleven.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**SEPT. 2.—**

Alce Lisle, one of the victims of Judge Jeffries, was executed on September 2nd, 1685, her crime being the giving of shelter to a rebel.

—H.W.K.

**SEPT. 3.—KING JOHN AT GLASTONBURY,  
1205.**

**NEW STYLE CALENDAR BEGAN,  
1752.**

**NEW STYLE CALENDAR BEGAN, 1752.**

This year and month the reformed Gregorian calendar was adopted in England. As the year had been wrongly calculated in the old system 11 days had to be dropped, and in consequence of the change being made in this September the month contained only nineteen days. The Old Style ended on September 2nd, 1752. The New Style began next day, which was called September 14th. As a consequence there was no new moon in this month. The first quarter of the moon was 15th September at one o'clock in the afternoon, and the date of full moon fell on September 23rd. There being no days enumerated from the 2nd to the 14th there was no new moon in the month.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

One natural consequence of the change of style was an alteration in the dates on which annual events took place, and for a year or two after the change the columns of our local papers contained many advertisements more or less similar to the following:—

**This is to Give Notice**

That Brewton Fair which used to be kept 18th of September will be (by Reason of the Alteration of the Style) be on Tuesday the nineteenth of the same month; And the Monday following (being Brewton Feast) will be play'd for at Sword and Dagger, a lac'd Hat as usual; the Gift of the Hon. Charles Berkeley, Esq.; and on Tuesday following will be play'd for at Backsword, One Guinea and Half; the best Gamester to have a Guinea, and the second Half-a-Guinea. And on Wednesday following will be play'd for at Sword and Dagger, One

Guinea and Half: a Guinea for the best, and Half-a-Guinea for the second best Gamester.—*Western Flying Post*, August 17th, 1752.

#### SEPT. 4.—CREWKERNE FAIR.

Crewkerne Fair—like all other similar institutions in the country districts in Somerset, and elsewhere—is not quite the same as it was thirty or forty years ago. In those days it was a fixture of considerable proportions; it has sadly dwindled since then. But the recollections of Crewkerne Fair revive the most pleasant memories. It was one of the largest fairs in South Somerset, and, so far as the pleasure portion of it was concerned, perhaps there was nothing in the county to beat it. There were some admirable customs associated with it. One was that it was the chief time in the year when the dwellers in the more rural parts of the district paid their bills to the tradesmen of the town. And that meant that the tradesman used to invite his customers to dinner in his house. There was something homely about this. There was something of the spirit of brotherhood and sound conviviality surrounding it. There was no thought of “favours to come” about the invitation. One could at once see that. It was “Come in and have some dinner, the missus will be pleased to see you; some of your friends have already arrived; you’re as welcome as the flowers in May.” Who could resist—who would desire to refuse such an invitation as this? And what merry parties these were! The tables groaned beneath the weight of the good things provided. The kettle bubbled on the hob, on the sideboard the spirit bottles stood in close order, and steaming jorums of rare liquor followed the dinner, churchwardens were smoked, and the utmost good fellowship prevailed. Friendships of long standing were renewed, and the spirit of brotherhood prevailed over the whole place. Alas! things have altered. But those convivial gatherings were as much an institution as the Fair itself. And what a fair it was! Thousands of sheep were penned, hundreds of bullocks were driven in, scores and scores of horses were on offer, tons of cheese were pitched in and about the old Market-house, and thousands of men, women, and children thronged the streets, which were more than ever congested by the display of farm implements ranged up and down the main thoroughfares, and the shows, and roundabouts, and nut stalls, and confectionery stalls, and fruit stalls, and stalls for the sale of fancy articles filled the Square and ran over into the converging streets, and noise and bustle prevailed

for the two days; and if the fair-day happened to fall on a Monday the town was in a pleasureable turmoil for the whole week. It was one season of the year when exiles from the dear little town made every effort to come "down hwome." Families were united again, old friendships revived, and a reign of jollity existed. An extract from "A Surveye and Rertall of the sayde Mannor, renewed and made April 26, 1599," says: "Within the town of Crokerne is a markett every Satterday, well served and furnished with all kindes of wares and victuals oute of all partes of the cuntrye, and much accesse thether by reason of the saide markett; and on Bartholomew's Day yearly, a great fayre. The tolle, stallage, and proffytes as well of the fayre as of the markett appertayneth to the lords, and is worth forty pounds yearly." The fair, at the time to which I am referring, was held at the top of Hermitage-street—that is so far as the sheep and cattle were concerned, for the horses were put through their paces in the Chard-road. Trains to and from Crewkerne were laden on that day: all roads led to Crewkerne, and the adjacent country must have been annually denuded of its population, for everyone attended Crewkerne Fair—that is, if the harvest permitted, and even then they came and remained as long as possible, and engaged in business, and joined in the jollifications of the day. No-one was too old not to have a ride on the horses, none too staid not to enter the "shows," none too proud not to become associated with the "standens." And everyone went through the Market-house and inspected the wonderful array of fancy and useful articles exposed for sale, while the hostleries were crowded to the very doors; every room was thrown open. There were sounds of minstrelsy from the "dancing-rooms;" there was "music," mechanical and otherwise, all around; there was good natured jostling through the crowds, and all this went on in these "good old days" until the clock in the old tower grey tower "het out twelve," and it was a good deal after that before quietness was restored. Amusements were cheap in those days—and appreciated. Now they are dear, and, apparently, unsatisfying, because the characters of the people have sadly changed during the past half century, and not for the better. Could the present generation be transported back to the days of Crewkerne Fair of which I write, they would, I am convinced, think things have not altered for the better. O tempora! O mores!

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**SEPT. 5.—KING JOHN at WELLS, 1205.**

**BRITISH ASSOCIATION MEETING  
AT BATH, 1888.**

BRITISH ASSOCIATION MEETING AT BATH,  
1888.

The British Association for the Advancement of Science held their fifty-eighth meeting in 1888. Bath was selected as the scene for the second time, the meeting having been held in that city twenty-four years previously. The President for the year was the famous engineer, Sir Frederick Joseph Bramwell. Bart. —EDWARD VIVIAN.

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**SEPT. 6.—KING JOHN at HARPTREE, 1205.  
KING JOHN at HOLWELL in  
BLAKEMORE, 1207.**

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**SEPT. 7.—BATTLE of BABYLON HILL,  
YEOVIL, 1642.**

**DEATH of HANNAH MORE, 1833.**

**STEPHEN HALES, BORN 1677.  
NORTH CURRY FAIR.**

STEPHEN HALES BORN 1677.

Stephen Hales, the versatile physiologist and inventor, was not born in Somerset, nor did he die there. He was a native of Kent, and a notable Fellow of the Royal Society. In 1710 he accepted a perpetual curacy at Teddington, Middlesex, where he remained. Notwithstanding which he holds his niche here by the fact of his appointment subsequently as Rector of Porlock. His invention of a ventilator preserved many lives, and his own life was prolonged till his eighty-fourth year, he dying at Teddington in 1761.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**NORTH CURRY FAIR.**

Until the year 1790 North Curry Fair was always held on August 1st (Lammas Day), but in that year the date was changed to the first Tuesday in September. The fair was originally granted by a charter from King John in 1206.

**BATTLE OF BABYLON HILL.**

On the 7th September, 1642, a battle was fought on Babylon Hill, Yeovil. An incident in the great Civil War was the siege of Sherborne. It was on the 6th September the besiegers struck their camp and took their way towards Yeovil, avoiding the ordinary road by the town and marching about a mile over the fields. In a letter to the Earl of Essex, Lord General of the Parliamentary Forces throughout England, Lord

Bedford, Colonel Denzil Holles, and Colonel Essex sent a justification of their action in raising the siege, declaring they had laid three days and three nights before Sherborne with as much damage to themselves and as little hurt to the enemy "as ever anything that had name of an army was, our number of men being rather the show of an army to muster than an army to fight." Out of 2,400 from Somerset and 900 from Dorset and Devon not 1,200 remain, "and God knows how many will slip away this night." The idea was to march to Dorchester, and there refresh men and horses. Subsequently the Somerset troops were to return to Somerset, with two troops of Horse to convoy them, and to secure Bridgwater and Taunton. Bedford quartered at Yeovil, but, on the 7th September, Hopton, with 400 horse and 200 musketeers, or, in his own words, with "all the horse and dragoons and sevenscore muskettiers," and accompanied by Captain Digby and Sir Francis Holles, with their troops, and by Lord Poulett, Sir John Stawel, and Sir John Paulet, issued from Sherborne, about two o'clock in the afternoon, and marched to Babylon Hill, Yeovil. The Parliamentarians held Yeovil Bridge with a guard of Foot and cannon. Hopton placed a guard of 20 musketeers on his right, lined with all his dragoons the hedges which flanked his left, and, drawing up his Horse in battle array upon the summit of the hill, with the rest of the musketeers played from the side of the hill on the guard upon the bridge. Having spent an hour or more in this position without much damage done to the adverse party, he, acting upon the advice of his officers, resolved to retreat; and accordingly gave orders for the Foot to march away, and the Dragoons to march up to the Horse to make good the rear—it being then within an hour of sunset. But the Foot were not clear drawn off the hill when Colonel Lawdy espied "the enemy marching out of Yeovil by a secret way he had made over the fields, and that some of his Horse had nearly ridden up to the top of the hill upon the left." Hopton prepared for battle. He saw that the Parliamentary troops had many difficulties to overcome—one of them being the sufficient guarding of their magazine. For the last but few men were available. The hill was difficult to ascend. Captain Ayscough took one way, Captain Tompson another, and Captain Balfour a third. The way taken by Ayscough was so narrow that only two could march abreast; and when they were almost at the top they encountered Hopton's ambuscade of six musketeers on either side, but having won through

these successfully they arrived at the summit. Captain Ayscough and his troop charged Captain Stawel's troop through and through, and then engaged Captain Moreton's. But Ayscough was forced to retreat. He was joined by Captain Tompson, and, charging together, they threw the two Royalist troops of Stawel and Moreton into hopeless confusion. Captain Balfour's troop did not fare so well, and it is recorded that Balfour was killed by a shot from Stawel, although another report says Stawel ran away and Balfour was unhurt. Hopton's Forces were, however, thrown into confusion and beat a retreat. The Royalist lost 15 or 20 Horse, and of their foot between 30 and 40 killed, but Major Bampfieid, who commanded them, with about 20 of his soldiers, were taken prisoners. On the other side some 15 or 16 of Bedford's troop fell into the hands of the Royalists; whereof some were killed but the more part spared, and taken prisoners to Særborne. "Tous," says Vickers, summing up the affair at Yeovil in characteristic fashion, "Babell-Hill proved a Babell, a hill of confusion to the Royalists."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### HANNAH MORE DIED 1833.

The name of Hannah More will ever live in history. Born at Stapleton, near Bristol, in 1745, she spent more than half of her life at Barley Wood, Wrington. It was there she and her sister, Miss Patty More, were visited by Mr. Wilberforce, the great apostle of slave deliverance, and as a result Miss Hannah More, the gifted novelist, dramatist, and essayist, "stepped aside from her position as a brilliant figure in the social world and became, with her sister, an earnest missionary amid the darkness of rural Somerset." When Hannah was 17 years of age she wrote "The Search after Happiness," a pastoral drama for young ladies. In 1777 she wrote a drama entitled "Percy," brought out with great success by David Garrick. "Celebs in Search of a Wife" won great popularity. But her literary work is comparatively insignificant when compared with what she did towards the uplifting of the uneducated people in the Cneddar district. She and her sister opened a school at Cheddar; they held a service for the parents every Sunday evening, and "after a year's work it is said that whereas at the one service held on Sunday eight were considered a sufficient attendance in the morning and about 20 in the afternoon, there was a congregation of 200 adults and as many children." They then turned their attention to Shipham and Rowberrow, two mining villages at the top of Mendip, "the people savage and degraded even

beyond Cheddar, brutal in their natures and ferocious in their manners." It is said the Rector of Shipham had claimed the tithes for 50 years, but had never catechised a child or preached a sermon there for forty. Here a school was opened, which was soon followed by schools at Langford and Banwell, Yatton and Congresbury. Teen Nailsea and Blagdon and Charterhouse were attacked. In these districts "no effort seems ever to have been made to supply the loss of the monastic schools, where rich and poor were alike educated; and the result of two hundred years of almost uninterrupted neglect was a state of savagery, which many a heathen country would have shamed." But the Misses More carried on their work in the teeth of opposition and obliquity; they worked quietly and calmly, apparently unconscious themselves of their heroism and self-devotion. They instituted Friendly Benefit Societies; their influence decreased crime in the district, and their names will ever be enshrined among the "Worthies of Somerset." Hannah More died in 1833, at the age of 88, and was buried at Clifton.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**SEPT. 8.—KING JOHN AT BRISTOL, 1205.  
EARTHQUAKE IN SOMERSET,  
1692.**

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**SEPT. 9.—WESTON ZOYLAND FAIR.**

This fair, which was formerly of large dimensions, was held by virtue of a royal charter on this day.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**SEPT. 10.—JOHN WESLEY AT WELLINGTON, 1775.**

The Rev. John Wesley, the great evangelist of the 18th century, visited Wellington on several occasions, as may be seen by his published "Journal," which affords much light concerning Somerset in his time. One of the occasions on which he came to the town that afterwards provided the Iron Duke with his title, was Sunday, September 10th, 1775. The previous day he preached at Exeter at four in the afternoon, and at Cullompton about seven in the evening. His "Journal" entry concerning Wellington is as follows:—"I came to Wellington in an acceptable time, for Mr. Jesse was ill in bed, so that if I had not come there could have been no service, either morning or evening. The church was moderately filled in the morning; in the afternoon it was crowded in every corner,



and a solemn awe fell on the whole congregation while I pressed that important question, 'What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'

The Rev. William Jesse was vicar of Wellington from 1734 until his death in January, 1791, and had reached old age at the time the founder of the Wesleyan denomination preached in Wellington Parish Church.

John Wesley was at Taunton next day, the 11th September, preaching in "the New Meeting" in that town to such a congregation as he supposes was never there before. He was desired to preach on the same text as at Wellington, and he remarked that it was attended with the same blessing.

—J.C.

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**SEPT. 11.—St. MICHAEL'S, GLASTONBURY,  
DESTROYED, 1275.**

On September 11th, 1275, the Church of St. Michael on the Mount, without Glastonbury, fell to the ground, and "pieces of many churches in England fell by force of the same earthquake." The words of the Chronicler, John of Glastonbury, are "at this time in the year 1275, on the third Ides of September (September 11th) the Chapel of S. Michael of Torre fell down by reason of an earthquake." It is thought the "earthquake" referred to was nothing more than a landslip, from which the geological formation of the hill, namely limestone resting on a bed of clay, provided the required elements. About 1290 a series of indulgencies were granted for the purpose of restoration, and it was, no doubt, soon afterwards that S. Michael's Chapel was re-built. Now only the tower remains.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**SEPT. 12.—THE BUSSE OF BRIDGWATER,  
1578.**

**BENJAMIN HEWLING EXECUTED, 1685.**

**OLD ST. GILES' DAY.—BRADFORD REVEL.**

Mentions of Somerset vessels in former centuries, especially in connection with the rise of English navigation, are rather infrequent. Interesting references to one, however, occur in the accounts of the third voyage of Sir Martin Frobisher to Meta Incognita, or Greenland, in 1578. Among Frobisher's little flotilla of 15 vessels was the bark commonly termed the Busse, of Bridgewater, her name being the Emanuel

(she must not be confused with another of the same name also with the fleet), and her master, James Leech. In another account the Captain's name is given as Newton, and in Sir Clement R. Markham's "Life of John Davis," the vessel's name is given as "Emna". They sailed together from Gravesend, May 27th, 1578, bound for Greenland. In a fog on 10th July, several vessels, the Busse among them, parted company from the fleet, but later they rejoined company and anchored in the Countess of Warwick's Sound. One bark was lost, and another forsook the fleet and went home. When the bulk of the vessels had finished lading with ore, they put out to sea, but, says Master Thomas Ellis in his account, "because the Busse had not lading enough in her, she put into Beares Sound to take a little more. In the meanwhile the Admirall, and the rest without at sea stayed for her." That night, however, there fell such a storm that all the ships were dispersed, and they had to make their way home the best way they could, leaving the Busse behind them.

Says another contemporary account: It was most marvellous how the Busse of Bridgewater got away, who being left behind the fleete in great danger of never getting forth, was forced to seeke a way Northward thorow an unknown channell full of rocks, upon the backe side of Beares Sound, and then by good hap found out a way into the North sea, a very dangerous attempt; save that necessitie, which hath no law, forced them to trie necessities."

Thomas Wiars, passenger in the Emanuel, gives the following narrative of what befel them: "The Busse of Bridgewater was left in the Beares Sound at Meta Incognita, the second day of September behinde the fleete in some distress, through much winde, ryding neere the Lee shoare, and forced there to ride it out upon the hazard of her cables and anchors, which were all aground but two. The third of September being fayre weather, and the winde North northwest she set sayle, and departed thence, and fell with Frisland on the 8 day of September at sixe of the clocke at night, and then they set off from the Southwest point of Frisland, the wind being at East, and East Southeast, but that night the winde veared Southerly, and shifted oftentimes that night; but on the 10th day in the morning, the wind at West northwest faire weather, they steered Southeast, and by South, and continued that course until the 12th day of September, when about 11 a clocke before noone, they descryed a lande, which was from them about 5 leagues, and the Southermost part of it was Southeast by East from them, and the Northermost next, North Northeast, or Northeast. The master accompted

that the Southeast poynt of Frisland was from him at that instant when hee first descryed this new Islande, Northwest by North, 50 leagues. They account this Island to be 25 leagues long, and the longest way of it Southeast and Northwest. The Southern part of it is in the latitude of 57 degrees and one second part, or there about. They continued in sight of it, from the 12 day at 11 of the clocke, till the 13 day three of the clocke in the afternoone, when they left it; and the last part they saw of it, bare from them Northwest by North. There appeared two Harboroughs upon that coast; the greatest of them seven leagues to the Northwards of the Southernmost poynt, the other but foure leagues. There was very much yce nere the same land, and also twentie or thirty leagues from it, for they were not cleare of yce, till the 15 day of September after noone. They plyed their voyage homewards, and fell with the West part of Ireland, about Galway, and had first sight of it on the 25 day of September."

What new land it was these men of Somerset discovered is not satisfactorily determined, but the incident is worth record. It afterwards appeared as an island on charts of the North Atlantic, and was marked "The land of Buss." It may be mentioned that a busse or buss was a small two-masted vessel formerly used in the fisheries.

Several interesting narratives of the whole expedition are to be found in Hakluyt's "Principal Navigations."

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### BENJAMIN HEWLING EXECUTED 1685.

Benjamin Hewling was an officer of the Duke of Monmouth, a young man, a native of Taunton. He was of scholarly disposition versed in mathematics and philosophy. He commanded a troop of horse in the Duke's army, his younger brother William, who was under twenty years of age, being a lieutenant of foot. The brothers distinguished themselves in several skirmishes, but were not with Monmouth at Sedgemoor. After that battle, attempting escape by sea they were headed back, apprehended and committed to Exeter Gaol. The younger was executed at Lyme, and Benjamin, the elder, at Taunton on the same day, September 12th, 1685. Upright, brave young fellows they suffered death with fortitude, so that one of King James's generals repeatedly said afterwards: "If you would learn to die, go to the young men of Taunton."

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**OLD ST. GILES' DAY : BRADFORD REVEL.**

The village revel of old times lasted here till within living memory, and was held soon after the patronal day. Old St. Giles' Day is the 12th of September, and the beginning of the Bradford festival was a service in the church on the third Sunday of the month, at which a sermon "appropriate to the occasion" was delivered. The next day a cattle fair was held in the wide road and open square between the church and vicarage and the inn. This over, the fun began. Sports were held, in which "wrestling" and single-stick were the chief features. These two particular items were held on what is now the lawn of the White Horse Inn.

**SEPT. 13.—KING JOHN AT WELLS, 1207.****TOR FAIR (GLASTONBURY).****THANKSGIVING PRAYERS, 1801.**

Special thanksgiving prayers were read in the churches on this day (a Sunday), 1801, for the abundant harvest. Saint Swithin's Day in that year had been particularly wet, the rain falling in torrents, and presumably people had dismal forebodings of the result. Contradictorily enough, the weather afterwards set in exceptionally fine, and a bountiful harvest resulted. The happy change probably made people more grateful than usual, and the thanksgiving prayer was read for four weeks.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**TOR FAIR (GLASTONBURY).**

A large and important horse, sheep, and cattle fair—known as Tor Fair—is held at Glastonbury on the second Monday in September. This fair is at least 793 years old, for in 1127 King Henry I. granted a charter to the abbot and monks of Glastonbury to hold a fair at the Monastery of St. Michael on the Tor. But the fair is really of much greater antiquity than this, as the charter mentions that it was to be held in a place where the fair had formerly been held for two days. Until within the last 70 years the fair was held on the very site mentioned in the charter, that is, on the slopes of Tor Hill. Of late years business fair has lasted one day only, but the pleasure fair has extended over the whole week, whereas formerly business and pleasure went on together the whole week through.

SEPT. 14.—HOLY ROOD DAY.  
 KING EDWARD I. AT FROME,  
 1276.  
 BRITISH ASSOCIATION MEET-  
 ING at BATH, 1864.

King Edward I. visited Frome on this day, proceeding the following day to Keynsham, where he remained two days.

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It is a fact perhaps worth recording in this column that the cross in Fitzhead Churchyard, which was restored and fitted with a new head about 12 years ago, was dedicated on Holy Cross Day, 11th September, 1908.

One of the most noteworthy of scientific societies, the British Association for the Advancement of Science, parent of many similar associations in all quarters of the world, held its thirty-fourth meeting this year, and for the first time selected Bath as their rendezvous. The members met under the presidency of the celebrated geologist, Sir Charles Lyell, F.R.S., who was created a baronet this same year.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

HOLY ROOD DAY.

Holy Rood or Holy Cross is in the Church of England Calendar on this day. The Roman Catholics hold a festival in honour of the Holy Cross, or, as our ancestors called it, the Holy Rood. It was in commemoration of the alleged miraculous appearance of the Cross to Constantine in the sky at mid-day. It was instituted by the Romish Church on occasion of the recovery of a large piece of the pretended real Cross, which Cosroes, King of Persia, took from Jerusalem when he plundered it. The Emperor Heraclius defeated him in battle, re-took the relic, and carried it back in triumph to Jerusalem. One cannot help on this day thinking of our Montacute and its Holy Cross legend. "After the bill of Senlac and the vanished choir of Waltham"—says Freeman—"we may fairly place the wooded hill of Montacute. No spot has more to tell us, no-one more directly suggests the memories of the great struggle which brought England for a moment under the yoke of the stranger. Our whole land, indeed, is full of memories of those days, but round that one spot they gather beyond all others. It was there, when the place yet bore its English name of Leodgaresburh, when King Cnut reigned over the land, that men found the wonder working Rood, which has left its name behind

it on the further side of the island. It was in its name that Englishmen clave through the Norwegian shield wall by the banks of Derwent, and that they bore up around their chosen King against the charges of the Norman horsemen and the more fearful thundershower of the Norman arrows. And before long the war cry of the Holy Cross was heard around the spot where the Holy Cross had first been revealed to the eyes of men. The hill of Leodgaresburh, now bearing its French name of Montacute, had, under that foreign name, become the object of the bitterest hatred of the men of the Western shires." The discovery of the great Rood which founded Waltham Holy Cross is interesting. Tofig, the standard bearer, a Dane, was Lord of Montacute, and also held vast lands in Essex. It befel, while this lord was absent, a certain smith of this village of Leodgaresburh, who is said at the time to have been sexton, dreamed three separate times that Christ appeared to him and bade him go to the priest, and, taking men, to go to the top of St. Michael's Hill and dig. The third time he responded to the summons. Therefore he sought out the priest and told him all, and they climbed the hill and dug and came upon a great stone which was suddenly cleft in twain, and in the cleft they saw a great crucifix of glistening black flint, and beneath it another smaller, of wood, with a bell very old and an old book. Tofig was sent for, a waggon was prepared, and the Crucifix of flint was placed upon it. And there were harnessed to the wain twelve red oxen and twelve white cows. By and by the Holy Cross rested at Waltham, and Tofig built a church and an Abbey there, and over the high altar he set up the Holy Cross of Leodgaresburh. "The Cross of Waltham, in our eyes rather the Cross of Leodgaresburh"—says Freeman—"became the special object of the devotion of Earl Harold's life, the rallying cry of the men who fought around his standard. It was before that Cross that the King knelt in the great crisis of his life, on his march from his northern field of victory to his southern field of overthrow; and it was from the awful form wrought on the sacred stone that he received, so men then deemed, the mysterious warning which told of his coming doom. And it was that Cross which gave England her war cry. It was at the name of the Holy Cross, the Holy Cross of Waltham and of Leodgaresburh, that men's hearts rose high on the day of battle. . . . And we may deem that no hearts beat higher to its call, that on no tongues the war cry rose more loudly than on those of the men who marched from the first

resting place of the Holy Rood to fight and die for England on the far South-Saxon hill. And, before long, the war cry of the Holy Cross was heard around the spot where the Holy Cross itself had been first revealed to the eyes of men. Three years after the great battle, when the whole west was conquered, when Exeter itself, the centre of the great Western struggle, was held in fetters by the Castle reared on its own Red Mount, the hill of Leodgaresburh, now bearing its French name of Montacute, had, under that foreign name, become the object of the bitterest hatred of the men of the Western shires. . . . It is well to go back to earlier times, to think of the days when that spot beheld one of the last hopeless struggles of conquered England, and to the earlier days when the Holy Cross, the Cross alike of Waltham and of Montacute, was the last cry which rose from the lips of the men who died around the standard of Harold."

There is only one church in Somerset dedicated to Holy Cross—that is at Babeary.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**SEPT. 15.—KING EDWARD I. at BATH, 1276.**  
**DEATH OF SPEKE, THE EX-**  
**PLORER, 1864.**  
**EMBER DAYS OF AUTUMN.**  
**JOHN HANNING SPEKE DIED,**  
**1864.**

The first of the three Ember Days of autumn, which are the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after the feast of Holy Cross, September 14th.

**JOHN HANNING SPEKE DIED, 1864.**

Somerset has given to the world its share of navigators in William Dampier; to the African travellers it has given the equally illustrious John Hanning Speke, pre-eminent among the explorers of the Dark Continent, the famous discoverer of the sources of the Nile, who was born May 4th, 1827. He joined the Indian Army, and after service in the Punjab, made expeditions into the Himalayas, and in 1851, in company with Burton, travelled in unknown Somaliland, where he was badly wounded by the natives. In 1857 Speke and Burton were sent by the Royal Geographical Society to explore Equatorial Africa, particularly the region of the rumoured great lakes. Here Speke, while travelling separately from Burton, discovered the great Victoria Nyanza, and believed it to be the head water of the Nile. Burton doubted this identification, and a rapture followed. In 1860 Speke returned to the great

lakes with Captain James Augustus Grant, explored the Victoria Nyanza, saw the Nile flowing out of it, and tracked the river's course, and was the first European to enter Uganda. His famous book—the "Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile"—was published in 1863, and in the following year came its sequel, "What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile." He was about to meet Burton in a great debate on their rival views before the British Association at Bath, September 15th, 1864, when on the morning of the day fixed for it Speke accidentally shot himself whilst partridge shooting. His name stands almost unsurpassed in the history of African exploration.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

John Hanning Speke, the discoverer of the source of the Nile, was the second son of William Speke of Jordans, in the parish of Ilton. He was born in 1827, and, in 1848, entered the Indian Army, and was engaged in four general actions under Sir Colin Campbell. After the annexation of the Punjaub, he explored the Himalayas. In 1854 he started to explore, at his own expense, Central Africa. In February, 1858, he sighted the great Tanganyika Lake, 300 miles long and 30 to 40 broad. In July of the same year he reached the Victoria Nyanza, and Speke declared it to be the head waters of the Nile. For nine years he remained in Africa, unwearied in his exertions to unlock the mysteries of that vast interior. He did not forget his home, for a branch of the Nile which connects the two great lakes, the Victoria and Albert Nyanza, he called the Somerset River. At the south of the great lake is a gulf called the Speke Gulf. On his return to England he was received with shouts of triumph. The Queen congratulated him, the Royal Geographical Society rewarded him, the Prince of Wales attended his lectures. He became the cynosure of all eyes and the object of everyone's curiosity. The D.N.B. says "the importance of Speke's discoveries can hardly be over-estimated. In discovering the source reservoir of the Nile he succeeded in solving the problem of all ages." He who had passed through so many dangers unhurt was killed while out shooting, by the accidental discharge of his gun, on September 15th, 1864, and was buried at Dowlish Wake.

There is a saying about September 15th that the day is fine six years out of seven.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.



**SEPT. 16.—KING JOHN at HARPTREE, 1207.  
 KING JOHN AT WELLS, 1208.  
 KING EDWARD I. AT KEYN-  
 SHAM, 1276.  
 KING EDWARD AT LYDFORD,  
 1292.  
 KING CHARLES II. A FUGITIVE  
 AT CASTLE CARY, 1651.**

September 16th is a remarkable day in the Somerset Calendar inasmuch as we are able to record no less than five royal associations with our county. Both King John and King Stephen seem to have interests at Harptree. King Edward I. went from Lydford in 1292 to Shepton Mallet, and the third day found him at Publow. It is said that Charles II., on his escape into the West, after the disastrous battle of Worcester, slept at Castle Cary Manor House. The King had safely pursued his journey from Colonel Lane's, at Bentley, to Colonel Norton's, at Leigh Court, near Bristol, disguised as Mrs. Jane Lane's postillion, that lady riding on a pillion behind the Monarch, who went by the name of William Jackson. From Leigh Court the royal fugitive came to Castle Cary on the 16th September, 1651. Here, according to the account given in the Boscobel Tracts, the King rested for the night at Mr. Edward Kirton's house, sending forward Lord Wilmot, one of his faithful companions, to Colonel Wyndham's house at Trent, to prepare him for his reception there the next day.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**SEPT. 17.—KING EDWARD I. at SHEPTON  
 MALLET, 1292.  
 JUDGE JEFFREYS at TAUNTON,  
 1685.  
 HENRY NORRIS, F.R.C.S., BORN  
 AT TAUNTON, 1789. (See  
 Calendar March 20).  
 St. JOHN'S HOSPITAL, BRIDG-  
 WATER, SUBMITTED to the  
 KING, 1534.**

The "Gaul Book of the Western Circuit," after Monmouth's rebellion, is still in existence. The part relating to the Assizes at Taunton is headed "Gaul Delivery of the Lord the King in the County of Somerset from Prison at Taunton, for the said county on Thursday, September 17th, the first year of the reign of our Lord James

H., by the Grace of God King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, &c." Four men, Simon Hamblyn, William Gatchell, William Cooper, and Joseph Cooper, pleaded not guilty and were tried, convicted, and left for execution for levying war against the King; 500 others then pleaded guilty in batches of 20. They were then sent back to their prisons. The Court removed to Wells on September 22nd, where 527 prisoners were charged with high treason in levying war against the King; 524 pleaded guilty, and three not guilty. Two of these last were acquitted and one convicted. Of those tried at Taunton and Wells only four were executed, perhaps only three. The prisoners were worth from £10 to £15 alive, they were worth nothing dead. The prisoners not executed were transported to the West Indies except Simon Hamblyn, William Gatchell, William Cooper, and perhaps Joseph Cooper. The sentence on these was that they should be drawn to the gallows and hanged until they were dead. The cost to the City of Wells in entertaining Jeffreys and his companions during the Assize amounted to £19 5s 7d, the principal items in the account being for "two hogsheds and halfe and 1 tearse of beere and ale brewed, £3; five duz. of October beere, £1; Nicholas Olding for 1 hogshed of ale, £2."

—W.G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**ST. JOHN'S HOSPITAL, BRIDGWATER,  
SUBMITTED TO THE KING, 1534.**

On the 17th of September, 1534, the master of St. John's Hospital, Bridgwater (Robert Walsh), with the President (Henry Pety), seven deacons, and three novices, subscribed to the King's supremacy, the yearly revenues of the institution being then valued at £120 19s 1½d. Following this the Hospital was surrendered to the King, and the master was given a yearly pension of £33 6s 8d and a gratuity of £16 13s 4d.

**SEPT. 18.—KING EDWARD I. at PUBLLOW,  
1292.**

**NUNNEY CASTLE ATTACKED,  
1645.**

On the 15th September, 1645, Sir Thomas Fairfax and General Cromwell, having conquered at Sherborne, marched by Castle Cary and Shepton Mallet directly for Bristol. From Cary, on the 18th, two regiments with three cannon, were told off to attack Nunney, and on the 19th the main body of the Army, being

advanced so far, Fairfax rode over from Shepton personally to inspect it. He declared the Castle "very strong, but not very large," and leaving the besiegers to do their work, returned to his head-quarters the same night. All preparations being quickly made, the usual summons for surrender was sent in. This, as usual, also being refused, the cannon were advanced, and after battering away for a short time, a small breach was made. Colonel Prater, who was both governor and owner, not wishing to see his property uselessly destroyed, offered to surrender, and the Castle was given up on the second day, September 20th, on bare quarter.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**SEPT. 19.—GLASTONBURY FAIR.**

**KING JOHN at HENTON, 1207.**

**KING JOHN at BRUTON 1207.**

**KING JOHN at BRIDGWATER,  
1208.**

**HARTLEY COLERIDGE BORN,  
1796.**

Glastonbury Tor Fair is stated to have been established in 1127, when Henry I. granted a charter to the Abbot and Monks of Glastonbury to hold a fair at the Monastery of St. Michael on the Tor. The fair is really of much greater antiquity, as the charter mentions that it was to be held in a place where the fair had formerly been held for two days. Up to modern times the fair was held on the site mentioned in the charter, that is on the slopes of Tor Hill, now crowned by the ruined Church of St. Michael.

If on September 19th there is a storm from the South, a mild winter may be expected.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

The eldest son of the famous poet was born at Clevedon, 19th September, 1796. He was brought up by Southey, who also had associations with Somerset, and he was educated at Ambleside and Oxford. It is seldom that a notable father has a notable son, but the case was an exception, and Hartley followed but too well in his father's footsteps, and inherited his infirmities as well as his genius. His father's bane was opium, his own vice was intemperance, which caused the loss of his Oriel fellowship. As well as much admirable and graceful poetry, he wrote several collections of biographies. He died January 6th, 1849.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**SEPT. 20.—ST. MATTHEW'S EVE.**

A correspondent, writing in "Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries" in 1909, told an interesting story of an alleged witch, with whom he was brought into contact in that year in his own parish in Somerset. On his relating the story to a well-known society lady, she astonished him by expressing her belief in the witch and her power for evil, and sought to put him on his guard against her. She also told him that she herself was a witch, and advised him to get the ace of spades and on the eve of St. Matthew to nail it upside down on her gate at midnight, and this would lessen the witch's power. She also said that she would send the village witch something by post which would show her that there was another witch with greater powers.

**SEPT. 21.—St. MATTHEW'S FAIR, BRIDGE-WATER.**

A fair was formerly held in Bridgwater about St. Matthew's Day under a charter granted by Queen Elizabeth, dated July 4th, 1586. A charter of James I., dated February 16th, 1613, regulated the holding of St. Matthew's Fair to three days. Mr. S. G. Jarman tells us that at this fair rowdyism and drunkenness and thieving were regular occurrences, and that on one occasion Mr. Pike, an ex-Mayor, had some snuff thrown in his face in the Fair Field, and during his temporary blindness the rascals who threw it stole his gold watch. On another occasion Bampfyld Moore Carew, the notorious "King of the Beggars," visited St. Matthew's Fair, where he appeared upon crutches as a poor miserable cripple, in company with many of his brethren, whose object was to deceive the generously-inclined public. To such an extent did the nuisance extend that the Mayor jocosely said he would make the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk! In view of this end he had them all apprehended and confined in the dark house at the gaol one whole night. The next morning a gentleman visited them in their miserable apartment, and pretending greatly to befriend them, advised them, if any of them were counterfeits, to make haste out of the town, otherwise they must expect no mercy from the Mayor, unknown to whom he had stolen the keys. He then unlocked the doors, and forth issued the "disabled" and "infirm" prisoners; the lame threw aside their crutches and artificial legs and made exceedingly good use of their natural ones; the blind made shift to see their way out of the town, and the deaf listened attentively

to the advice of their supposed friend and followed his counsel with all speed. The Mayor, with several aldermen and gentlemen, were in hiding on the opposite side of the gaol, and were amused spectators of this highly diverting scene, calling out to stop them, not with any intent of capture, but only to add a spur to their speed. Indeed, one of them was so alarmed that instead of running across the bridge he jumped into the river and swam to the opposite side. In short, so well did these cripples ply their limbs that not one of them was taken again, excepting a real lame man, who, in spite of the fear and consternation he was in, could not mend his decrepit pace. He was brought back to the Mayor, who, after rebuking him for his vagrant course of life, generously relieved him, and several other members of the Corporation were also kind to him.

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**SEPT. 22.—ST. MATTHEW.**

**KING JOHN at CASTLE CARY,  
1207.**

**FLIGHT of PERKIN WARBECK  
FROM TAUNTON, 1497.**

**BLOODY ASSIZE OPENED AT  
WELLS, 1685 (See Sept. 17).**

**ARREST of RICHARD WHITING,  
ABBOT of GLASTONBURY,  
1539.**

**ROYALIST TROOPS ENCAMPED  
at BRADFORD, 1642.**

The only church in Somerset dedicated to St. Matthew is that at Wookey. There is a good deal of weather-lore associated with this day. It is one of the three days of the month which rule the weather for October, November, and December. There are several rhymes:—

Matthew's Day, bright and clear,  
Brings good wine in next year.

\* \* \*

St. Matthew  
Brings on the cold dew.

\* \* \*

St. Matthee  
Shut up the bee.

A South wind on September 21st indicates that the rest of the autumn will be warm.

**FLIGHT OF PERKIN WARBECK.**

Perkin Warbeck is said to have mustered his men at Taunton on the 20th September, 1497; he probably reached it on the 19th, and

remained there until the 21st. Then he heard that the Lords Daubeny and Lord Willoughby de Broke and Sir John Cheney, with the King's troops, had arrived at Glastonbury Abbey. Taunton was not then defensible and Taunton was not a walled town, so Warbeck abandoned his followers and rode off at midnight on the 21st.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

At the first visitation of the monasteries the Abbot of Glastonbury had been favourably mentioned. He had been passive under Cromwell's measures, nor had he apparently sought to influence any against them. Yet Cromwell's distrust was aroused, and enquiry into Whiting's conduct was ordered. Three of the appointed visitors, Layton, Pollard, and Moyle, arrived at Glastonbury on the 22nd September, 1539. Richard Whiting, the Abbot, was absent at a country house a mile and a-half away. Thither the visitors went. He was questioned, but confessed nothing, and was taken back to the Abbey, where his private apartments were searched. Although nothing very incriminating was discovered, the Abbot was placed in charge of a guard, sent to London, and put in the Tower. This was followed by the dissolution of the monastery. On his examination it was found that Whiting, like the Abbot of Reading, had supplied money to the northern insurgents, a fact which sealed his doom.

(His death will be more properly detailed under its date next month.)

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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#### ROYALIST TROOPS ENCAMPED AT BRADFORD, 1642.

In the narrative of Sir Ralph Hopton's campaign in the West, told in one of the volumes of the Somerset Record Society, it appears that this General came westwards because of the strength of the enemy at Portsmouth, where they "had gain'd a great magazine of ammunition and ordnance," and partly because the castle of Sherborne was not defensible.

"On Sunday, the 20th September, calling his Court of Warr together, upon a very solemn debate, it was generally resolved that a retreat was necessary. . . . This resolution (to go across Somerset to Wales) was taken that night, and Sir Ralph Hopton had present orders to prepare for a general remove, which was done, and the carryages began to draw out about 8 of the clock in the morning, but the Marquess (of Hertford) was that night persuaded by some of the gentlemen of Somerset not to engage his

company in those rotten unhealthy Moores, but to march straight to Myneard (Minehead), where hee was assured hee should every Thursday find, of course, Welch barques enough to transport him and all his forces into Wales, whereof he advertised Sir Raphe Hopton that Munday morning, who submitted to his commands, notwithstanding hee toretold him the most part of the inconveniences that hee afterwards mett with. It being a much longer marche, and over very ill countrye for carryages, and worst affected to the service, Taunton being just in his way at that tyme a strong garrison of the Parliaments and Dunster Castle being then held against him, and there being a possibilitie many wayes that his expectacion of Welch boates might fail him, which afterwards did, but the Marquess persisted in his resolution, and marched that night to Hinton and the parish thereabout, the next day they marched to Bradford, where they quartered just betewre Taunton and Wellington, then both held for the Parliament, and the whole country thereabout being in continuall allarum, ringing their bells backward, and making fyres to drawe the people into an uproar.

Wednesday night they marched to Strakegummer (Stogumber) and there quartered, and on Thursday they marched into Myneard."

—F. W. MATHEWS.

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### SEPT. 23.—SUPPRESSION of CANYNGTON PRIORY, 1536.

Canyngton Priory was founded about the year 1138 by Robert de Curci or Cury, for a community of Benedictine Nuns. The founder was server, or chief butler, to the Empress Mand. The House was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. Local tradition affirms that Canyngton—(now spelt Cannington)—was the birth-place of Fair Rosamund—Rosa Mundi, the rose of the world—the lover of King Henry II. She died in 1177.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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### SEPT. 25.—KING JOHN at NEWTON, 1208.

The St. Loes, who held lands here in the reign of Henry III, built a Castle at Newton, in which they are reported to have imprisoned King John.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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### SEPT. 26.—SOMERSET ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY INAUGURATED, 1849.

The Somerset Archæological Society, formed with the object of "cultivating and collecting information on archæology and natural history

in their various branches, but more particularly in connection with the county of Somerset," was inaugurated at Taunton on September 26th, 1849, before a large gathering of distinguished ladies and gentlemen. The Society boasted of 250 members, many famous men figuring in the list, including Lord Cavan, Lord Loveace, the Right Hon. H. Labouchere, M.P., Sir E. T. Colebrooke, M.P., Sir T. D. Acland, Sir A. Hood, M.P., and the Right Hon. Henry Hobhouse. The then Lord Lieutenant of the County (Lord Portman) was patron, and Sir Walter Trevelyan, Bart., presided over the gathering. The proceedings were held in the Assembly-rooms, an ante-room being converted into a museum. Amongst a great variety of curiosities and valuables exhibited was a miniature portrait of Charles the First, worked with his own hair (lent by the President), fossils and corals from Cannington (Mr. Baker, of Bridgwater), a collection of the eggs of Somerset birds (Mr. Crotch, jun., of Taunton), and a series of sculptures discovered by Mr. Giles, architect, of Taunton, under the chancel of Wellington Church, and presented to the Society by the Vicar.

The inaugural proceedings were marked with great enthusiasm. Sir Walter Trevelyan declared that Somerset was rich in all the objects in which that Society would be interested. The Rev. Mr. Dymock presented a report which outlined the work done by the Committee in the formation of the Society, pointing out that their great doubt was whether they should make it co-extensive with the county or confine it to the western part. It was determined to embrace the whole of the county first, and if that was found too large an object to fall back upon the lesser design.—A striking address on geology was delivered by the Dean of Westminster, who said it was his lot during three of the most interesting weeks of his life to travel in solitude, his only companion being an ordnance map, over the whole of the Mendips from one end to the other for the first time that it was ever traversed by an individual of the human species, employed and successfully employed in ascertaining by his own personal inspection the structure of that important range of hills. It had been his lot to traverse the whole of that chain of mountains, and at the end of three weeks when he had finally finished that map and he stood alone on the summit he felt a pride he had never felt before or since. He felt a pride which he trusted it was not improper for him to feel—that he was the first of the human race whom God had permitted to understand the construction of His



glorious works in that important part of the county of Somerset.

Mr. F. H. Dickinson, in an address which gave much satisfaction, enforced attention on the antiquarian branch of the Society's objects, and after the Dean of Westminster had been thanked for his address, Mr. W. Pinney, M.P., moved the thanks of the meeting to the chair, and the Society retired to Giles's to dinner.

### SEPT. 27.—KING JOHN at TAUNTON, 1208.

It would seem as if King John was at Taunton on September 27th, 1208, for on that day William Brewer witnessed the following letter at "Taunton":—"The King to all who shall see or hear these presents. Know ye that we have given leave to Garin, son of Gerald, that he may cause to come from across the sea into England for his use 20 casks of wine." Far from having free imports in King John's time, you could not import anything without first obtaining the King's leave.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### SEPT. 29.—HENRY VII. at BATH, 1497.

#### ST. MICHAEL AND SOMERSET CHURCHES.

#### S. MICHAEL, MICHAELMAS, or MIHELMAS DAY.

#### FOUNDATION STONE of TAUNTON & SOMERSET HOSPITAL LAID, 1772.

#### THE CURFEW BELL.

Says Tusser in his "Husbandry" for March, in the 1557 edition:—

"Have millions at Mihelmas, parsneps in Lent."

Mihel or Mihil, indeed, was the medieval spelling and pronounciation of Michael.

The story which tells that the eating of goose at Michaelmas originated with Queen Elizabeth's eating that bird at Sir Neville Umfreyville's house September 29th, 1588, when the news arrived of the destruction of the Spanish Armada is ill-founded, for the custom may be traced a century earlier.

In the "Posies of Gascoigne," published in 1575, are the lines:—

"And when the tenants come to pay their quarter's rent

They bring some foule at Midsummer, a dish of fish at Lent.

At Christmās time a capon; at Michaelmas a goose,

And somewhat else at New-year's-tide for fear the lease fly loose." —EDWARD VIVIAN.

## MICHAELMAS-DAY.

Jeboult, in his "West Somerset," tells us that Cothelstone is noted for a strange old custom that prevails in the manor. Certain tenements are held by payment of so many bushels of rye annually on Michaelmas-day. The tenants are called rye-renters.

\* \* \*

A statement as to the customs of the Manor of Minehead, drawn up on the 5th January, 1646, gives as item No. 3 "We present the custom there is that every Customary Suitor without delivery or Assignment may take and breake upon the Lorde's Commons or Waste Ground, paying for every acre at Michaelmas twelve pence, And all other customary tennants."

\* \* \*

As many days old as the moon is on Michaelmas-day so many floods shall we have after.

\* \* \*

If St. Michael brings many acorns Christmas will cover the fields with snow.

\* \* \*

A Michaelmas loc  
Comes ne'er in the pot.

\* \* \*

Bridgwater Fair is now held on Michaelmas-day, and it is usually wet, hence the saying frequently heard in the neighbourhood "Twill rain for sure to Bridgwater fair."

\* \* \*

## MICHAELMAS LORE.

Mr. C. S. Whittaker kindly sends us the following cutting from the *Daily News*:—The once popular superstition that after to-day (Michaelmas) the devil passes his hoof over the blackberries and scorches them up, lingers on still in Devon and Cornwall in the form that the fruit is unwholesome when Michaelmas has passed. In leaving the blackberries alone after Michaelmas our ancestors were wise, for their calendar was eleven days later than ours, a fact we are apt to forget when, as we often do, we regret that things are more backward nowadays. In most years October 10th (old Michaelmas Day previous to 1752) is about the latest day you could expect to harvest really unspoilt blackberries. Other items of country lore at Michaelmas related to the cracking of nuts in church on the Sunday preceding it, and the consumption of a "green" goose as a fitting concomitant for Michaelmas Day. In weather lore you reckoned the coming winter's floods from the age of the moon at Michaelmas: one flood

for each day it was old being the reckoning. Nowadays we usually associate it with the flowering of the Michaelmas daisies and the quarterly payment of rent. The custom of eating a young goose was bound up with the tenures: a goose being given to the landlord, or his steward, then—just as a turkey was at Christmas, fish at Easter, and a chicken in midsummer—to sweeten the proceedings.

\* \* \*

#### FOUNDATION STONE OF TAUNTON AND SOMERSET HOSPITAL LAID, 1772.

The *Western Flying Post* for October 5th, 1772, says:—"On Tuesday last was laid, with great ceremony, the foundation stone of the new County Infirmary at Taunton. The Militia Regiment under arms formed two ranks entire, through which the gentlemen of the town, the Freemasons, the town music, the Mayor and Corporation, the clergy, and the nobility and gentlemen of the county passed. After laying the stone several volleys were fired by the grenadiers, and the company repaired to the Town Hall to dinner, where an elegant entertainment was provided. And in the evening was a splendid ball at the New Room in the market place."

\* \* \*

#### THE CURFEW BELL.

Amongst other towns where the curfew still tells the knell of parting day are Taunton and Castle Cary. In the latter town the bell is rung at eight o'clock each evening from Michaelmas to Lady-day, omitting the twelve days of Christmas. In Taunton the curfew is still rung from the tower of St. Mary's Church at eight o'clock each night. The bell was formerly rung at 5.45 a.m. and eight p.m., but had to be discontinued during the war. Now the evening bell is again rung, but the early morning one has not been re-started. Until about the year 1874 the curfew was rung at Axbridge at seven o'clock each evening from Michaelmas to Lady-day. The registers and accounts of many of our Somerset parishes in which the "curfy" is no longer to be heard contain records of payments for its being rung a century or two ago. The North Curry Churchwardens' accounts for 1687 include an item of 10s paid to the "Saxon" for "ringing of Corfee."

\* \* \*

In Somerset there used to be an old saying that if you eat goose on Michaelmas Day you will never want money all the year round. It is not known how this saying arose, but it was popular at all events 200 years ago. One cor-

respondent, when the 18th century was very, very young, tried to discover the origin of the saying. He was picturing to himself Apollo's sons having completed a feast of goose on Michaelmas Day, when the thought occurs to him whence

"The custom'd proverb did commence,  
Those who eats goose on Michael's Day,  
Shan't money lack his debts to pay."

The answer is supplied. It is ingenious, and contains not a little wisdom and sage advice. It is alleged that the proverb was framed in days of yore, and was "grounded on a prudent score." Doubtless it was at first designed in order that the people might bear in mind the seasons:—

"That so they might apply their care,  
To all those things which needful were,  
And, by the good industrious hand,  
Know when and how t' improve their land.

The curiosity of this correspondent led another one as inquisitive as himself to frame another question to the "British Apollo" in 1709. He, too, desired to know what reason there was for the belief that if one ate a fat goose on St. Michael's Day for dinner that money would be plentiful all the year round. The answer is given in rhyme, and amounts to this, that

"The custom came up from the tenants presenting  
Their landlords with geese, to incline their  
relenting  
On following payments."

The association between the goose and St. Michael's Day, however, dates from a much earlier period than early in the 18th century. To bring a goose "fit for the lord's dinner" on Michaelmas Day appears to have been customary in the time of Edward IV. There is a good deal of ground for the suggestion that probably no other reason can be given for the custom of eating goose on Michaelmas Day than that the day was a great festival and geese at that time are plentiful. We find special feasting attaching to special days throughout the year.

"Frose January, leader of the year,  
Minc'd pies in van and calves' head in the rear.

\* \* \*

"September, when by custom (right Divine),  
Geese are ordained to bleed at Michael's shrine."

It used to be popularly believed in this part of the country that a goose formed part of the Royal dinner when the news was brought to Queen Elizabeth of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and that her chivalrous Majesty commanded that the dish (a goose) might be served up on every 29th day of September to com-

memorate the glorious event. Antiquaries, however, believe that the custom of eating goose on Michaelmas Day was at that time established at Court. That it was a common custom before the Armada victory is shown in the following passages from Gascoigne, who died in 1577, or eleven years before the great naval event mentioned:—

‘ And when the tenanntes come to pay their  
quarter’s rent  
They bring some fowle at Mid-Summer, a dish  
of fish at Lent,  
At Christmas a capon, at Michaelmas a goose,  
And something else at New Yere’s-tide, for feare  
their lease flies loose.

Other explanations of the association of goose with St. Michael’s Day have been offered, but we are tempted to accept the suggestion that St. Michael’s Day being a great festival, and geese being plentiful, the downy bird was thought a fit victim to offer at St. Michael’s shrine. And many people to-day will be inclined to agree that our forefathers, in selecting the bird, showed a considerable amount of wisdom.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### HENRY VII. AT BATH, 1497.

After Perkin Warbeck hurried from Taunton to the New Forest, Henry VII. moved from Woodstock towards the West, knowing that the second rebellion of 1497 was over, but knowing also that the embers of discontent still flickered there. By the time he reached Bath he had a large body of troops with him—estimated at 10,000 men. Oliver King, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, was with him.

#### ST. MICHAEL AND SOMERSET CHURCHES.

The following churches in our county are dedicated to St. Michael:—Angersleigh, Blackford, South Brent, Brushford, Burnet, Butcombe, North Cadbury, Chaffcombe, Clapton-in-Gordano, East Coker, Combe St. Nicholas, Compton Martin, Creech St. Michael, Dinder, Enmore, Greinton, Haselbury Plucknett, Milverton, Minehead, Penselwood, Puriton, Runnington, Rowberrow, Seavington St. Michael, Somerton, Stawley, Templecombe, and Twerton.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

SEPT. 30.—KING HENRY VII. at WELLS,  
1497.

CHARLES I. at CHARD, 1644.  
19 PERSONS EXECUTED at  
TAUNTON by JUDGE JEFFREYS, 1685.

Henry VII. came to Wells on this day with 10,000 men in arms against Perkin Warbeck. The Bishop (Oliver King) being non-resident and the Dean resident, it is probable that the Palace was not in a proper state to receive the King, who therefore went to the Deanery. The tradition as to the King having been entertained at the Deanery there is good reason for assuming, is founded on fact. The King sent the good news of the surrender of Perkin Warbeck from Somerset to the Lord Mayor of London. He attended a thanksgiving service in Wells Cathedral on the following day (Sunday).

On September 30th, 1685, no less than 19 victims of the notorious Judge Jeffreys were executed at Taunton. The first to suffer on that occasion was Major Perrott, a London brewer, who had been a zealous supporter of Monmouth. Amongst others who were put to death at Taunton on that day were Captain Annesley, William Jenkin, Captain Hucker, and Mr. Gatchill, constable of the hundred, who had been forced, against his inclination, by some of the duke's party, to execute a warrant for bringing in provisions for the Army. As he was drawn to execution he looked on the people and said "A populous town: God bless it!"

#### CHARLES I. AT CHARD.

The fair town of Chard—as Lord Clarendon calls it—was frequently occupied during the Civil Wars between King Charles and the Parliament by the troops of both parties, and the King himself, with one division of his Army, took up his quarters there for a week in the end of September, 1644, when on his way from Cornwall and Exeter to his intended winter quarters at Oxford. His great object in halting at Chard was to obtain the supplies which the Commissioners for Somerset had promised to send thither. He also issued a proclamation, dated from Chard, inviting the "speedy peace" which he never lived to realise. "It was on the last day of September—says Clarendon—that the King marched from Chard and quartered that night at a house of the Lord Poulett (Hinton House), where Prince Rupert met him, and gave him an account of the unhappy affairs of the North, and that he had left about 2,000 horse under the

command of Sir Marmaduke Langdale, which he might as well have brought with him, and then the King would have had a glorious end of his Western expedition. His Majesty had scarcely left Chard with the main body of his troops, ere a party from Lyme, with the unflagging activity which distinguished that garrison, dashed into the town and took several prisoners, along with eleven of the King's saddle horses and their accoutrements. The King's Army at Chard consisted of 10,000 horse and foot and 17 pieces of artillery. His Majesty stayed at the house of Mr. Bancroft, his troop being quartered first at Knowle, then at South Pether-ton, the Army generally being distributed at Crewkerne, Yeovil, and the country around. After leaving Hinton, Charles I. went to South Perrott, being quartered for the night at the Manor House, and so passed on to Sherborne.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.



## OCTOBER.

Hail! holy October, congenial and kind;  
To me, with the glare of the summer behind,  
So calmly thou comest that thou art most dear;  
Hail! holy October, sweet eve of the year.

GREGORY.

The year is falling. This is the tenth month. Some people think it is a melancholy month, but perhaps it would be more correct to say in October one's mind gives way to "a feeling of repose, calm contemplation and poetic ease." The days are declining, the leaves commence to rustle and "slowly circles through the waving air," and the great business of Nature, with respect to the vegetable creation, at this season, is dissemination. Plants which, having gone through the progressive stages of springing, flowering, and seeding, have, at length, brought to maturity the rudiments of a future progeny, which are now to be committed to the fostering bosom of the earth. The gloom of the falling year is, in some measure, enlivened, during this month especially, by the variety of colours, some lively and beautiful, put on by the fading leaves of trees and shrubs. To these temporary colours are added the more durable ones of ripened berries, a variety of which now enrich our hedges. Among these are particularly distinguished the hip, the haw, the sloe, the blackberry, and the berries of the alder, holly, and woody nightshade. The common martin usually disappears this month, and the swallows will break up their homes. Hunting will commence and, in the olden days especially, the country people of Somerset used to go in for the brewing of malt liquor for long keeping, and the production was commonly called "Old October."

There is an old saying

Dry your barley in October,  
Or you'll always be sober,

meaning that if this is not done there will be no malt. There is plenty of weather lore associated with this month, and it is satisfactory to be told that there are always nineteen fine days in October. We all look forward to St. Luke's



“little summer.” If there should be much rain, there will be much wind in December, and should it freeze or snow, January will be mild. For every fog in October there is snow in the winter, heavy or light, coming as the fog is heavy or light, and if in the fall of the leaves in October many of them wither on the boughs and hang there, it betokens a frosty winter and much snow. Watch the full moon this month. If it comes without frost there will be no frost until the full moon in November.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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### WEATHER AND OTHER LORE FOR OCTOBER.

Much rain in October, much wind in December.

\* \* \*

If the deer's coat is grey in October there will be a severe winter.

\* \* \*

In October manure your field  
And your land its wealth shall yield.

\* \* \*

On St. Luke's Day (18th)  
The oxen may play.

The same is also said of St. Jude's Day.

\* \* \*

A good October and a good blast  
To blow the hog acorns and mast.

\* \* \*

If in October you do marry  
Love will come, but riches tarry.

\* \* \*

Dry your barley in October  
Or you'll have to be sober.

\* \* \*

Cuckoo wheat and woodcock hay  
Will make the farmer run away.

\* \* \*

Ice in October that will bear up a duck  
Foretells a winter as wet as muck.

\* \* \*

Nowe sowe thy wheate  
To sel or to eate:  
Sowe all thy rie  
If October be drie.

(To be found as a popular saying in an old calendar as far back as 1606).

\* \* \*

When the horn of the huntsman is heard on  
the hill  
It is time for the farmer to look to his drill.

We are indebted to Mr. Edward Vivian for the following additions to the "lore" we printed last week:—

Corn in good years is hay; in ill years straw is corn.

\*       \*       \*

Corn and horn go together.  
(i.e., prices of corn and cattle.)

\*       \*       \*

Late fruit keeps well.

\*       \*       \*

When the sloe tree's as white as a sheet,  
Sow your barley whether it be dry or wet.

\*       \*       \*

Many haws.  
Many snaws.  
Many sloes,  
Many cold toes.

---

"If the deer's coat is grey in October, a severe winter is coming."

This saying is common out Exmoor way. One wonders what colour the deer's coat was in the year 789, for hard frost held all England in its grip from the 1st of October to the 26th of February in the next year.

This month the hooting of the owls in the woods heralds the approach of winter, and by many a fireside is recalled the local legend of the belated wanderer mistaking the bird's cry for the voice of some inquisitive busybody.

One such tale from our own county follows, and probably every parish in the West Country has its variant, for I have heard its like in Somerset, Devon, and Dorset. An old fellow who had stayed in jovial company for a good many hours one evening, took himself off at last on the way towards home, and at a puzzling cross-roads where five ways met he took the wrong turning. He wandered on, and blundered into sogs and brambles, for it was only a lane to some moors. Tangle-footed and muddle-headed, he sank down at last on an old moot, and presently heard a loud "Who? who-o-o?" from just above. "Plaise, zur, tis me," he replied. "Who, who, whoo?" again. "Jacob Stone, zur." "Who, who, whoo?" "Jacob Stone, zur, tailor, and honest man as ever lived." "Weef, weef, wait," then a rustle as the owl flew out of the tree. "Can't wait, zur, tis too cold; man-a-lost! man-a-lost!" raising his voice to a loud halloo.

"Hallo, Jacob, what's the matter?" came a shout in reply, and the old fellow recognized the voice of a neighbour of his. "I was passing the end of the lane, and heard thee talking, so I

comed along to see what wast up to. Thee't a party ole chap to be out; come along home wi' I."

The story was retailed next night to the huge amusement of the company at the inn, and Jacob's name was ever after coupled with the tag, "honest man as ever lived, zur."

—F. W. MATHEWS.

### OCT. 1.—KING HENRY VII. at WELLS, 1497.

King Henry VII., who had arrived at Wells from Bath a day or two before, was at Wells on October 1st, 1497. The day previous the news arrived in the city of the taking of Perkin Warbeck within the sanctuary of Beaulieu, and—says Mr. Chisholm Batten, in a paper on "Henry VII. in Somersetshire," read before the Royal Archaeological Institution, at Taunton, and printed in the "Proceedings" of 1879—doubtless there rose from the Cathedral choir, in unison with that of St. Paul's, in honour, the thankful anthem of *Te Deum*, the King himself assisting; the Vicars Choral coming by the new steps from the beautiful Vicar's Close, which Beckington's executors, executing faithfully the last will of the pious founder, had just raised. Tradition says Henry VII. stayed at the Deanery with Dean Gunthorpe, who had re-built a considerable part of the stately building now standing; for it seems that the Palace of the Bishop was, if not in a state of dilapidation, at least uniminished. The next day the Royal host, said to have numbered 10,000 men, moved to Glastonbury, where they would join the division of the army led by Lord Daubeney. Glastonbury Abbey was then in all its glory, for Bere was its Abbot. The King occupied, we presume, the new lodgings by the great chamber, built by Bere, and thenceforth these apartments bore the name of the King's Lodgings—the name given, as Leland tells us, to Abbot Bere's building. On Tuesday the King moved his court to Bridgewater; and on Wednesday, the 1th October, he arrived at Taunton, then, as in Clarendon's time, and now, "the fairest, largest, and richest town in Somersetshire."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### OCT. 3.—RETURN of TOM CORYATE to ODCOMBE, 1608.

Thomas Coryate, the "Odcombian Leg-stretcher," an account of whom appears under date May 14th, the day he left England on his first expedition, returned after traversing a distance of 1,975 miles, on October 3rd the same

year (1608), "after having enjoyed a very prosperous gale all the way" from Flushing. Being at home again, Coryate busied himself with his notes in his hungry native air, two years being thus occupied before the "Crudities" were ready. On the 20th October, 1612, he left London for his second adventure.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**OCT. 4.—KING HENRY VII. at TAUNTON,  
1497.**

**TAUNTON CASTLE, 1662.**

**FRANCIS WILLIAM NEWMAN  
DIED, 1897.**

An order was issued on October 4th, 1662, by King Charles the Second, for the speedy dismantling of Taunton Castle.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

When King Henry arrived at Taunton on the 4th October, 1497, the Castle was not then habitable, and it is probable His Majesty was received by John Prowse the Prior, at the Priory. The next day Perkin Warbeck was brought, with John Heron, his chief councillor, a prisoner to the King's Court. Perkin was admitted into the Royal presence. To be received into the presence of Henry was to be safe; not like the brutal James II., who let Monmouth kneel to him for mercy and then sent him to Tower Hill, but, like a King, Henry assured the Pretender of his life and ordered him to follow in his train. On the 6th October King Henry left Taunton and Somerset. It is recorded that while at Taunton Henry VII. indulged in card playing and lost £9. He gave 6s 8d to St. Mary Magdalene's, and Sir Peter, his almoner, distributed 240 pence to the poor of Taunton, and 13s 4d was spent on healing two sick folk.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

The gifted brother of Cardinal Newman was born in London in 1805, and after taking his degree at Oxford and sojourning in the East for several years spent a further thirty years of his life as professor in colleges at Bristol, Manchester, and London successively. Unlike his brother the Cardinal who found satisfaction for his desires in the Roman Catholic faith, Francis William sought for a faith which should include the whole of the best in existing religions. He wrote many works on theology, mathematics, modern Arabic, and the Hebrew Monarchy. Living to an advanced age, he died at Weston-super-Mare on October 4th, 1897.

**OCT. 6.—FAIRFAX at CHARD, 1645.****EARTHQUAKE in SOMERSET, 1863****TOTAL ECLIPSE of the MOON, 1009.**

On this day Cromwell's Army, under Fairfax, was at Chard, where they remained eight nights, leaving on the 18th for Honiton, by way of Axminster. During this period Lady Fairfax took the opportunity of paying a short visit to Hinton House—for there was a relationship between its owner, the popular Royalist commander, and the renowned Generalissimo of the Parliamentary forces. They had married two sisters. Lady Fairfax was Anne, daughter of General Sir Horatio Vere, and Lady Poulett was Catherine Vere, first married to Oliver St. John.

**EARTHQUAKE IN SOMERSET, 1863.**

At 22 minutes past three on this day there was an earthquake that made itself felt in the western and other parts of England. Another earthquake "shocked" Bath and other places in the West in 1868.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

Of the eclipse of this date, 1009, we are told in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* "This year the Moon was changed into blood."

**OCT. 8.—St. KEYNA.****HENRY FIELDING DIED, 1754.**

We are told that St. Keyna, the daughter of Bragan or Braganus, Prince of Brecknockshire, became a recluse, and fixed her home in Somerset in a wood near Keynsham. Legendary lore says the county was infested with venomous serpents, and these, by her prayers, were converted to stones. Before her birth her mother dreamed that her child should be a dove, and lo! as she grew up "a certain wonderful and gracious spiritual beauty shone in the face of the maiden as when the sun shines on the snow." After a time she left her home and crossed the Severn in search of a desert spot where she might devote her life to meditating on the glory of God. "And having found a certain woody spot," she begged the chief of the district to give it to her that she might there serve God, and he granted her request right cheerfully, laughing merrily because the place was infested with such a multitude of snakes that neither men, nor cattle, nor wild beasts could exist in it. Having got rid of the snakes in the manner stated, she prayed until a spring gushed forth, which gave health to many infirm people. Her death has been picturesquely

described, and as her soul left her body "a roseate hue overspread her face, and so fragrant an odour arose from her body that all who were with her thought that they too were assembled in the glory of Paradise." Kentisford, near Sampford Brett, preserves the tradition of St. Keyna's sojourn in the district.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

Henry Fielding, the father of the English novel, was born at Sharpham Park, near Glastonbury, on April 22nd, 1707, and a brief summary of his life was given in our Calendar under that date. He was educated, first at Eton, and then at Leyden University, but, owing to parental extravagance, he was forced, at the age of 20, to return to London and earn his own living. Here he subsisted by writing plays, but as they brought neither great fame nor money, and, owing to his extravagance, he was always in debt. In November, 1734, he married a Miss Craddock, who possessed a fortune of £1,500, and, on the strength of it, Fielding went to reside at East Stour, Dorset, where he led the life of a country gentleman. Within two years he had spent his wife's fortune, and he then returned to London, where, for a time, he opened a small theatre, but, making no great success, he studied law. In 1740 he was called to the Bar, but, as his practise was small, he still tried to earn his living by the pen. About this time appeared "Pamela," a novel written by Samuel Richardson, and its success inspired Fielding to write a novel on the same lines, but with more vigour. This novel was "Joseph Andrews," for which he received £200. He next wrote "Jonathan Wild," and for a time edited a small paper. His first novel, "Joseph Andrews," won for him the patronage of Lord Lyttleton, who obtained for him, in 1748, the paid position of Justice of the Peace for London and Middlesex, where he rendered most valuable services. Soon after his appointment appeared his novel, "Tom Jones," and in 1751 he wrote "Amelia"; for this he received £2,000. This novel is most interesting, as the chief characters are supposed to represent Fielding and his wife. Early excesses had undermined his health, and he was advised to go to Lisbon. On the voyage his strength was failing, and he died at Lisbon on October 8th, 1754, and was buried in the English cemetery there.

**OCT. 10.—WOLSEY INSTITUTED RECTOR  
of LIMINGTON, 1500.**

**Dr. WALTER RALEIGH DIED, 1646**

In West Somerset it is believed that after Old Michaelmas Day (October 10th) the Devil

spits on all the blackberries, and they are not fit to eat after that date.

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Wolsey's first living was Limington, near Ilchester. He was afterwards, among his numerous preferments, Bishop of Bath and Wells, Rector of Hillfarrance, and likewise Rector of Milverton. Wolsey kept a school at Limington. His conduct, at that time, is said to have been somewhat irregular, and for some disturbance on a fair day, at which he led the revels, he was brought before a magistrate—Sir Amias Poulett—and put into the stocks. When he afterwards attained to greatness and became a Cardinal, he failed not to remember the humiliating punishment, and to have his revenge upon the impartial magistrate who inflicted it.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### DR. WALTER RALEIGH DIED, 1646.

Dr. Walter Raleigh, nephew of Sir Walter Raleigh, and a staunch Royalist, was rector of Chedzoy from 1620 and Dean of Wells from 1641. When the civil war began in 1645 Dr. Raleigh was in attendance on the King as his chaplain. During his absence his rectory-house was plundered by the rebels, his property stolen, his wife and children driven away. He returned, only to be compelled to fly after the battle of Langport, and his rectory was made the headquarters of the rebel generals. He took shelter in Bridgwater, and when that town fell he was captured and sent back to Chedzoy and kept as a prisoner in his own house. There he remained for a while, for he was suffering from illness; but Henry Jeanes, vicar of Kingston, who from a bitter opponent had now become a zealous upholder of presbyterianism, desired the living for himself, and he carried Rayleigh off to Ilchester and threw him into gaol. From Ilchester the unhappy man was taken to the Bishop's house at Banwell, and thence to Wells, where he was confined in the Deanery in the custody of a shoemaker named David Barrett, the constable of the city. This Barrett, being one day in ill-humour, demanded to see a letter the Dean was writing to his wife, and when the Dean resisted and struggled to withhold it, the shoemaker stabbed him through the body. After lingering some weeks, Raleigh died, October 10th, 1646. He was buried by Standish, one of the priest-vicars, who read the Church Service over his body—a crime for which he was imprisoned till the day of his death. Barrett escaped all punishment.

OCT. 11.—St. ETHELBURGH'S DAY.  
 OLD MICHAELMAS DAY.  
 REV. SYDNEY SMITH'S SPEECH  
 at TAUNTON, 1831.

The interesting local incident associated with this day is that in ancient times, on the festival of this Saint, furmity was a usual dish. Furmity was a well-known concoction in Somerset, and reference to it was made under my account of Club-day on May 24th.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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At the General Quarter Sessions for the County of Somerset held in July, 1829, regulations were made for the better division of the county. It was decided to divide it into twenty divisions, within and for which special sessions should be held. This order took effect October 11th, 1830.

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Before the change from the old style to the Gregorian Calendar, 1752, this was Michaelmas Day.

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REV. SYDNEY SMITH'S SPEECH AT  
 TAUNTON, 1831.

Mr. Edward Vivian kindly reminds us that it was in October, 1831, that the Rev. Sydney Smith made his famous "Mrs. Partington" speech at Taunton, in which he said "I do not mean to be disrespectful, but the attempt of the Lords to stop the progress of reform reminds me very forcibly of the great storm of Sidmouth, and of the conduct of the excellent Mrs. Partington on that occasion. In the winter of 1824, there set in a great flood upon that town—the tide rose to an incredible height: the waves rushed in upon the houses, and everything was threatened with destruction. In the midst of this sublime and terrible storm, Dame Partington, who lived upon the beach, was seen at the door of her house with mop and pattens, trundling her mop, squeezing out the sea water, and vigorously pushing away the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic was roused. Mrs. Partington's spirit was up; but I need not tell you that the contest was unequal. The Atlantic Ocean beat Mrs. Partington. She was excellent at a slop or a puddle, but she should not have meddled with a tempest."

We find the meeting was held on October 11th, commencing at noon and lasting until nearly five o'clock.



**OCT. 12.—AXBRIDGE FAIR.  
CRISPIN HALL, STREET,  
OPENED, 1885.**

A charter of Queen Elizabeth provided for four fairs for the town of Axbridge, the last of which was to be held on the day of St. Simon and St. Jude (28th), but of late years this fair has always been held on the second Tuesday in October.

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The "Crispin Hall" Club and Institute at Street was built in 1885 at a cost of £6,000. It was given to the inhabitants by Mr. W. S. Clark, J.P., and was opened by the late John Bright on October 12th of that year. It has a large hall capable of holding 800 persons, and a smaller hall holding 250, in addition to smoking-rooms, a gymnasium, a library of about 4,000 volumes, and a museum, amongst the exhibits of which are numerous fine specimens of fossil fish and reptiles found in the local blue lias.

**OCT. 13.—St. EDWARD, KING and CONFESSOR, A.D., 1066.  
DEATH of HENRY IRVING, 1905  
THOMAS HAYNES BAYLY BORN,  
1797.**

This, in the Church of England Calendar, and almanacs, denotes the day to be a festival to the memory of the removal of St. Edward's bones or relics, as they are called by the Roman Church, from whence the festival is derived. Edward the Confessor died on the 5th January, 1066, and was buried in the Abbey Church of St. Peter, Westminster. Upon miracles "duly proved, the Saint was canonized by Alexander III. in 1161." It appears "there are commemorated several translations of his sacred body. In 1163 it was translated by St. Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the presence of King Henry II. This translation seems to have been made on the 13th October; for on that day "he is commemorated in our martyrologe, whereas in the Roman he is celebrated on the 5th January." It further appears that "about a hundred years after, in the presence of King Henry III., it was again translated, and reposed in a golden shrine, prepared for it by the same King." The only church in Somerset dedicated to this Saint is at Goathurst.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**DEATH OF HENRY IRVING, 1905.**

On this day in 1905 died Henry Irving, the great actor, who was born at Keinton Mandeville.

Irving—or to know him in his own name. John Henry Brodribb—was born of poor parents on the 5th February, 1838. As a lad he entered a London office, which he forsook for the stage, making his first appearance at Sunderland in 1856. He went from success to success, and his name is now enrolled among the greatest English actors who ever lived.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

Thomas Haynes Bayly, the titles of whose songs are more familiar than his own name, was a native of Bath, he being born there on October 13th, 1797. Educated for the Church at Winchester and Oxford, he settled in London in 1824, and quickly produced his world-famous ballads—"I'd be a Butterfly," "We met—'twas in a Crowd," "Oh, no, we never mention her," "The Soldier's Tear," the memorable "She wore a Wreath of Roses," as well as numerous others. Several tales followed, volumes of verse, and some thirty-six dramas. Ill-health and poverty dogged him, however, and he died in early middle life, April 22nd, 1839.

**OCT. 14.—'GLATT' HUNTING at KILVE.  
SAMUEL DANIEL DIED, 1619.  
DEATH of HAROLD the SAXON.**

"Glatt" hunting, or "hunting the conger," is a sport associated with Kilve in October. The conger eel abounds in the blue lias mud along the coast, and at the time of the spring tides his hiding places are revealed. At such times—says Harper, in "The Somerset Coast"—a large proportion of the rustic population anywhere near the shore assembles and proceeds to the muddy or sandy flats, accompanied by fox terriers and other dogs, and armed with stout six or eight-foot-long sticks, cut from the hedges and sharpened at one end to a chisel-like edge. In October days hunting the glatt is usually in full swing. Clad in their oldest clothes, the hunters wade ankle deep through the mud, heaving up huge boulders, and mud-whacking after the wriggling, writhing congers, while the dogs rush frantically among the crowd scraping holes in the mud and essaying the not very easy task of seizing the slippery fish. The congers, or "glatts," captured on these occasions scale, as a rule, about four or five pounds, but occasionally run to 20 pounds.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

Samuel Daniel, the poet, was the son of a music master, and was born in 1562 near Taunton, to become one of the greater sons of Somerset. He left Magdalen Hall, Oxford, without taking

a degree, and became tutor to the son of the Earl of Pembroke, and later to Lady Anne Clifford, daughter of the Earl of Cumberland. Probably noble patronage led in 1604 to his appointment to read new plays, and three years later he became one of the grooms of the privy chamber to Anne of Denmark, queen of James I. Meanwhile he had produced much poetry, epistles, dramas, masques, and sonnets, as well as a work in good prose, a "Defence of Ryme." His fellow poets esteemed him highly as a man, though some of them looked upon his poetry rather lightly. Daniel's sonnets, however, will not suffer by comparison with the work of his critics, and rank as second only to the best in the language. His chief production was a great poem in eight books, "A History of the Civil Wars between York and Lancaster." In 1615-18 Daniel had charge of a company of young players at Bristol. Shortly after this period he retired to a farm he owned at Beekington, where he died in 1619.

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A Norman arrow, just 854 years ago this day, ended the career of Harold, the last of the Saxon Kings. He was a monarch of whom Somerset history records no kindly memory; on the contrary it is written in the ancient Anglo-Saxon chronicles:—"This year came Harold, the earl, from Ireland, on his ships to the mouth of the Severn, nigh the boundaries of Somerset and Devonshire, and there greatly ravaged; and the people of the land drew together against him, as well from Somerset as from Devonshire, and he put them to flight, and there slew more than thirty good thanes, besides other people." Another version states that he "landed at Porlock, and there much people was gathered together against him, but he failed not to procure himself provisions. He proceeded further, and slew there a great number of the people, and took of cattle, and of men, and of property as it suited him."

This invasion, in which nine ships, well furnished with armed men, took part, was occasioned by family differences, the town of Porlock being the property at that time of Algar, the son of Leofric, earl of Mercia, who, with his father, was greatly instrumental in opposing and thwarting the ambitious designs of Earl Godwin, the father of Harold. Inspired by this family animosity, Harold not only slaughtered many of the inhabitants on this occasion, and looted freely, but set fire to the town of Porlock. It is supposed that the Saxon palace which existed there was then destroyed.

—H.W.K.

**OCT. 17.—S. AUDREY, or ETHELDREDA.**

The "day" of an English saint, once celebrated, particularly in the West of England, and who has been undeservedly neglected. She is remembered, if for nothing else, by giving us the word "tawdry," to which became corrupted the name of the lace sold on her feast day at a once famous fair. The beautiful church of West Quantoxhead or St. Audries is dedicated to this saint.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**OCT. 18.—S. LUKE the EVANGELIST.  
BEAU NASH BORN, 1674.**

There are two churches in Somerset dedicated to this Saint—Brislington and Priston.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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On St. Luke's Day  
The oxen have leave to play.

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Very frequently we get about this date a spell of fine weather, which is known as "St. Luke's little summer."

Richard Nash, better known as Beau Nash, and often styled "The King of Bath," though in his day the most celebrated man in Somerset, was a native of Glamorganshire, where he was born at Swansea on October 18th, 1674. Showing early intelligence, his father strained his means to give his son an excellent education. From Carmarthen School Nash proceeded to Jesus College, Oxford. Being more industrious in the pursuit of love affairs than of knowledge, he was sent down from the University. For a time he served in the Army, and in 1693 entered Middle Temple, living a life of intrigue and dissipation. He made a precarious livelihood by gambling, spending everything he could obtain on dress, and making great outward show. He thus gained so considerable a reputation that in 1704 he was appointed Master of the Ceremonies at Bath. Here he conducted the public balls and receptions with unsurpassed splendour. Nash ruled Bath with regal power for nearly half a century, and acquired an unprecedented influence in society. Gaming heavily and successfully, he lived and dressed in the most sumptuous manner. His benevolence was great, and he guarded the morals of innocent young visitors to Bath with the utmost care. In his old age the great Beau sank into poverty; the charity he had so frequently extended to others he felt the need of himself in his declining days. Yet the city which he helped to raise to the position of one of the most

celebrated and fashionable in the world was not unmindful of one who had served her so long and well, and after his death at Bath on February 8th, 1762, when within a year or two of attaining the age of ninety, he was accorded a public, one might almost say a State, funeral

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

### OCT. 19.—PLOUGHING MATCH DAY.

Mr. W. C. Baker tells us that this is considered the day for making cuttings of roses.

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Down West one of the festivals in the rural district was Ploughing Match Day—generally in October—and it is hoped will be again now that the war is over. Before the world was turned upside down, and for many years previously, this day vied with the Cub Day to break the monotony of social life. Let us look back to the scene which presented itself on this day. The village is all excitement. Everybody is seized with a holiday feeling—that is everybody except the competitors. They are seriously preparing for the tasks before them. The members of the Committee wear gaily-coloured badges, and act staidly, as befits them. The energy of the hard-working Secretary causes him to attempt the impossible. He desires to be in half-a-dozen places at once. He displays feverish anxiety to please everyone. He goes hither and thither notebook in hand, up and down the village street. He urges laggard competitors to hurry up for the start, and is quite the busiest man in this busy little community on ploughing match day. Even the ringers have taken the day off. The bells of the Parish Church clang out a welcome to the visitors as they drive through the street and disappear into the village hostelry. Their steeds are taken in charge by the ostler. He is engaged for this special day. Instead of wearing the conventional breeches and gaiters, he dons his best black trousers and waistcoat. Later on we see him acting as a waiter! There are no school lessons to-day. The village pedagogue is the Secretary before mentioned, and the children are given a holiday. What a scrubbing and a curling have been going on in their homes this morning! Clean little frocks, stiffly starched, have been the care of the anxious mothers for days. Jack's collar is as polished as his pretty little round red face. The boys and girls wear bunches of flowers almost as large as their own little curly heads. Standing outside their homes, they cheer passers-by as if they were the representatives of Royalty. By and

bye, when the journeys homeward are commenced, these same little boys and girls, not so spic and span as in the early morning, their flowers drooping, and their hair out of curl, but with the same winning smiles, cheer the departing guests. They scramble for the coppers thrown them in the roadway. Presently they toddle off to bed very tired, but very happy. They, too, have taken their part in the ploughing match day. A good natured farmer places a field at the disposal of the Committee. Here the champion ploughmen of the district meet to test their skill: here the local followers of the plough enter into friendly rivalry; here the farmers' sons compete one against the other; and here the boys, who are to be the ploughmen of the future, conscious that the eyes of those who know how to do it are upon them, take their places at the starting point, and, during the day, show how far they are advanced towards perfection in an art practised by the ancients. The time for commencing the competition has arrived. This is no aristocratic function taking place after lunch. It is a whole day jollification with a serious vein. The judges are on the ground. The Secretary notes the ploughmen. They, for the nonce, will be distinguished by numbers. The signal is given, and the tasks are entered upon. The work goes steadily forward. Each man keenly watches his furrow. An occasional whoa! to the horses is the only sound proceeding from the competitors, so intent are they on their labour as they cross and re-cross the field. Backward and forward they go, working with a steady rhythm. The horses champ their bits. With measured tread they contribute their share to the ploughman's success. It is a picture to gaze upon. There is no hurrying—man and horse working in perfect harmony. Above, the bright sky; beneath, the scent of the newly-turned sod. The criticism of the onlookers reaches the ploughmen across the furrows. It urges them to renewed efforts. Ever and anon is faintly borne to their ears some expression which sharpens their appetites for success. Every nerve is strained. The plough is adjusted to a fine point. A word, and "Dobbin" and "Merry" quicken or slacken their paces as the ploughman wills. They enter into the spirit of the competitions. They are proud of their silky coats and highly polished harness. Contentedly they act their part in the serious business of ploughing match day. Furrow after furrow is turned until the task is complete. The judges walk across the newly-ploughed land deciding the merits of the competitors. Those who have laboured look upon their handiwork with that

pride which possesses a brilliant artist when he completes a picture which is entirely satisfactory. In another portion of the field, or in an adjoining meadow, men are busy hedging or ditching. Others are spar-making; some thatching. All are testing their skill in different departments of farm work. But the interest has been centred in the ploughing. The spar-maker, dexterous though he may be, has been left to complete his task in comparative seclusion.

While all these varied operations have been proceeding, the villagers and visitors from the country-side have been flocking to the field. From the refreshment booth comes sound of merriment. The village fiddler strings a lively tune, rustic man and maid are tripping it on the greensward. The company discusses the merits of the competitors. The noise from the inside of the marquee reaches those at work like the hum of a mammoth bee-hive. All are merry this day; all are full of feelings of good fellowship. Representatives of various parishes meet, old tales are re-told, old jokes are cracked. It is the workman's holiday. The farmer on whose land the competitions are taking place throws open his house to all comers. The tables groan beneath the weight of such things as the vegetarian loveth not, but which the average countryman enjoys. The comely house wife and her abigails have as much as they can do to arrange for the accommodation of the troops of visitors who invade the house. But friends are welcome. And when evening draws to a close, when the sun touches the horizon, and men and horses are gone from the field, there is the adjournment to the village inn for dinner, the revealing of the judges' decisions, and the distribution of prizes. The little hostelry is full to overflowing. Boniface has more customers than he can well look after. His henchmen run from room to room in answer to incessant calls. From the more domestic portion of the premises come the clatter of dishes, the steam from the dinner which is being served. The voice of the waiter—the aforesaid ostler—is heard: "Upstairs for dinner, please!" There is a rush like as schoolboys to a free entertainment. The 'Squire takes the chair. He is supported by the Parson. The local gentry attend. The room is filled with a hungry, merry throng. Close by is heard the boisterous laughter of the ploughmen as they eat their well-earned meal, moistened with John Barleycorn or with the natural wine of our county. Dinner over, the ploughmen join the company presided over by the 'Squire. The loyal toasts are drunk, and then the prizes are distributed. There is little restraining the company after this. The average countryman does not care for long speeches. He

likes to listen to a song, and so the remainder of the evening is spent, as the newspaper reporter describes it, "in harmony." The champion ploughman of the day is made a hero, indeed. He ought to be, because he forms one in the line of succession dating back to remote times. And the antiquity of his profession is only equalled by the rank of those who have preceded him in treading the furrows. James Thomson, in "The Seasons," tells us that

"In ancient times the sacred plough employed the Kings."

Although we do not expect Kings or Queens to follow the plough-tail to-day, it is necessary we should have hardy sons of toil in our rural parishes, who eagerly seek, as their forefathers did, to become champion ploughmen. Champion ploughmen! I go back in memory. I recollect the spirit thrown into the competitions years ago. The champions of one parish met the champions from other districts in the open field. As much local excitement was the result as when wrestling was the popular rural sport, or when cudgels were used to test a man's prowess, and he wigs ornamented the village greens. Do not sell me ploughing matches are useless. The competitions induce thoroughness. They create a desire to do the best. They make a perfect workman. Jethro Tull wrote more than a century ago that "tillage is manure." If that be still true, then the art of ploughing is worth cultivating. Let us hope the country-side will still attract the workman. I do not like to think the occupation followed by Judah will be left to those who have no traditions to maintain, no championship honours to keep bright. Whilst Jacob did not despise the task of breaking Judah's clods, the youths of to-day are found flocking to the towns to swell the number of workers in dingy warehouses, dusty factories, and over-crowded shops. May the ploughing matches be revived!

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### OCT. 20.—FOUNDATION STONE of WEL- LINGTON MONUMENT LAID, 1817

Early in September, 1815, a meeting was held at Wellington to consider the propriety of erecting a monument on the commanding height of Blackdown in honour of the Duke of Wellington, but it was not until 1817 that Lord Somerville laid the foundation stone. There was a grand procession, preceded by several bands of music, troops of Yeomanry and Artillerymen, and a numerous train of noblemen and gentlemen's



carriages. Lord Somerville delivered a long and most animated address, in which he traced the commencement of the subscription for this noble purpose and entered into a minute description of the pillar which had been fixed upon by the Committee. His lordship then proceeded to deposit in a recess, formed in the centre of the foundation stone, coins of every current denomination of the reign, and which were enclosed in a thick glass case, and covered with a brass plate with a suitable inscription. The stone was then gradually lowered to its destined bed amidst discharges of cannon and the acclamations of 10,000 persons, who, joining in the National Anthem of "God Save the King," proclaimed the accomplishment of this interesting ceremony. The procession returned to Wellington, and Lord Somerville presided at an "elegant dinner" at the White Hart Inn. Speeches were delivered by Sir T. B. Lethbridge, Lord Somerville, Mr. W. Dickenson, M.P., Sir T. Acland, Mr. W. A. Sanford, and Captain Crofton.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**OCT. 21.—EARTHQUAKE, 1859.**

**EDWIN NORRIS, of TAUNTON,  
BORN, 1795.**

A slight earthquake was felt in this part of England on this day in 1859.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

Dr. Edwin Norris is one of Taunton's worthy sons. Born on October 21st, 1795, he became hon. secretary to the Royal Asiatic Society, and also translator to the Foreign Office for a number of years, besides being the author of many learned philological works. At the time of his death he was compiling an Assyrian dictionary, "intended to further the study of the Cuneiform Inscriptions of Assyria and Babylonia," a laborious and learned work which had never before been attempted. He died in 1872.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**OCT. 22.—EDWARD THRING DIED, 1887.**

Edward Thring was born at Alford on November 29th 1821, and was the son of its Rector. He was educated at Ilminster and Eton and Cambridge. At 25 he was a Gloucester curate, and took a great interest in the children of his parish schools, and learned that the most elementary teaching requires the highest teaching skill. At 31 he was elected head-master of Uppingham School. He found it with 25 boys and two

masters, and he left it with 300 boys and 30 masters. From the first he dedicated all his best powers to the business of teaching. His chief desire was to find out what each of his boys needed and was able to do, and to supply his needs and give him the work he was best fitted to do. The ordinary school lessons were begun at seven a.m. and finished by mid-day. The afternoon was devoted to chemistry, drawing, carpentry, turning, and music. He established workshops, laboratories, gardens, and aviary, a gymnasium, and was the first to effect many important reforms in public school life. His school started a mission to the poor of London, and sought to make itself useful to the town of Uppingham. His books have inspired many English teachers with their sense of the moral and religious import of education by their enthusiasm and their insight into child nature.

**OCT. 23.—WELLS CATHEDRAL CONSECRATED, 1239.**

**THOMAS PRIDE DIED, 1658.**

When Wells Cathedral was sufficiently built and endowed it was consecrated by Bishop Joscelyn on October 23rd, 1239, for the first time.

C. S. WHITTAKER.

The famous republican and regicide, Thomas Pride, is believed to have been born near Glastonbury. He was poorly reared in London, and became a drayman and brewer. Joining the Parliamentarians, he became a captain on the outbreak of the Civil War, subsequently rising to the rank of colonel, and having an important command in Scotland. As long as English history is studied he will be remembered as giving the name to "Pride's Purge," a measure by which over a hundred Presbyterian royalists were excluded from the House of Commons. Pride blockaded the House with his regiment of foot and Rich's cavalry, and between forty and fifty of the members he imprisoned in a cellar called "Hell." The reduced House—"The Rump"—proceeded to the trial of King Charles I. Pride was one of the King's judges, and signed the royal death warrant after Hutchinson and Goffe. Fortunately, perhaps, for himself, Pride died before the Restoration, the date of his death being October 23rd, 1658. The Royalists later dug up his corpse and exposed it at Tyburn.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**OCT. 21.—WILLIAM PRYNNE DIED, 1669.**

William Prynne was born near Bath in 1600, and graduated from Oriel, being later called to

the bar. Before he was 30 he had published several controversial works—strongly Puritan and anti-Arminian in character. In 1633 appeared his famous “*Histrio-Mastix: the Players’ Scourge*,” for which he was sentenced to be expelled from Oxford and Lincoln’s Inn, to have his book burnt by the hangman, to pay a fine of £5,000, to be put in the pillory, to have both ears cut off, and to be imprisoned for life—a sufficiently heavy series of punishments. He assailed Laud and the bishops in further pamphlets, with the result that three years later he was fined a further £5,000, was again pilloried, and branded on both cheeks with the letters S.L., initials of “seditious libeller.” After seven years in prison he was released by a warrant of the House of Commons, and resumed his attacks on Laud. In 1647 he became Recorder of Bath, and a year afterwards entered Parliament as a Cornish member. He was among those purged from the House by Pride, and was later imprisoned for some time. A short period of his imprisonment, from January to July, 1651, was passed at Taunton. Prynne entered Parliament after the death of Cromwell, and was taken into some favour at the Restoration, being made Keeper of the Tower Records by Charles II. He was an assiduous compiler of history and records, particularly relating to Parliament. Prynne died on October 24th, 1669.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

OCT. 25.—St. CRISPIN.

### HANNAH MORE’S FIRST SCHOOL OPENED at CHEDDAR, 1789.

In view of the fact that the prosperity of Street has been largely built up on the boot trade, and of the fine Crispin Hall erected there, to which reference was made under the date October 12th, it may be of interest to many Somerset folk to know that October 25th is St. Crispin’s Day. He and his brother, Crispinian, were members of a noble Roman family, but they gave up everything in order to preach the gospel. They went as missionaries to Soissons, in the North of France, and there supported themselves by making boots. They were brought before the Tribunal, where pressure was brought upon them to make them give up their religion, but neither imprisonment nor torture by fire and in other ways could move them, and finally they were beheaded in A.D. 288.

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Largely, if not entirely, owing to the influence of William Wilberforce, who was appalled at

the miserable condition of the villagers, Hannah More undertook to "do something for Cheddar." She found almost as much darkness and ignorance "in the wretched miserable place" as might be found in the interior of Africa. Drunkenness and indolence prevailed in almost every cottage. She saw only one Bible in all the parish, and that was used to prop a flower-pot. At this time the Vicar of Cheddar lived in Oxford, and the Curate at Wells. The incumbent of the next parish was drunk about six days in each week, and was often unable to preach on Sunday through black eyes earned by fighting. Hannah More took a house at Cheddar on a lease for seven years, and by removing a partition she made it suitable for a school. She and her sister Sally took up their abode at the village alehouse for a week whilst they visited the parents and invited their children to school. In spite of great opposition from the farmers and the principal inhabitants, the school was opened on October 25th, 1789, and was attended by 140 children. The school prospered, and as a result the sisters soon afterwards commenced Sunday evening services for the parents. Previous to this it was said that the attendance at church was about eight for the morning service and about 20 in the afternoon, but at the end of a year from the opening of Miss More's school the congregation had increased to nearly 500, of which about half were adults and about half children. The sisters subsequently opened schools in nine other Mendip villages, and also started clubs and institutes for women, and in many other ways did a vast amount of good during a period of nearly 50 years. The house in which the Cheddar School was first held is still standing, but its roof of thatch was replaced by tiles a few years ago.

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**OCT 28.—JOHN LOCKE, PHILOSOPHER  
DIED, 1704.**

**DEATH of KING ALFRED, 901.  
St. SIMON and St. JUDE**

Reference to the great philosopher will be found under his birthday, August 29th.

**ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE.**

In many places it is believed that on St. Simon and St. Jude's Day Satan puts his foot on the bramble and blackberries are not fit to eat afterwards.

**DEATH OF KING ALFRED.**

This is the anniversary of the death of King Alfred, at Winchester, in 901. The history of Somerset is so intimately associated with King

Alfred that we naturally look upon him as our King. He was born at Wantage in 849—the youngest of the four sons of Ethelwulf, King of Wessex. He it was who was destined to check the ravages of the plundering Danes. We all know the hard task he set himself and how he had eventually to take refuge in the Isle of Athelney. It was here he prepared his plans for his decisive struggle against his enemies; it was at Wedmore a treaty of peace was signed in 878, and from that time the power of the Danes in England gradually declined.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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#### DATE OF KING ALFRED'S DEATH.

Several correspondents have written us with regard to the date of the death of King Alfred. Although neither of the two letters we print was written for publication, we feel sure the writers will pardon our using them in this way. Mr. F. W. Mathews writes:—There was considerable controversy over the date of Alfred's death some years back, and many arguments seemed to point to 900 as the correct year. With this in mind I put down 900 as the date in my notes, but that given in the A.S. Chronicle is 901. The date of Alfred's Accession in A.S. Chronicle is Easter, 871. He reigned 28½ years (same authority), therefore the death would be 899 (autumn) by this. Some authorities, I remember, were very strongly of opinion that the autumn of 900 was correct, and the 901 of the A.S. Chronicle a copyist's error.

Mr. Willis Watson writes:—“*Re* Alfred's death. I have looked up many authorities on this point, and I think we may conclude the King died in 901. He was *buried* at Winchester, and if I wrote *died* it was my error. I don't know where he died, for none of my books records the fact. By the way, Powell's “History of England” gives 26th October, 901, as the day of his death; “National Eve,” 27th October; “Richmond,” 28th October! Goodness knows which is correct.

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#### OCT. 29.—ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, 878. BRISTOL RIOTS, 1831.

For the year 879, in the reign of King Alfred, we are told in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that “The Sun was eclipsed at 1 hour of the day.” There has been considerable discussion about the year of this eclipse, some astronomers assigning it to a date in the following year, but as a matter of fact the previous one, 878, is the more probable.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

## BRISTOL RIOTS, 1831.

The great riots at Bristol occurred on the visit of Sir Charles Wetherell, the Recorder, to the city. The Reform Bill had been thrown out by the House of Lords, and Wetherell, a Tory, made an entry with a cavalcade in a kind of triumph. This aroused so much resentment that the mob rose. Prisons were burnt and the prisoners released, the Bishop's palace, Mansion House, and many other buildings set on fire or sacked. Over half-a-million pounds damage was done, and about 110 persons lost their lives. Colonel Breton, who was in command of the military forces, and who was court-martialled for neglect of duty, committed suicide. Three of the rioters were executed.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

## OCT. 30.—EARTHQUAKE, 1868.

A slight earthquake was experienced in the West of England and South Wales on this day, 1868. The shocks were felt distinctly in Somerset, especially in the neighbourhood of Bath.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

OCT. 31.—ALL HALLOWS' EVE.  
HALLOW-E'EN or SAMHTHEINE.  
NUTCRACK NIGHT.  
AMPLIAS FESTIVAL.

On Hallowe'en night a girl should go into a room by herself at midnight. She must light a candle, and going to a mirror, must eat an apple. It is said that if she does not look behind but fixes her eyes on her own reflection she will see in the mirror the image of her future sweetheart looking over her shoulder.

A custom at Hallowe'en was to bake some little cakes. Into one was put a ring, another a sixpence, and in a third a button. The person who gets the cake with the ring will be the first of the company to be married; the one who gets the button will be an old maid or bachelor; and whoever finds the sixpence will become the wealthiest.

Another custom is to take two nuts, and naming one after your sweetheart and the other after yourself, place them in the fire. If they burn brightly together there will "always be love between you two." But, on the contrary, if the nuts crack and spring away from each other, there will be quarrels, and possibly separation.

C. S. WHITTAKER.

\* \* \*

On this evening, years ago in Somerset, high festivals were held and mystic rites observed

round the household fires. All Hallows' Eve was one of those rare occasions when witches and fairies were abroad and condescended to endow humans with power of foretelling the future. Halloween is a fine excuse for a children's frolic, and the mother who likes to make merry among her youngsters should not miss this opportunity. The majority of the old customs have become obsolete. Those associated with Halloween are, undoubtedly, of pagan origin. The last night of October was held to be the date when all spirits, whether good or evil, were free to roam the world as they pleased. Our forbears, if they were abroad on that night after sunset, hastened home with quivering nerves, and burned chestnuts on the hearth-stone before the fire, having not the slightest idea that in doing so they were offering burnt sacrifice to the spirits of evil, as did their remote ancestors in the days before the Romans came. It was customary to roast nuts on this evening. They were, on this particular night of the year, believed to be gifted with prescience of matrimonial affairs. Burns alludes to the burning of nuts in his poetical description of Halloween. Each person took a couple and placed them in the fire. If they burnt quietly together, or started from beside one another, the course and issue of the courtship was foretold. In Somerset, naturally, the apple played a prominent part in the divinations. It was religiously held that if on this night of the year a youth or maiden took a candle, went alone to a looking-glass, and ate an apple before it, the face of their future wife or husband, as the case might be, would be seen dimly, as if peeping over the shoulder. Apples were also dived for, being floated in a large tub of water. With hands tied behind them, the younger members of the household and their friends would attempt to catch one of these with their teeth. Then there was another method of divination. Three dishes were arranged on the hearth, before a glowing fire. One dish was empty, while the others were filled with clean and dirty water respectively. The persons who wished to ascertain what the future held in store were blindfolded, and, approaching the fire, dipped their left hands into one or other of the bowls. To dip into the empty bowl foretold a life of single blessedness; the selection of the bowl of clean water meant that the future mate would be a maid or young man; while the person who chose the bowl of dirty water was considered as destined to wed a widow or widower. Bell-ringing marked this night, and it is stated in Kethe's sermon, preached at Blandford Forum, Dorchester, January 17th, 1570, that "there was a custom in the papal times to ring bells

at Allhallow-tide for all Christian souls." Burnet's "History of the Retormation" refers to a draft letter which King Henry VIII. was to send to Cranmer "against superstitious practices," and directs the abolition of "the vigil and ringing of bells all the night long upon Allhallows' Day at night," and the said vigil to have no watching or ringing. In the reign of Elizabeth, too, an injunction was issued to the effect "that the superfluous ringing of bells at Allhallow-tide, and at All Souls' Day, with the two nights next before and after, be prohibited."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.





## NOVEMBER.

The dead leaves strew the forest walk,  
And wither'd are the pale wild flowers ;  
The frost hangs blackening on the stalk,  
The dew-drops fall in frozen showers.  
Gone are the Spring's green sprouting bowers,  
Gone Summer's rich and mantling vines,  
And Autumn, with her yellow hours,  
On hill and plain no longer shines.

The Anglo-Saxons, who gave characteristic names to each of the months, designated November *Wint-monath*, or wind month, "whereby we may see," remarks Verstegan, "that our ancestors were in this season of the yeare made acquainted with blustering Boreas." They also denominated it *Blot-monath*, or blood-month, and were at this period accustomed to kill abundance of cattle for winter store. We are in the habit, in common parlance, of calling this "the gloomy month of November." "And undoubtedly," remarks Leigh Hunt, "November, with its loss of verdure, its frequent rains, the fall of the leaf, and the visible approach of winter, is a gloomy month to the gloomy, but to others it brings but pensiveness—a feeling very far from destitute of pleasure. There are gentle fine days in November, which come to contradict the general sayings, the green plover and the green-finches congregate, the wood pigeons come back again. As October was marked by the change, so this is distinguished by the fall of the leaf. This is so striking a circumstance, that the whole declining season of the year is often, in common language, named the "fall." The trees generally lose their leaves in the following succession:—Walnut, mulberry, horse-chestnut, sycamore, lime, ash; then, after an interval, elm; then beech and oak; then apple and peach trees, sometimes not till the end of November; and lastly, pollard oaks, and young beeches, which retain their withered leaves till pushed off by the new ones in the spring. In the olden days, among the rural sounds and scenes which struck the ear and the eye of the observer, might be mentioned "the busy flail, which, now in full employment, fills the air about the homestead with a pleasant sound." Walter Raymond, our Somerset novelist, in his "English Country

Life." gives us a delightful word picture of "Old Abe Flailing," remarking that like all home-made implements, the flail showed a careful adaptation of materials easily within reach. No doubt, by a gradual evolution, ages ago it attained to its simple perfection and remained unchanged for centuries, to be abruptly cast aside at last. The handle of "Old Abe's" flail was made of ash. At the end was a revolving cap, called a "capel," made of a ram's horn. The flail was of holly, the capel on the flail was of raw hide from a bull's neck, the middle bind was of hide, pinned together "wi' a peg o' black-thorn." Old Abe remarked that "a man can break his own head to this game so easy as cracken a nut; ay, though his skull mid be so thick as a stone wall." One of the curious phenomena of winter which is frequently seen this month in marshy places, during moist weather, is the "Jack-o-Lantern," or *ignis fatuus*, or, as it is called in some parts of the country, "Will-o'-wisp," scaring the belated traveller, and frightening the timid rustic.

The month is associated with a good deal of weather-lore. It is said that flowers in bloom late in autumn indicate a bad winter. When in November the water rises, it will show itself the whole winter.

If there's ice in November that will bear a duck,  
There'll be nothing after but sludge and muck.

If there is thunder in the month, a fertile year will follow. "As November, so the following March."

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

WEATHER AND OTHER LORE FOR  
NOVEMBER.

\* \* \*

A snow year

A rich year.

\* \* \*

A winter's thunder

A summer's wonder.

\* \* \*

Thunder in November signifieth the same year  
to be fruitful and merry, and cheapness of corn.

\* \* \*

Winter's thunder

Is the world's wonder.

\* \* \*

North winds send hail,

South winds bring rain,

East winds we bewail,

West winds blow amain.

Set trees at Allhallontide, and command them  
to prosper ;  
Set them after Candlemas, and entreat them  
to grow.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

Country people say that as the season for  
apples and other fruit passes away, so the stains  
made by the juice on cloth will disappear.

\* \* \*

If the robin becomes more familiar than usual  
at the fall of the year, a severe winter may be  
expected.

—C. S. WHITTAKER.

\* \* \*

November take flail,  
Let ships no more sail.

\* \* \*

A wet November, a plentiful year.

\* \* \*

Thunder in November, a fertile year to come.

\* \* \*

If there's ice in November that will bear a duck,  
There'll be nothing after but sludge and muck.

\* \* \*

If ducks do slide at Halloween,  
At Christmas they will swim ;  
If ducks do swim at Hallantide,  
At Christmas they will slide.

\* \* \*

The weather on Martinmas Eve (November 10th)  
is supposed to indicate that for the winter.

\* \* \*

If you wed in bleak November,  
Only joy will come, remember.

\* \* \*

When frost and snow are both together,  
Sit by the fire and spare shoe leather.

\* \* \*

Apples, pears, hawthorn quick, oak : Set  
them at All Hallow Tide and command them to  
prosper ; set them at Candlemas, and intreat  
them to grow.

#### CONSTABLES' FEAST AT TAUNTON.

The following paragraph is taken from the  
Taunton section of Mr. Jeboalt's " West Somers-  
set " :—It has been the custom for many years  
past for the constables to provide a public dinner  
annually out of the proceeds of the market  
scales and the sum of £18 paid to the Portreeves  
by the Trustees of the Taunton Markets,  
the retiring constables being elected por-  
treeves for the year following. The question

as to the propriety of thus expending these funds has been raised on many occasions, and it has been suggested that it would be more appropriate to lay out the same for charitable purposes; but it is understood that it has been found that the constables have no choice in the matter. The custom has probably arisen from the usual practice of the steward of the lord providing entertainment to the lord's tenants upon audit-court or rent-days. The dinner has usually been held about the early part of November, at one of the principal inns or public halls in the town. The number of gentlemen who have responded to the invitations has varied from eighty to one hundred and twenty. The cost, including wine and waiters, has been about 10s 6d each. Music is usually provided, either gratuitously or by arrangements made with a band, choir, or glee singers, accompanied on a piano-forte, &c. The bailiffs, as chief officers, have generally been asked to preside. The constables take the vice-chair, and the portreeves the centre.

An Old Tauntonian kindly gives us the following additional information:—The Constables' Feast, which was held annually at Taunton in November during a long period, has been discontinued. It was a pleasant social gathering of a goodly number of local male residents, who were provided with a bountiful dinner, and an enjoyable entertainment, consisting of music and song, interspersed with speech-making. The feast was partly paid for out of the fees charged for the use of the market scales, which were erected under the Western Arcade on Saturday for the weighing of green skins, and partly out of an annual payment of £18 by the Trustees of Taunton Markets, under an agreement made between them and the Constables when the Act of Parliament was obtained for the taking over the markets by the said Trustees.

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### NOV. 1.—ALL SAINTS, HALLOWMAS, HOLLOWMAS, or ALL HALLOWS.

There are traces of a festival for the commemoration of all martyrs and saints not otherwise commemorated as far back as the time of St. Chrysostom, who refers to the Sunday after Pentecost as such a festival. In the Sacramentary of St. Gregory there are also collects and Scriptures appointed for two such days, one for all Martyrs on May 13th, and one for All Saints on November 1st. These two days appear likewise in the Calendar of the Venerable Bede. The formal institution of the festival is

usually associated, however, with the dedication of the temple of the Pantheon at Rome as a Christian Church on November 1st, 608.

On the 1st of November, if the weather hold clear,

An end of wheat sowing do make for the year.

Another piece of weather lore is that if on All Saints' Day the beech nut is dry, we shall have a hard winter, but if the nut be wet and not light, we may expect a wet winter.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

The mass or feast day of All Hallows or All Saints. There has been considerable confusion in the minds of the ignorant with the festival of the following day.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

Mr. C. S. Whittaker kindly sends us the following cutting from the *Daily News*:—

All Saints' Day should bring us a second "little summer," lasting three days, and crowning the prolonged spell of glorious sunshine sent by St. Luke: but at the time of writing this weather folklore does not look likely to be fulfilled. Among our West Country farmers there is immemorial custom to begin making cider on All Saints' Day.

## NOV. 2.—ALL SOULS.

It appears to have been the custom of the primitive church, even as early as the time of St. Cyprian, to commemorate annually "the souls of all those who have died in the communion of the body and blood of our Lord," annual communions, for the same purpose, being also mentioned by Tertullian, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and others. This commemoration, known in the mediæval Church of England as "the year's mind," was probably the origin of a general commemoration following that of All Saints, such a festival being found in existence in the tenth century. In the old Calendars of the Church of England it appeared as "The Commemoration of Souls," or "of the souls of the departed," until the Reformation, but was not retained in the Calendar on its reconstruction for the Book of Common Prayer.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

All Souls was once a very popular feast in England, as may be evidenced by the number of churches with that dedication. It was instituted between 990 and 998 in France as a day of prayer for all souls departed, and rapidly grew in popularity. It is still a favourite festival in Roman Catholic countries, but in England it declined after the Reformation. Its special reference to our

Western counties is that in country districts it was regarded as a day for visitations and commerce with spirits.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

The following note from one of our correspondents appeared in these columns 19 years ago :—

This festival of the Latin Church, kept annually on November 2nd, was once an important day in "Merry England," and in some countries, especially in Southern Italy, it is now observed as one of the great *festas* of the year. Those who desire to become better informed on the subject are referred to Alban Butler's "Lives of the Saints"; but it may be shortly stated that it was finally established as a Church festival in 998. The name by which the day appears in the calendar is "All Souls: or the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed." The old customs practised in relation to those whom we no longer pray for, are kept alive by the survival of many quaint ceremonies here in England, as well as in other countries, where their meaning is perhaps not understood or forgotten. Nowadays we no longer believe in such real ceremonies as our fathers did, to keep fresh the memory of their dead, but we display our superiority, and the genuineness of our affection, by placing sham wreaths of tin flowers under glass shades upon their graves! Special cakes, called soul cakes, used to be, and are still made in some of our own counties, and these were, doubtless, once offered, as they are still in Italy, at the graves of dead relatives. The cakes were then eaten and given to the poor "for all Crysten soules." "Going a souling" is still kept up in several places: the girls go about on November 2nd to the farm-houses, singing

"Soul, soul, for a soul cake,

Pray you good mistress, a soul cake."

These are said to have been originally made "always in triangular form," and here is another much more ancient form of words than the above :—

"A soule-cake, a soule-cake, have mercy on all  
Christen soules for a soule-cake."

Through the kindness of a lady living at Ellesmere, in Shropshire, I am able to send you a much longer piece of doggerel rhyme. She says in her letter :—"All about here the children on All Souls'-day go from house to house singing and begging for trifles. It is supposed to have originated by asking for money to pay for masses for the souls of deceased relatives. First they

cry 'Soul! Soul!' and then sing, or rather chant:—

An apple, a pear, a plum, or a cherry,  
 Any good thing to make us all merry;  
 One for Peter, and two for Paul,  
 Three for the little lad under the wall;  
 Up with your kettles and down with your pans,  
 Give us an answer and we will be gone,  
 Go to your cellar and take your keys,  
 An apple, an orange, or what you please;  
 The road's very dirty, my shoes are very thin,  
 But I've a little peck of to put a penny in.  
 'Please, good Missus, give us a soul cake!'

The farmers will say 'O! here comes the children a-souling,' and the children talk of going a-souling." It is possible some other of your correspondents may know of similar begging ditties, and perhaps others may be able to give further instances of the survival of this old practice of remembering the departed on the 2nd of November.

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### NOV. 3.—SOLOMON AVON.

Solomon Avon is an old term meaning the "Eve of the Summer-close." Solomon is a corruption of the ancient *samhuin*, meaning end of summer, or it may be of the term *Samhtheine* or Hallowe'en. Avon is merely a corruption of eve or even.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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### NOV. 4.—S. WITHOLD.

#### REVOLUTION DAY.

#### ECLIPSE of the SUN, 1668.

Saint Withold, though now almost fallen into oblivion, was formerly much venerated in this part of England.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

#### REVOLUTION DAY.

This day is notable for many anniversaries, particularly for a number associated with King William III. William was born on this day, 1650, took Boon twenty-three years later, married Princess Mary on the anniversary in 1677, and landed at Torbay 1688. To celebrate the latter a society was formed on November 4th, 1792, and termed the Revolution Society. It comprised a number of the Whig aristocracy and gentry, not only from Somerset, but from many other counties, and this gathering sent an address to the French National Assembly.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

## ECLIPSE OF THE SUN 1668.

The eclipse of the sun recorded for this day in 1668 was not a remarkable one. Perhaps it is chiefly noteworthy because Flamsteed, who afterwards became Astronomer Royal, observed it. This was seven years before the founding of Greenwich Observatory.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

## NOV. 5.—GUY FAWKES' DAY.

MRS. LEAKEY BURIED, 1634.\*

BRIDGWATER NEW TOWN

BRIDGE OPENED, 1883.

Mr. W. C. Baker informs us that tulips should be planted on Guy Fawkes' Day and dug up on St. Peter's.

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Mr. S. G. Jarman in his "History of Bridgewater" gives a full description of the new town bridge—which was erected without the necessity of increasing the rating of the borough—and of the ceremonies in connection with its formal opening on November 5th, 1883. He adds that in the evening the bridge was again "opened" by the annual Guy Fawkes' carnival procession, and received a "baptism of fire."

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"Bonfire Night!" What memories these words recall. What a night it was between forty and fifty years ago in my native town, which snugly nestles among the hills in a beautiful part of South Somerset. Those were the days when the policemen wore "box-hats," which were such a capital mark for the young sports who could afford squibs. This was one of the few days in the year when the fire engine—the "parish squirt" as we called it—made a public appearance, when water was procured from the town pump, and the Market-square damped down. These were the days when the Market square was the scene of a huge bonfire; when lighted tar barrels were rolled about the streets; when cannon were fired—cannon of extraordinary make, from a piece of iron tubing to an article something after the orthodox pattern; when crackers were tied to the tail coats of the unwary and discharged, or lighted and dropped into someone's pocket, or thrown into open doorways, to the consternation of the old ladies within; when "Professor Gingle's" rockets were the admiration of hundreds; when little boys let off "tiss-devils" and danced around the sparkling pyramid of damp gunpowder and iron filings; when Catherine wheels were pinned against doorposts and showered



sparks all around; when everyone was excited, everyone full of merriment, up to all kind of mad capers, and the very windows were threatened destruction by the discharge of the "heavy artillery." What "a-pushing and a-shoving" there was. What a noise! Pandemonium reigned on this night. And yet no great harm was done anyone, and the policemen had a quiet time until they felt called upon to interfere, and then an officious "bobby" stood a sporting chance of losing his "topper" or in being sat upon a blazing tar barrel. So, generally, the Guardians of the Peace looked on and said little and watched the fun, and remained in evidence until the last remnants of the fire died down and the Market-square was once more resumed to something like its wonted appearance. But evidence of the tar from the barrels remained in the centre of the town for many weeks after that, and the stories of what happened on Bonfire-night were good enough to be retailed almost until Bonfire-night came again and the same kind of programme was enacted. Naturally some of the larger towns in the county celebrated Guy Fawkes' Day in a far more elaborate manner than my native place—Bridgwater, for instance; but in all quarters—village as well as town—the celebration was observed with fun and frolic. The "Fifth" is now nearly forgotten, although it is still kept in some parts as an anniversary dating from 1605 when the Gunpowder Plot was discovered. Everyone knows that the design was to blow up King James I., the Prince of Wales, and the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament. Guy Fawkes and his associates concerted the plot at the Old King's Head tavern in Leadenhall-street. Two of the conspirators were killed in endeavouring to avoid apprehension; eight were executed.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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Guy Fawkes Day was in the "sixties" and "seventies" celebrated with all honours at Wellington. The local version of the well-known rhyme ran thus:—

Please to remember  
The fifth of November  
Gunpowder treason and plot,  
And I know no reason  
Why gunpowder treason  
Should ever be forgot.

And this was sung about the streets by boys and lads as a prelude to the evening's proceedings, which were sometimes of a rather rowdy character. In fact "gunpowder treason" was simply an excuse for what at Cambridge would be known as a "rag." Soon after dark the fun began in

earnest, crackers, cannon-crackers, squibs, toy cannon, &c., were chiefly in evidence, although occasionally a few Roman candles and rockets were called into service, but the preference was for a firework which made a bang and which could be flung amongst a crowd or at passers-by. Often burns and similar injuries resulted, and on one occasion I re-call a boy, whom I knew well, who was killed by the explosion of a toy cannon. A piece of the exploding cannon caused a severe wound in his leg, titanus set in, and an inquest followed, at which rather severe strictions were passed by the Coroner on the dangers of firework celebrations in the streets. Sometimes a more or less "organised" procession paraded the streets with masks or blackened faces and torches, and on one or two occasions I re-call that a local "guy" (someone who had during the previous year rendered him or herself a bit objectionable) was carried in the procession. A bonfire was started in the Market-square, the necessary material being "commandeered" and the "guy" burnt. On other occasions a lighted tar barrel was rolled through the streets, and this, of course, formed a nucleus for a subsequent bonfire. The "brickeys" from Poole Brickworks usually trooped into the town and lent vigorous assistance to the proceedings. The police were powerless to interfere, and it was certainly wiser for townspeople of a quiet disposition to remain indoors rather than run the risk of being squibbed. Generally speaking, however, the proceedings were of a good-natured character, although on one or two occasions subsequent proceedings in the police-court resulted in fines for disturbance or assaults. Of recent years the celebrations have lost their old-time character, and during the years before the war there seemed to be little disposition to "remember the fifth of November," an occasional rocket or a few squibs and crackers being almost the only reminder of the rowdy celebrations of bygone days.

—W.S.P.

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The Rev. W. H. P. Greswell, in his "Land of Quantock," says:—It may be worth noting that there is no place in the whole of England where the "Guy Fawkes" celebrations are kept up with such spirit as in West Somerset. For generations the glimmer of the bonfires, tar-barrels, and of fire-works have been seen regularly, year after year, in the Quantock parishes and in the Quantock country. The Bridgwater carnival is still an annual event of great importance, and is entered into with zest. . . . It is curious to reflect, however, that possibly the

original of the plot of 1605 was hatched in the brain of Robert Parsons, a native of Nether Stowey.

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A correspondent wrote as follows to the first number of "Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries":—"Some few years ago I heard the boys at Pill, near Bristol, commemorating Guy Fawkes' Day in the following lines:—

Remember, remember, the fifth of November,  
The gunpowder treason and plot,  
For I see no reason why gunpowder treason  
should ever be forgot.

Halloa! boys: halloa! boys: let the bells ring,  
Halloa! boys: halloa! boys: God save the  
Queen.

Ladies and gentlemen who sit by the fire,  
Put your hands in your pockets to help the brand-  
fire.

And whenever this Popery shall return,  
Into the brand-fire he shall burn!

A rope, a rope, to hang the Pope! Hip, Hip,  
Hurrah!

Give us another to hang his brother! Hip, Hip,  
Hurrah!

Are the last eight lines local; or are they common  
to denunciations of Guy Fawkes?

\* \* \*

#### BULL BAITING AT AXBRIDGE.

The late Mr. Frank Knight, in his "Heart of Mendip," tells us that "A barbarous custom which, with what Mr. Bennett, writing in 1804, called "all its concomitant horrors," survived in Axbridge well into the nineteenth century, was the annual Bull-Baiting on the Anniversary of the Discovery of Gunpowder Plot. It was vividly remembered by persons comparatively lately living in the town. Every year, on the 5th of November, after service in the Parish Church, duly attended in state by the Mayor and Corporation, a bull was let out of the George Inn in the Market-place, and hunted through the town. Having been chased by a shouting mob, worried by dogs, and beaten with clubs all through High-street and West-street, whose windows had been carefully barricaded, the unfortunate beast, half mad with pain and terror, was driven out of the town to a place called Outing Batch, at the foot of the hill above the Bristol-road, near the quarries, where it was fastened to the bull-anchor to prevent its escape, and then beaten to death. The carcase was then cut up by a "cag-mag" butcher, that is to say a butcher who dealt in the flesh of inferior animals, and the meat given to the poor. The original

anchor, which is a heavy five-armed grapnel about four feet long and about eighteen inches across the flukes, is still preserved in the basement of the Town Hall.

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#### MRS. LEAKEY BURIED, 1631.

Minehead parish registers record the burial of Mrs. Leakey, whose name has been made locally famous as the principal character in a ghost story, which is now not given any credence. Sir Walter Scott made her famous by devoting one of his notes to the second canto of "Rokeby" to her. She is generally known as the whistling ghost. Early in the 17th century she appears to have resided at Minehead, where her only son was a well-to-do shipowner, trading between that port and Waterford. She told her friends, who looked upon her as an amiable old soul, that she would not, perhaps, be so welcomed by them after her death. She accordingly died, and then commenced to haunt her friends by day as well as by night. She began to appear to persons in her own house, in the town and fields, at sea and upon shore. So far had she departed from her former urbanity, that she is reported to have kicked a doctor of medicine because he impolitely neglected to hand her over a stile. It was also her humour to stand on the quay and call for a boat. And when her son's ships approached the harbour she would mount to the masthead and blow a whistle, which, raising a terrible storm, wrecked the ship utterly. When she had thus proceeded until her son had neither credit to freight a vessel nor could he procure men to sail it, she began to attack the persons of the family, and actually strangled their only child in the cradle. The rest of her story, showing how the spectre looked over the shoulder of her daughter-in-law while dressing her hair at a looking-glass; and how Mrs. Leakey the younger took courage to address her and how the beldam despatched her to an Irish prelate, famous for his crimes and misfortunes, to exhort him to repentance, and to apprise him that otherwise he would be hanged, and how the Bishop was satisfied with the replying that if he were born to be hanged he should not be drowned—all these, with many more particulars, may be found at the end of one of John Dunton's publications, called "Athenianism" (London, 1710), and there the tale is engrossed under the title of "The Apparition Evidence." The story about Mrs. Leakey's ghost was a subject for an enquiry, and the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Paul Godwin, and Sir Robert Philipps solemnly reported upon the evidence of Elizabeth Leakey, the daughter-in-law, of Mr. Heathfield, curate of Minehead, and

of two others, all of whom declared that they had seen, and some of them asserted that they had conversed with the apparition. The Commissioners declined to believe there was any such apparition, declaring it to be an "imposture, devise, and fraud for some particular evils, but what they are we know not." This report, which was endorsed by Archbishop Laud, is among the State Papers in the Public Record Office.

—W G. WILLIS WATSON.

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### RINGING OF BELLS.

The 5th of November was a day on which bells were formerly rung in many of our churches, and when the occasions for ringing the bells became so frequent as to entail considerable expense, and it was found necessary to reduce considerably the number of days on which the bells were rung, Guy Fawkes' Day was in many cases still retained upon the list of anniversaries to be thus celebrated when almost every other anniversary was struck off. From the many entries referring to this matter in various parish records we quote the following:—

On November 5th, 1680, the ringers at Minehead as usual "ring for the horred powder plote." In 1732-33 the cost of ringing at Minehead had become so excessive that a vestry meeting decided that the bells should in future be rung on only five anniversaries, of which the 5th of November was one. Thirty-three years later Minehead decided that the ringers should be paid "for ringing on 5th of November and 29th May yearly, and on no other day at ye expense of ye parish."

From the parish records of North Curry we learn that the bells were always rung on November 5th (gunpowder plot) and May 29th (the restoration of King Charles II.) and a fee allowed, sometimes for refreshments, beer, &c.

The following extracts from the church books of Stoke St. Gregory between 1741 and 1800 will be interesting in this connection:—

1744.—Gave the Ringers in Syder and expenses the 5th November .....	0 15 3
1746.—Gave the Ringers the fift November half-hogshed of sider and bred and backey .....	0 11 07
1772.—Half Hoxhead of Cyder 5th November .....	1 1 0
Meat, bread, and cees for the same.....	9 10
1775.—A Hogshead of Cyder the 5th November .....	14 0

1776.—At ye 5th November pd one hogshead of Cyder and Beef and Bread and Chees and firing to ye same .....	1	2	6
1782.—For Cyder 5th November and carriage .....	17	0	
1 chees to the same.....	2	3	
6 Loaves of Bread to the same	4	0	
1792.—For Sider, Beef, Bread, and Cheese and Garden mores at ye 5th November.....	1	3	4½

**NOV. 6.—St. LEONARD.**  
**SHIPHAM FAIR.**  
**THE FIRST YEOVIL FAIR.**

The churches in Somerset dedicated to this Saint are Butleigh, Chilwood, Farleigh Hungerford, Marston Bigot, Misterton, Otterford, Pitcombe, Rodney Stoke, and Shipham. St. Leonard is retained in the Church of England Calendar and Almanacs for his ancient popularity in Romish times. He is the titular saint of many of our great churches, and was particularly invoked on behalf of prisoners. St. Leonard was a French nobleman in the Court of Clovis I., where he was converted by St. Remigi<sup>us</sup>, or Remy; became a monk, built an oratory for himself in the forest at Nobilac, near Limoges, lived on herbs and fruits, and formed a community, which, after his death, was a flourishing monastery, under the name of St. Leonard le Noblat. He was remarkable for charity towards captives and prisoners, and died about 559, with the reputation of having worked miracles in their behalf.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**SHIPHAM FAIR.**

Writing of Shipham in his "Heart of Mendip," Mr. F. A. Knight said "One of the records states that in 1309 King Edward II., sitting at Westminster, granted to William Malherbe "a market every Monday at his manor of Shepham" and "a fair every year lasting three days, namely, the vigil, feast, and morrow of St. Leonard." The weekly market has long been discontinued. But the fair is still held; not, however, before, on, and after St. Leonard's Day, which is the 6th of November, but, as it may very likely have been since 1752, the year of the introduction of the New Style, on the 17th of the month.

**THE FIRST YEOVIL FAIR.**

One of the first fairs held in Yeovil was granted in 1402 by King Henry IV., and was held on the eve and on the feast of St. Leonard and for the

two days next following. For her particulars were given in **this** column under the date of August 24th.

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**NOV. 7.—St. CONGAR, 711.**

St. Congar was born and bred at Constantinople. His terror of matrimony was the cause of his flight from the Court at Constantinople to the wilds of Somerset, for it was suggested he should marry the daughter of a very noble king. He travelled to Italy, thence across the Alps into Gaul, and sailed for Britain. He strove with all his might to lead a solitary life. Wherefore he enquired diligently on his journey for a place suitable for a hermitage. Subsequently he found himself at a very pleasant place, surrounded with water and reeds, afterwards called Congresbury. In the night it was revealed to him by an angel that wherever he should see a boar on the following day he should build a habitation, and afterwards found an oratory. Having awoke, he hastened forth, saw a boar, and there built a dwelling and founded an oratory in honour of the holy and undivided Trinity. He continued then in this place, clothed in sack-cloth, leading a blameless life, with fastings and frequent prayers. Every morning he got into cold water and stayed there until he had repeated the Lord's Prayer three times. Coming shivering out of the brook, he returned to the church, watching and praying. King Iba bestowed on him the little territory around his cell, wherein he instituted twelve canons and laymen, according to Capgrave, both English and Welsh, assisting the King, therefore, in his great desire to unite the races. After settling his priory, he went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where he died. His body was brought back and buried at Congresbury. Badgworth Church is dedicated to this Saint.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**NOV. 8.—WILLIAM CLARK RUSSELL DIED  
MEMORIAL SERVICE at WELLS  
CATHEDRAL.**

William Clark Russell is an instance of a famous son of a famous father. He was born in New York in 1844, the son of Henry Russell, the vocalist and composer, the well-known writer of "Cheer Boys, Cheer!" Clark Russell went to sea as a boy about 1857, and at twenty began journalistic work. In 1874 he published "John Holdsworth, Chief Mate," and three years later came the novel which made him famous, "The Wreck of the Grosvenor." Novels, biographies, and

naval histories and sketches poured thereafter from his pen in a refreshing stream for over a quarter of a century. Among these works was a capital "Life of Dampier," the Somersetshire navigator. Clark Russell was the maritime novelist above all others for the Victorian era. He did for the Merchant Service what Marryat and Chamier did for the White Ensign. Never again shall we have such pictures of sea life as he gave us, for Clark Russell lived in the days when sailing ships were at the zenith of their perfection. Steam was already driving canvas from the face of the oceans. And moreover Russell had a picturesque language which suited his themes. Every variety of sea experience crowds his pages. Shipwrecks, fires, and derelicts; marooners, pirates, and mutineers—it would be difficult to find a sea incident or character which he has omitted to depict. Probably in centuries to come antiquarians will read Clark Russell to obtain a picture of the sea life of the nineteenth century, when many names greater than his will have been lost in oblivion. Amongst nearly a hundred works he wrote few that are dull and fewer from which something may not be learned of that great industry which has made England Mistress of the Seas. Slaver and whaler, clipper and collier, Indiaman and convict ship, tramp and trawler scud through his pages. Yet their creator lived at an inland Somerset town, a semi-invalid, drawing upon the keen observation of his earlier years. At Bath, where he had long lived, he died November 8th, 1911.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### MEMORIAL SERVICE AT WELLS CATHEDRAL.

A memorial service is annually held in Close Hall Chapel, Wells, in commemoration of Ralph de Salopia, who was Bishop of the See in 1329.

Immediately after the ending of matins in the Cathedral on November the 8th the whole body of Choral Vicars and choir boys go to the ancient building, the Vicar's Hall, at the south end of the Close, and thence proceed vested to the chapel at the north end, now leased to the Theological College, where the morning service is intoned with special Psalms and Lessons, and ends with an especial mention of the founder during the prayer, "O merciful God the Father of our Lord," &c., from the Burial Service. The Psalms used are the 84th, the 122nd, and the 132nd, and the Lessons are from the Book of Kings and the Gospel of St. John (*ibid*, p. 336). The above are quoted from "Church Folk Lore," by J. E. Vaux, M.A., F.S.A.—R.



**NOV. 9.—ST. BENIGNUS.**

Mr. W. C. Baker informs us that raspberry canes should be planted on Lord Mayor's Day (November 9th) and cut down the first year on Candlemas Day (February 2nd).

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St. Benignus (or Bencen; pl. 460 A.D.) was an early disciple of St. Patrick, who, as a tiny babe, kissed the dear Apostle's foot and cried to be with him. In delight at such ardent love St. Patrick named him Benignus (the kind one) instead of Beon. He succeeded his master and worked in Ireland, until worn with years he followed his teacher's example, and came to die at Avalon. He built a hermit's cell at Ferramere, and died there. In the reign of William Rufus, Abbot Turstin sought out his bones and brought them with great honour by water to the Abbey. They were wrapped in fine linen, placed in a shrine, and rowed up the waterways in a wonderful light, by a monk and a layman. A great procession, such as the Normans loved, bearing banners, crosses, censers, and torches, met the boat at the landing stage. Half-way between this and the Abbey the procession halted, a sermon was preached, the relics were shown, and such grace and wonders followed the blessing of the people that a chapel was built on the very spot. It was re-built by the active piety of Abbot Beere, whose mitre and initials are on the North Porch. It was made a parish church in 1846.

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**NOV. 10.—NUNNEY FAIR ESTABLISHED.**

The first record found of Nunney is in 1259 (44 Henry III.), when the King, under date from Westminster, 23rd October, granted to Henry de Monteforti, that he and his heirs for ever might have one market every week on Wednesday at his Manor of Nuny, and one fair there every year, to last for three days, viz., the vigil, the day, and the morrow or St. Martin (except the said market or fair should be to the injury of neighbouring markets and fairs), and with all liberties and free customs to the same appertaining, &c. The witnesses are H. Cantuar, Archbishop; W. Wigorn, Bishop; Simon de Monteforti, Comes Leicester; Peter de Montefort, Robert Waller, and others. In 1279 (8 Edward I.) Nicholas Braunche, Lord of the Hundred of Frome, endeavoured to stop the market at Nunney, and summoned Henry de Montefort, on complaint that his market was an injury to the free market at Frome, on Saturday, and to the said Braunche of twenty pounds. To which de Montfort answered that he held his

market on Wednesday, two days earlier than at that at Frome, and that Nony being two miles and more from Frome, no injury was done.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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### NOV. 11.—S. MARTIN'S DAY or MARTINMAS.

St. Martin's summer means a warm month.

\* \* \*

Another spell of glorious sun  
Should with St. Martin's season come.

\* \* \*

If the wind is in the South-East at Martinmas  
it remains there till after Christmas.

\* \* \*

If there is ice that will bear a duck before  
Martinmas there will be none that will bear a  
goose all the winter.

\* \* \*

Eight of our Somerset churches are dedicated  
to this Saint, namely, Elworthy, Fiddington,  
Fivehead, Kingsbury Episcopi, North Perrott,  
North Stoke, West Coker, and Worle.

\* \* \*

Martilmasse shall come again,  
Spite of wind, and snow and raine ;  
But many a strange thing must be done,  
Many a cause be lost and won,  
Many a fool mast leave his pelfe,  
Many a worldling cheat himselfe,  
And many a marvel come to passe,  
Before retirn of Martilmasse.

—OLD RHYME.

To-day is Martinmas—sometimes called Martilmas—or the Feast of St. Martin. It was an important day in the Old Calendar, and had many interesting characteristics. Our forefathers were never backward in associating business with pleasure. Thus we find of the eight established "quarter days," five of them designated with the word mas—meaning feast or festival—Lammas, Michaelmas, Martinmas, Christmas, Candlemas. Years and years ago, when every village in England was a self-supporting community, Martinmas was a time of great importance. It was then arrangements were made for stocking the larder for the winter, during which season fresh provisions were seldom or never to be had. Then it was oxen and pigs were slaughtered and the

meat preserved. Martlemas beef was well known in these days, and did

beare good tacke,

When country folke do dainties lacke.

Hall, in his Satires, mentions :

“Dried fitches of some smoked beeve

Hang'd on a withen wythe since Martin's Eve.

“A piece of beef hung up since Martlemas” is also mentioned in the “Pinner of Wakefield,” 1599. In the Statistical Accounts of Scotland (1793), concerning the parish of Forfar, it is stated that “between Hallowmass and Christ-mass” when the people laid in their winter provisions, about 24 beeves were killed in a week, the best not exceeding 16 or 20 stone. “A man who had bought a shilling's-worth of beef, or an ounce of tea, would have concealed it from his neighbours like murder.” And who would credit it? Black pudding probably had its origin at Martinmas. Where is the Somerset man who hasn't a love for a pudding? The dish may not be looked upon as regal, but prepared as the Somerset people know how, a pudding is something of a luxury, and the person to whom it is served may well bless the time when circumstances were such as to compel the thrifty housewife to contrive so excellent a means of utilising some portions of the fifth quarter of the animal sacrificed in order that the winter food supply should be secure. The original home of the black-putting is probably not known—I would suggest Somerset. The feast of St. Martin was also kept up with great gusto on the Continent, and we are told that no-one was so poor or niggardly as not to have his dish of pudding at Martinmas, which he washed down with a liberal supply of wine. Butler mentions the black-putting in his Hudibras, when speaking of the religious scruples of some of the fanatics of his time. He says :

“Some for abolishing black pudding

And eating nothing with the blood in.”

There used to be a common expression that “blood without groats is nothing,” meaning that “family without fortune is of no consequence.” There is some philosophy in this vulgarism, the pun in which is absolutely unintelligible except to those who are acquainted with the composition of a black pudding.

The weather wise will look to-day from which quarter the wind is blowing, for, whatever the direction, so it will remain mostly up to Candlemas Day. But what of St. Martin's Summer? It breaks in upon us just as the autumn is giving way to winter, and so regular is it in its coming that nearly all Europe has a proverb on this season. Shakespeare alludes to it in the first

part of King Henry IV. "Farewell, thou latter spring! Farewell, all-hallow'n summer," and more expressively in the first part of King Henry VI. :

"This night the siege assuredly I'll raise ;  
Expect St. Martin's summer, halcyon days."

It is a pretty little fantasy to associate this summer, in the midst of dark and dismal days, with such a saint as St. Martin, "the glory of Gaul," and "the light of the Western Church in the fourth age." The story of St. Martin is full of interest ; the miracles which are associated with him are entertaining. But as to his humility, his kindness of heart, his meekness, his self-denial, there can be no question. Like the sun, which shines upon the just and upon the unjust, so St. Martin not only forgave his enemies, but sought every opportunity of serving them, of heaping benefits upon them, and brightening their lives. Somerset people should be especially interested in St. Martin's Day. There can be no objection to associating the Martins of the West of England with the "glory of Gaul," for Somerset produced members of the family whose prowess in the field, whose intellectual attainments, and whose services to their country entitle their names to be writ large in the history of our county. I have dealt very exhaustively with the Martin family and its association with Somerset in my book "The House of Martin," and to that work I must refer any readers who would care to know more about the subject. The Martins, Martinmas, and its customs are things which encourage thoughts, but space forbids those thoughts being put into words. Martinmas was one of the old "quarter days" which deserves to be remembered. The fact that a feast was associated with the day when the history of England was young—a feast which we in Somerset can still appreciate, lends additional interest to the 11th. November, and makes Martinmas something more than a mere memory to Somerset men. Added to that that the Martin family have brought honours to this and the adjoining counties, and we have ample excuse for, in our own peculiar manners, celebrating "The Feast of St. Martin."

If ducks do slide at Hollantide,  
At Christmas they will swim ;  
If ducks do swim at Hollantide,  
At Christmas they will slide.

If it is at Martinmas fair dry and cold, the cold in winter will not last long. If the geese stand on ice they will walk in mud at Christmas. Another old weather saying was verified in 1869 : "When the wind is S.S.W. at Martinmas, it keeps mainly to the same point on to old

Candlemas Day (February 14th), and we shall have a mild winter up to then and no snow to speak of.”

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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The name of this day was generally corrupted to Martlemas, or commonly Marta-mas. It is spoken of as an euphuism for decline, as the year is closing at this season. Shakespeare writes of Falstaff:—“How doth the Martlemas your master?” Tusser writes it Martilmas. It was a notable season for housekeepers; a day which signalled the season for the storage of winter provisions, salted meat, fitches of bacon, smoked beef, and the like. It was celebrated also for the giving of copper-gilt rings as farings or love tokens.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

Of the Manor of West Wootton there is preserved a grant by King Eadmund (the Elder), in 946, to his thegn Ætelnot in perpetuity, on the condition of his rendering yearly on St. Martin's Day, to the “old church” of St. Mary, at Glastonbury, five gallons of beer, and one of hydromel; thirty loaves of bread, “with the condiments pertaining thereto”; and five bushels of corn, together with ecclesiastical services, when demanded—being probably a liability to contribute labour and materials towards the buildings of the Abbey. The rendering of these rents and services is enforced by stringent penalties, and it is provided that in case of forfeiture by default of the grantee or his successors, the land shall revert (not to the king, but) to the monastery of Glastonbury, “because it is of the perpetual inheritance of the said church.” The deed is marked as doubtful, but it represents what seems to have been a real transaction.

—C. S. WHITTAKER.

#### NOV. 13.—S. BRYCE'S DAY.

**MASSACRE of the DANES, 1002.  
DOOMSDAY BOOK COMPLETED,  
1086.**

This day is the feast of Saint Brice or Bryce, who succeeded Saint Martin as Bishop of Tours about 400. He died in 441.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

A familiar saying in the district is “Cold day!—mind anybody of Gin and Cider Fair.” The reference is to Broomfield fair, formerly held on November 13th, and being winter and a cold country, a great deal of that beverage was consumed there.

### MASSACRE OF THE DANES, 1002.

This day is memorable in Somerset as elsewhere for the concerted massacre of the Danes in England in 1002. The Danes had been bought off with bribes time after time, but this naturally encouraged them, so the foolish King Ethelred II., the Unready, plotted their massacre. Taking them unawares the English fell upon them, and slaughtered large numbers. So great was the storm of anger and resentment roused among the murdered men's fellow countrymen abroad that formidable armies of Danes came over and took revenge on the unhappy land.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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In the year 1002 King Ethelred the Unready issued a secret order for the massacre of all the Danes within his dominion on the day of the festival of St. Brice (November 13th). Secret letters were despatched by him to every city and town commanding the people on that day—on which the Danes usually bathed themselves—to fall upon them suddenly and either destroy them with the sword or consume them with fire. This command, horrible as it was, met with a ready obedience, and the Danes, with their wives and children, were butchered without mercy. Neither age nor sex was spared, or even those who had inter-married with the English. To revenge this massacre, Swegn, King of Denmark, came to England, and carried on a desolating war for ten years, compelling the King to leave the country, Swegn mounting the throne in his stead. Mr. S. G. Jarman, in his "History of Bridgwater," tells us that the last occasion of which we have record of the Danes' disturbance, in the neighbourhood of Bridgwater, was in 1010, "at or about Cannington," where they practised their old cruelties by burning and plundering.

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### DOMESDAY BOOK COMPLETED, 1086.

It is reputed that the celebrated Domesday Book of William the Conqueror was completed on this day, 1086. In it was a description of Somerset, as well as other counties, although a fuller account appears in the Exon Domesday. The King's justiciaries were sent all over every county in England except the extreme north and south, taking the name of each person, the extent of his land and possessions, and the number and kinds of his live stock for this record. So accurate was Domesday that its authority was never allowed to be called in question.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**NOV. 14.—GREAT EARTHQUAKE, 1318.  
 ABBOT WHITING ARRAIGNED,  
 1539.**

One of the greatest earthquakes ever known in England was felt on this day, 1318.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**ABBOT WHITING ARRAIGNED, 1539.**

Richard Whiting, the last Abbot of Glastonbury, was this day, Thursday, November 14th, 1539, arraigned at Wells. He was tried before Lord Russell, but his conviction had already been determined on by Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex. The Abbot was formally accused of robbing the Abbey Church. There is little doubt that he was technically guilty of having removed articles from it and used them for purposes other than those for which they were intended. But his real crime in the eyes of the government was treason—rebellion open or secret against the authority and wishes of the Crown. Unpopular among his dependents, his tenants, and in the county generally, there were found many witnesses against him. He was convicted and sentenced to death.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**NOV. 15.—EXECUTION of ABBOT WHITING, 1539.  
 GREAT FLOODS at LANGPORT,  
 1894.**

At the beginning of 1539, Glastonbury was the only religious house in Somerset which was untouched by the Crown. But in September "visitors" arrived at Glastonbury, and in the presence of Abbot Whiting, searched the Abbey in the hope of finding valuables that had been omitted from the list previously supplied to the Commissioners. They discovered some arguments in writing against the divorce of Henry VIII. from his first wife. They examined him and found he had "a cankered and traitorous heart against the King and his succession," and they sent him to the Tower of London. Then they ransacked the Monastery. They found "a fair gold chalice, with h her plate, hid by the Abbot that had not been seen by the former visitors, of which they think the Abbot meant to make his own advantage." They reported the house was the noblest they had ever seen and meet for the King's Majesty. Two months later the venerable Abbot—he was past 80 years of age—was sent back to Somerset, and on November 14th, 1539, he was arraigned in the great hall of the Bishop's Palace at Wells. He was found

guilty of "the robbery of his church," while his wish was to preserve the sacramental cups which had been used in Glastonbury Abbey for ages past, and save them from the hands of the despoilers. He made no defence, but he asked that he might bid his brethren farewell. This was denied him. He was sentenced to be hanged on Glastonbury Tor with two of his monks. The following day the three were taken from Wells to Glastonbury, tied to hurdles, and dragged to the top of the hill. To add to the ignominy, the body of the Abbot was ordered to be divided into four parts. His head was placed upon the Abbey gate, and the remains were sent to Wells, Bath, Ilchester, and Bridgewater. It was long before the indignation caused by the Abbot's fate died out in Somerset. In the year 1896 Richard Whiting, last Abbot of Glastonbury, was beatified.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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#### ABBOT WHITING EXECUTED 1539.

This day, 1539, Richard Whiting, Abbot of Glastonbury, met a felon's death at the hands of the executioner. With two of his monks who had been also condemned to death he was taken from Wells to Glastonbury. Some accounts say that like a common criminal he was dragged through the town on a hurdle. The infirm old man was taken to the gallows which had been prepared for him on the summit of the famous Glastonbury Torre. He was continually questioned, and it was sought to implicate others in his treasons, but he would accuse no one. Pollard says, writing to Cromwell, Earl of Essex, that the old man before his death begged the beholders to entreat the Monastery Visitors and Lord Russell "to desire the King's Highness of his merciful goodness and in the way of charity to forgive him his great offences by him committed and done against his Grace." So perished the last Abbot of Glastonbury.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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#### GREAT FLOODS AT LANGPORT, 1894.

In this month the River Parret, which drains an area of 384,000 acres, or 600 square miles, overflowed its banks, causing the most disastrous flood within the memory of living man. There was heavy rainfall on November 11th-12th. The river rose rapidly and overflowed. The road opposite the Bank was covered. The gasworks were flooded and gas lights extinguished. The day of the 12th was very fine, but there was much more rain at night with a hurricane. On the 13th the railway station was flooded and



traffic brought to a standstill. Roads in the neighbourhood were impassable. Houses in most parts of the town were flooded, and in the lower parts the water rushed through the doors from one side to the other of the main street. In Moor-lane the water reached to the ceilings of the houses. In some places in this street the water was 5ft. deep. Horses with high vehicles traversed the main street, which was also navigated from end to end by boats. Relief parties with food to the flooded and fireless houses were at work. On Wednesday, the 14th, watch was kept on the river banks with lanterns. The following day (the 15th November) the flood attained its maximum height—12½ feet; at Boroughbridge it stood at nearly 20 feet. The dividing wall between the Common Moor and Aller Moor gave way, with disastrous results for Aller. The flood began to subside on the 16th, the main street was cleaned on the 19th, and the railway service restored. The lowest estimate of the damage done was placed at £5,000. A relief fund was organised, followed by meetings regarding prevention of floods.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## NOV. 17.—St. HUGH.

### JOSEPH ALLEINE DIED, 1668.

St. Hugh was born in Burgundy in 1140, educated in a convent, took the habit of the Chartreuse, near Grenoble, before he was of age, was ordained priest, and, at the end of ten years, the procuratorship of the Monastery was entrusted to him. Henry II. of England, confiding in his prudence and sanctity, induced him to come over and regulate the new monastery of Carthusians, founded by the King at Witham, in Somerset, which was the first of that Order established in England, and hence Hugh became very closely associated with our county. The Carthusian Order, founded by St. Bruno, in 1080, followed an exceedingly rigid rule. The monks never ate flesh, and, on one day in the week, were bound to fast on bread, water, and salt; they wore a hair shirt next the skin, and were forbidden to leave the grounds of their monastery. The early days of the new foundation of the Monastery or Charterhouse, as all the houses of the Order were called after their mother-priory, the Great Chartreuse, were stormy; the first Prior deserted his post, and the next died before the necessary buildings of the convent were begun. By the advice of a noble of Maurienne, Henry sent to the Great Chartreuse to beg Hugh of Avalon to take charge of the new house. Reginald Fitz Jocelin, Bishop of

Bath, headed an embassy to La Grande Chartreuse, and, with the assistance of the Bishop of Grenoble, induced the Prior to send Hugh across the sea. He was conducted in honour to Witham, where the monks there received him with "ineffable joy" "as the angel of the Lord." The little community were found in the woods not far from the village of Witham, dwelling in what must have been nothing better than rude huts, for their cells were made out of stakes hedged round with pales and a low wall. The new Prior built the convent, and it is believed that the present Parish Church of Witham was the very church of the lay brethren of Hugh's convent, and that it was, moreover, the old Parish Church, which was a chapel belonging to the Prior of Bruton. Charterhouse-on-Mendip was a cell of Witham, and so the place, though treated for civil purposes as a part of Blagdon, still remains extra-parochial. Another Carthusian monastery, founded by William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, in 1222, was settled at Hinton. After St. Hugh had been eleven years Prior of Witham, he was elected Bishop of Lincoln, and on September 29th, 1186, he was enthroned. He died in London on the 17th November, 1200. His body was embalmed and conveyed with great pomp to Lincoln, where it was met by King John of England and King William of Scotland, with three Archbishops, fourteen Bishops, above a hundred Abbots, and a great number of Earls and Barons. The two Kings put their shoulders under the bier as it was carried into the church.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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The notable Saint Hugh, unlike the majority of saints in our calendar, had close personal connection with Somerset. Hugh was born in Burgundy about 1135, and was ordained priest at the Grande Chartreuse, of which some years afterward he became grand procurator. King Henry II. about 1170 pressed him to become Prior of the house of Carthusian monks at Witham in Somersetshire, a position he held until 1186, when he was compelled to accept the Bishopric of Lincoln against his will. Many interesting but lengthy stories are told of S. Hugh's life in his Somerset monastery, and of his relations with King Henry. Hugh died in London on November 17th, 1200. He was buried at Lincoln, his funeral being attended by two Kings (John of England and William of Scotland), three Archbishops, fourteen Bishops, one hundred Abbots, and many Nobles. Twenty years afterwards Hugh was canonised.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

## JOSEPH ALLEINE DIED, 1668.

Joseph Alleine, the celebrated Puritan divine, was born a fourth son of Tobie Alleine at Devizes in 1634. He went to Lincoln College, Oxford, in 1649, and took his B.D. degree in 1653. Full of zeal, he refused several offers of preferment, but in 1655 became assistant to George Newton, of St. Mary Magdalene Church, Taunton. He married a relative, Theodosia Alleine, a lady of great charm. It is said of him "His public life—in preaching after the intense, awakening, wistful type; in catechising with all diligence and fidelity; in visitation among the poor, and mean, and sad; in letter-writing, tender and sympathetic; in devotional intercession through long consecrated hours of day and night—was a model of pastoral devotion." In 1662 he and his pastor were among the Two Thousand ejected clergy, and he was thrown into prison for itinerant preaching. He was released on May 26th, 1664, but defied the Conventicle (Five Mile) Act, and was again and again imprisoned. His sufferings broke down his health, and he died November 17th, 1668, a young man still, though old in suffering and great in influence. His works, particularly his "Letters from Prison" and "An Alarm to the Unconverted," were notable contributions to Puritan literature.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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Of the Puritan ministers in Somerset who were displaced by the Act of Uniformity (1662), by far the most distinguished was Joseph Alleine. He was born at Devizes early in 1634, and studied at Lincoln and Corpus Christi Colleges, Oxford. In 1655 he received Presbyterian Ordination, and became assistant to the Rev. Geo. Newton at Magdalene Church, Taunton. He never held a benefice, but received a stipend of £80 a year, raised by voluntary contributions. He probably had also some private means. In his ministry he was indefatigable, besides assisting his wife in the conduct of a boarding school for girls. Refusing to comply with the terms of the Act of Uniformity, both he and Mr. Newton were ejected from the Parish Church. For several months no-one was appointed in their places, and the church is said to have been shut up for some weeks together. Alleine persisted in preaching in Taunton and the neighbouring villages, sometimes six, eight, or ten times a week; and declared he would go on till he was either imprisoned or banished; in the latter case he would preach to the heathen. On 26th May, 1663, he was arrested and committed to Hechester Gaol, where in a short time were crowded together 13 Ministers, 17 Baptists, and 50 Quakers. The Ministers were

accustomed to preach in turn from the window to crowds that gathered from miles around. After a time the rigour of his imprisonment was mitigated, and when indicted at the Sessions at Taunton, the Grand Jury ignored the bill. But he was not released, and in August he was again indicted for "a riotous and seditious assembly." The Judge, Sir Robert Foster, directed a conviction, in spite of inadequate evidence; to which Alleine replied that "he was glad it had appeared that he was guilty of nothing but doing his duty, and he would accept with all thankfulness whatever sentence might be passed on him for so doing." He was adjudged to pay a fine of 100 marks, and to remain in prison until it was paid.

During this imprisonment he wrote several books. In one, "A Call to Archippus," he maintained that all who were ordained to the Ministry of the Gospel were morally bound to persist in that Ministry, in spite of any obstruction or prohibition by civil authority."

He continued in prison till 20th May, 1664. He received many visitors, and sometimes preached to numerous congregations. He instructed children who were sent to him, and in dealing with them in some measure anticipated Joseph Lancaster's Monitorial System. When the Gaol Chaplain fell sick he assumed his place, and preached to the convicted felons.

Immediately on his release he returned to Taunton, and resumed his regular ministry; but in about three months' time his health failed. Several changes of residence were necessitated by the "Five Mile Act," and while preparing for a visit to his birthplace he held a devotional meeting, which was invaded by a mob led by two magistrates. All present were "convicted of a conventicle," and sentenced to a fine of £3 each or 60 days' imprisonment. As they all refused to pay, Mr. Alleine, his wife, his father, seven other ministers, and 40 other persons were committed to Hchester Gaol. The first thing they did on their release was to make a collection for the sufferers by the Great Fire of London Mr. Alleine being a large contributor.

From this time his health rapidly declined. In vain he sought relief from a physician at Dorchester and a mineral spring at Devizes. The waters of Bath afforded temporary relief, and on Sundays he gathered together in his lodgings a large number of children for religious instruction. This was certainly the first Sunday School in Somerset, perhaps the first in England; but the Bishop broke it up by serving citations on several of the helpers. This was Alleine's last work, and after a period of severe suffering he died on 10th November, 1668. His tomb in Magdalene Church bears this inscription:—

"Hic facit Dominus, Josephus Altheine, Holo-canstum Tautoniensis, et Deo et vobis." His writings are numerous, but mostly posthumous. The best known is "An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners," which continued to be re-printed till the middle of the last century. Two pirated editions, issued in 1678 and 1689, bore the titles, "The Way to True Happiness" and "A Sure Guide to Heaven." Except the title pages, both are identical with the "Alarm," and it is said that their aggregate sales numbered 50,000.

—T. G. CRIPPEN.

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**NOV. 18.—COLONEL WYNDHAM CREATED  
A BARONET, 1673.**

Colonel Francis Wyndham, a decided Royalist, and Governor of Dunster Castle, was this day, 1673, created a Baronet. He married Anne, daughter of Thomas Gerard of Trent, and this lady had considerable influence over Charles II.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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**NOV. 20.—CHATTERTON BORN, 1752.**

**S. EDMUND, KING & MARTYR.**

Thomas Chatterton, "the marvellous boy that perished in his pride," was born of poor parents in the Somerset quarter of Bristol, November 20th, 1752. At the age of eight he entered Colston's School, Bristol, and left at fourteen. He was apprenticed to a lawyer named Lambert, and while there commenced to write poetry. The idea came into his mind of pretending that he had in his possession a number of poems written in ancient times by a monk to whom he gave the name of Thomas Rowley. He said that he had found them in an old chest in St. Mary Redcliffe Church. He desired to get the poems published, and invoked the aid of Horace Walpole, afterwards Earl of Orford. But the assistance he anticipated did not materialise; he was reduced to the greatest poverty, and this wonderful boy, at the age of 18, despairing and starving, ended his own life by poison at Brook-street, Holborn, in the year 1770. People who would not notice his poems when he was struggling for existence read them with delight when they heard his sad story, and the verses written by the boy in his 15th year are to-day ranked among the masterpieces of English literature.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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**S. EDMUND, KING AND MARTYR.**

Although the greatest of the East Anglian Saints, yet a few words upon his history may

not be out of place in a Somerset paper, for have we not in the north porch of our Cathedral a remarkable series of carvings representing his martyrdom? He was born at Nuremberg in 841, and, receiving the Crown of East Anglian from the childless Offa, landed near Hunstanton, where twelve springs at once gushed forth. It was owing to the false story of the King's complicity in the murder of Lodbroc—a Danish falconer who was washed ashore in a boat—that his son Inguar, with Ubba, came over with an army, and, defeating Edmund, tied him to an oak, and shot at him with arrows until his body resembled an "urchin" (hedgehog). He was then beheaded, and thrown in the forest. His followers took up the body, but for 40 days were unable to find the head, until the sound of a voice crying "Here, Here, Here" led them to a spot where they found the King's head guarded by a large grey wolf. This story is all shown at Wells in a beautiful series of capitals. The shooting at the King is also to be seen in a most interesting window in Bristol Cathedral.

The traditional oak at Hoxne, in Suffolk, fell suddenly in 1848, and in cutting it to pieces an arrow head—now at the Vicarage—was found in the heart of the tree. The wooden church in which the Saint's body rested in 1013 is still standing at Greenstead, near Ongar, Essex.

The chief result of his death was the founding of the great Abbey of St. Edmund's, Bury.

—H. CORDER.

#### NOV. 21.—ST. COLUMBAN DIED, 615.

The tiny church of Culbone—claimed to be the smallest complete church in England, as well as the most picturesquely situated—derives its name from a corruption of St. Columban, who was an Irish Saint, born in Linstor A.D. 513. He loved solitary places and the sole companionship of nature; and there is therefore a peculiar fitness in the church of so retired a place as Culbone being dedicated to him. Much of his life was spent in itinerant preaching on the Continent, chiefly in Burgundy, whence he was expelled for his too plain speech, criticising the conduct of the Court. His last years were spent in meditation, and in peace and quiet he died on November 21st, 615, at the age of 72.

#### NOV. 22.—S. CECILIA.

This saint is a notable one in England. A Roman lady, who underwent martyrdom in the third century, she is patroness of the blind (having been herself blind) of musicians, and was in old days reputed "inventor of the organ."

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

NOV. 23.—S. CLEMENT, "OLD St. CLEM'S  
DAY."

EXTRAORDINARY ECLIPSE of  
the MOON, 755.

Saint Clement was once a very popular saint in rural districts, perhaps through his being the patron of blacksmiths. Smiths used to chant a curious old rhyme to him while working at the forge, of which much is made by Dickens in his "Great Expectations." —EDWARD VIVIAN.

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EXTRAORDINARY ECLIPSE OF THE  
MOON, 755.

The eclipse which occurred this day, 755, was one of the most remarkable ever noted in England. It was rendered extraordinary by the fact that the eclipse of the moon was contemporaneous with its occultation of a planet. This was the planet Jupiter, which was hidden by the moon for about an hour. Moreover, it is the first occultation of star or planet by the moon observed and recorded in this country. Roger de Hoveden, in his "Annales," describes it thus:—"On the 8th day before the calends of December the Moon on her 15th day being about her full, appeared to be covered with the colour of blood and then the darkness decreasing she returned to her usual brightness; but, in a wondrous manner, a bright star followed the Moon, and passing across her, preceded her when shining, at the same distance which it had followed her before she was darkened."

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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Although not directly connected with the County of Somerset, we think the following remarkable hymn, which was sung at the dedication of a church at Bournemouth in November, 1873, is of sufficient interest to be given a place in our calendar:—

It was about November-tide,  
A long, long time ago,  
When good Saint Clement testified  
The faith that we now know.  
Right boldly then he said his say  
Before a furious King:  
And, therefore, on Saint Clement's day  
We go a-clementing.  
Work in the mines they gave him then,  
To try the brave old Saint,  
And there two thousand Christian men  
With thirst were like to faint,  
He prayed a prayer, and out of clay  
He made the water spring:  
And, therefore, on Saint Clement's day  
We go a-clementing.

An anchor round his neck they tied,  
 And cast him in the sea,  
 And bravely as he lived, he died,  
 And gallantly went free.  
 He rests a many miles away,  
 Yet here his name we sing :  
 As all upon Saint Clement's day  
 We go a-clementing.

Our fathers kept it long ago,  
 And their request we make—  
 Good Christians, one small mite bestow,  
 For sweet Saint Clement's sake.  
 And make his feast as glad and gay  
 As if it came in spring :  
 When all upon Saint Clement's day  
 We go a-clementing.

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NOV. 25.—St. CATHERINE'S DAY.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH IN  
 SOMERSET ?

This Saint is in the Church of England Calendar and the Almanacs. Some people doubt her existence, but Alban Butler, in his "Lives of the Saints," says "From this martyr's uncommon erudition, and the extraordinary spirit of piety by which she sanctified her learning, and the use she made of it, she is chosen, in the schools, the patroness and model of Christian philosophers." According to his authorities she was beheaded under the Emperor Maxentius, or Maximinus II. He adds "She is said first to have been put upon an engine made of four wheels joined together, and stuck with sharp pointed spikes, that when the wheels were moved her body might be torn to pieces. At the first stirring of the terrible engine, the cords with which the martyr was tied were broke asunder by the invisible power of an angel, and, the engine falling to pieces by the wheels being separated from one another, she was delivered from that death. Hence the name of St. Catherine's Wheel." The Catherine wheel, a sign of inns and public houses, and the Catherine wheel in fireworks, testify to this Saint's notoriety in England. There is, or was, a Catherine Wheel public house at Bath, and another at Ashill. Drayton, Montacute, and Swell Churches are dedicated to the Saint. In the spring of 1848, while the decayed chancel of the Church of St. John Baptist, Wellington, was being pulled down, some beautiful sculptures were found in detached pieces, turned upside down, and forming the floor of the space around the altar. While the faces of the figures had been destroyed by the hammer, the rich colouring and gilding were



nearly perfect. Evidently these sculptures formed a portion of a very elaborate reredos. One figure was that of St. Catherine and an angel destroying the wheel. Another, a large female figure carrying a sword, might probably also represent St. Catherine. The date of the figures has been stated as a little earlier than the year 1400. There is in Wells Cathedral a chapel dedicated to St. Catherine, identified by the Catherine wheel in the glass and the tomb of Bishop Drokenford. There is a story of a prior and cell of nuns on St. Catherine's Hill, Frome. This Saint was esteemed the saint and patroness of spinsters, and in some parts of England young women used to meet on this day and make merry together, which they called "Cathar'ning."

The weather lore for this day is as if it be fair or foul, so will it be next February.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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Bath burgesses on being admitted to the freedom of the town formerly took the following oath : — "I shall be buxom and obedient to the mayor of bathe and to all his successowrys, and I shall maintain me to no lordship for hinderance of any burges's of bath. Neither I shall not plead with no burges's of bath, but on the mayor court—Saint Katherine Day—I shall keep holy day yearly, and help to sustain St. Katherine's Chapel and the bridge. All other customs that belong to the said freedom I shall well and truly keep and maintain, so help me God and the Saints."

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The Somerset churches dedicated to this Saint are St. Catherine's (near Bath), Drayton, Montacute, Swell, and Woodlands.

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A correspondent writes :—"I recently heard an old lady, who has long been bed-ridden, re-calling some of the sayings and rhymes of her childhood. The following was one of the number :

St. Catherine's night ! You may believe  
To-morrow month is Christmas-eve."

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The possibility of Sir Walter Raleigh having made a survey of the Somerset coast is indicated in a letter from him written from Sherborne, and dated November 25th, 1595, to the Privy Council. It is preserved in the MSS. of the Marquis of Salisbury, at Hatfield House, and relates to the necessary or advisable disposition of defence forces in the West of England. Sir Walter deals with the extent of the forces in Cornwall, Devon, and Somerset, and of the latter county he says :—"Somerset is seated from danger, having

Devon towards the south, and on Severn side it hath no port capable of any ship of burden, and the indraught is long and dangerous, all the north coast of Devon and Cornwall lying between the waters of Somerset, which are Dunster, Minett, and Bridgewater, into which small barks cannot arrive without precise observation of the tide."

### NOV. 26.—GREAT STORM, 1703.

This day in 1703 began one of the greatest storms known in history. In England millions of pounds worth of damage was done. In Somerset the storm was very violent, thousands of trees were torn up by the roots, numbers of cattle killed, lowlands were flooded, and ships blown away never to be heard of more. In this storm the Eddystone lighthouse was destroyed, and all its inmates perished, including Winstanley, its builder.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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A great storm took place in Somerset on Friday and Saturday, November 26th and 27th, 1703. The hurricane was so terrific that great trees were blown down and buildings shattered. Damage to the thatch of houses was general, sending the price of reed up from 20s to 50s and 60s a hundred. Many of the poorer people were compelled to use the haulm of beans and potatoes as a thatch. In this storm Somerset lost its Bishop, Dr. Kidder, who was killed through the fall of a chimney stack of the Palace at Wells.

—C. S. WHITTAKER.

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The great storm which ravaged the South and West of England stripped many churches of the lead; and at Dinder so much damage was done that an additional rate was made that year "for the repairing of the roofe of the parish church, having been torne by the violent wind in 9ber last." Lord Macaulay has noticed that no other tempest in this country has been the occasion of a Parliamentary address, and of a public fast. The 19th of January following was ordered by proclamation to be observed as a day of general fast and humiliation throughout England "on account of a calamity so dreadful and astonishing that the like hath not been seen or felt in the memory of any person living in this our kingdom." The parish books of Dinder contain a double notice of this fast:—

"Pd for prayer for a fast on ye 12th January 00.00.06."

"Pd for proklamation and a book for a fast, being Wensdy ye 19th January, 00.10.0."

—C. S. WHITTAKER.

**NOV. 27.—Dr. KIDDER, BISHOP of BATH  
and WELLS, KILLED.**

In the great storm of 1703 the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Dr. Kidder, and his wife, were two of the most famous sufferers. Part of the roof of the episcopal palace of Wells was blown in on them during the night, killing both the Bishop and his wife whilst they were in bed. It is estimated that ten thousand people perished in England in this storm. —EDWARD VIVIAN.

**NOV. 28.—HENRY FIELDING MARRIED at  
CHARLCOMBE, 1734.**

Reference to Henry Fielding was made under date April 22nd, his birthday. It was on the 28th November, 1734, he married his first wife, Charlotte Cradock, at Charlcombe, a delightful village near Bath, looking into the Avon Valley. The lady possessed a fortune of £1,500, and on the strength of it Fielding went to reside at East Stour, Dorset, where he led the life of a country gentleman. Within two years he had spent his wife's fortune.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**NOV. 29.—EDWARD THRING BORN, 1821.**

The great schoolmaster, Edward Thring, was born at Alford House, in Somerset, November 29th, 1821. A brief account of his life and work will be found under the date of his death (October 22nd, 1887).

**NOV. 30.—St. ANDREW'S DAY.**

St. Andrew's the King

Three weeks and three days before Christmas  
comes in.

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A considerable number of Somerset churches are dedicated to this Saint, including :—Aller, Almsford, Backwell, Banwell, Blagdon, Brimpton, Burnham, Cheddar, Chew Stoke, Old Cleeve, Clevedon, Compton Dundon, Congresbury, Corton Dinham, Curry Rivel, Dowlish Wake, High Ham, Holcombe, Loxton, Mells, Northover, Stoke Courcy, Stoke-sub-Humdon, Thorn Coffin, Trent, Wells Cathedral, Whitestaunton, Withypool, and Wiveliscombe, while Pitminster Church is jointly dedicated to St. Andrew and St. Mary.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## DECEMBER.

Hoary and dim, and bare and shivering,  
Like a poor almsman comes the aged year,  
With kind "God save you all, good gentlefolks."  
Heap on fresh fuel, make a blazing fire,  
Bring out the cup of kindness, spread the board,  
And gladden winter with our cheerfulness!  
Wassail!—To you and yours and all!—All  
health!

\* \* \*

This is the twelfth and last month of the year. By our ancestors December had his due appellation given him in the name of winter-monat—winter month; but after the Saxons received Christianity, they then, of devotion to the birth-time of Christ, termed it by the name of heligh-monat, that is to say holy month. They also called it mid-winter month, and giul erra, which means the former or first giul. The feast of Thor, which was celebrated at the winter solstice, was called giul from iol or ol, which signified ale, and is now corrupted into yule. This festival appears to have been continued through part of January. December may be a season of dreariness and gloom, as one writer has it, but there is circumstance which turns it into the merriest month of the year—Christmas. Apart from that festival, as a month December may not have much to recommend it. It has been called "Dark December."

Last of the months, severest of them all.

"The trees are mere skeletons.

Bare, wind choirs, in which the sweet birds sang,"

is Shakespeare's description of them. Reptiles and other creatures have retired to their winter quarters, the squirrels and field mice have laid in their winter provisions and done their best to protect themselves from the wintry winds. the hours of daylight become shorter and shorter, until, on the 21st, arrives the winter solstice, the shortest day. By that time we are close on the eve of Christmas. Columns could be written about this festival, as columns and reams have been written. What a time it is for the children: what a time for the grown-ups—the Christmas festivities, the expressions of good-will, the con-

siderations for the poor, the decoration of the churches, the family gatherings, the meetings between old friends. Christmas has ever been a mad, merry season. And although times have sadly got out of joint lately, Christmas still holds a very respectable place in the calendar. Long may we be able to repeat the old rhyme :

Christmas comes but once a year,  
And when it comes it brings good cheer.

One does not desire to be too critical of the times as they are at present. One wishes rather to re-call the olden days when good cheer, good fellowship was something real, something felt, something following on the lines of the thankfulness mingled with festivity which has existed from the very day on which Christ was born. As a matter of fact the decoration of our churches is older than that. Innocently, in engaging in that operation, we are perpetuating a custom which has come down from Pagan times. "Trimming of the Temples," says Polydore Vergil, "with hangynes of floures, boughes, and garlondes was taken of the heathen people, whiche decked their idols and houses with suche array." Dr. Chandler, in his "Travels," says that it is related where Druidism prevailed, the houses were decked with evergreens in December, that the sylvan spirits might repair to them and remain unrippped with frost and cold winds until the milder season had renewed the foliage of their darling abodes. Stowe, in his "Survey of London," says that against the feast of Christmas every man's house, as also their parish churches, were decked with holme, ivy, bayes, and whatsoever the season of the year afforded to be given. Gay, in his "Trivia," describes the custom :

When Rosemary and Bays, the poet's crown,  
Are bawl'd in frequent cries through all the town ;  
'Then judge the festival of Christmas near,  
Christmas, the joyous period of the year !  
Now with bright holly all the temples strow,  
With laurel green and sacred mistletoe.

It has been suggested, however, that Gay is incorrect in including mistletoe in the church decorations, for the berried plant is generally associated with the Pagan rites of Druidism. Whether this be so or not, the adornment of our churches at Christmastide is still observed. It has the antiquity associated with it which commands respect, and whatever its origin is a pretty custom, and one which it is hoped will not be departed from even in these days of "enlightenment." In the olden days the Good Souls of Somerset considered Christmas in the double light of a holy commemoration and a cheerful festival, and, accordingly, distinguished it by

devotion, by vacation from business, by merriment and hospitality. The great halls resounded with the tumultuous joys of servants and tenants. The tables groaned beneath the weight of the fare provided. Then, assembled around the open fireplace, they told and heard the traditionary tales of the village respecting ghosts and witches and such like. Then the mummers would appear. The village lads, dressed up to represent various characters, acted old Christmas plays. One of the dramas performed had to do with the time-honoured legend of St. George and the Dragon. Poole tells us that at Christmas-time a peculiar custom was observed at North Curry in memory of King John, the murderer of Prince Arthur. A feast was held in the Reeve's house, the chief dish among the pastry being a huge mince pie, ornamented with a rude effigy of the King; two candles, weighing a pound each, were lighted at the time of the entertainment, and, while they were burning, the visitors at the festive board had a right to regale themselves with "jolly good ale and old" ad libitum. Now, after nineteen centuries, whether it be in the busy towns of our county or in the most remote villages, the Christmas festival is proclaimed by the bells hanging in the most beautiful church towers this England of ours can produce. The holly and the mistletoe are still used to decorate our homes. The latter grows profusely in Somerset and years ago it was the exception not to find a mistletoe hanging from the ceiling of a house or forming a portion of the Christmas "trimmings." And, of course, there was "kissing under the mistletoe," probably the oldest custom existing in this country. It is impossible to touch even lightly upon the Christmas customs as they were observed in Somerset in one short article. Some of them must be dealt with "as the days come round." The Christmas-eve customs, including the burning of the ashen faggot, were referred to in the calendar under January 5th. The wassailing of the apple trees has already been very fully treated in the Calendar under the dates January 5th and January 17th, and the old stories need not be repeated. To some of us of a past generation it is a matter for regret that even Christmas is not kept with anything like the vigour, perseverance, and elegance of our ancestors. They decorated, they sang, they revelled, and so welcomed the New Year like happy and grateful subjects of nature. To-day we look to others to provide amusement and recreation and jollity rather than provide these things for ourselves, and the result is not so satisfying.

As a month, there is but little weather lore

associated with December. Cold with snow is said to be good for rye. Thunder presages fine weather, while December's frost and January's flood never boded the husbandman's good.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

WEATHER AND OTHER LORE FOR  
DECEMBER.

A good winter brings a good summer.

\* \* \*

A green winter makes a fat churchyard.

\* \* \*

He that passeth a winter's day escapes an enemy.

\* \* \*

Winter is summer's heir.

\* \* \*

Winter never rots in the sky.

\* \* \*

Winter finds out what summer lays ap.

\* \* \*

Winter's thunder and summer's flood,  
Never boded Englishmen good.

\* \* \*

Rhyme on seeing snow coming down :—  
Old Mother Gander's\* " a-pickin' " her geese,  
An' zelliu' the veathers a penny a-piece.

(\*Name varies in different localities.)

\* \* \*

If Christmas come during the waxing moon we shall have a very good year ; if during the waning moon a hard year, the nearer the end of the moon so much the worse.

\* \* \*

At Christmas play and make good cheer,  
For Christmas comes but once a year.

And

Christmas comes but once a year,  
And when it comes we have good cheer.

\* \* \*

If the ice bear afore Christmas it wun't bear a goose afterward.

\* \* \*

A light Christmas ; a heavy sheaf.

\* \* \*

Light Christmas, light wheat-sheaf ;  
Dark Christmas, heavy wheat-sheaf.

(Supposed to refer to full or new moon at Christmas.)

\* \* \*

A green Christmas makes a full churchyard.

\* \* \*

After a Christmas comes a Lent.

\* \* \*

Yule is good on Yule even.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

## MORE WEATHER LORE FOR DECEMBER.

A snow year, a rich year.

\* \* \*

Many slones (sloes), many groans.

\* \* \*

Winter's thunder is the world's wonder.

\* \* \*

Thunder in December foretells fair weather.

\* \* \*

When frost and snow are both together  
Sit by the fire and save shoe-leather.

\* \* \*

A December frost and January flood  
Never boded the husbandman's good.

\* \* \*

An unusually fine day in winter is sometimes called a "Borrowed Day," which will be repaid with interest later in the season.

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 DECEMBERS LONG AGO.

A wild December was that of A.D. 1053. The *A.S. Chronicle* says:—"About this time was the great wind, on the mass-night of St. Thomas, which did much harm everywhere."

Another wild December was that of A.D. 1117, and it is recorded in the *Chronicle* that "this year in the night of the calends of December (Dec. 1) were immoderate storms with thunder and lightning, and rain and hail. And in the night of the third day before the ides of December was the moon, during a long time of the night as if covered with blood, and afterwards eclipsed. Also in the night of the seventeenth day before the calends of January (*i.e.* Dec. 14th) was the heaven seen very red, as if it were burning. . . . This was a very blighted year in corn, through the rains that scarcely ceased for all the year."

A.D., 1121.—"In the night of the eve of Natalis Domini (Christmas) was a very violent wind over all this land."

A.D. 1124.—An unfavourable year for corn and fruit, "so that between Christmas and Candlemas men sold the acre-seed of wheat for six shillings. Full heavy year was this."

—F. W. MATHEWS.

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 DEC. 2.—PRINCE of ORANGE at WIN-  
CANTON, 1688.  
BRIDGWATER WATERWORKS  
OPENED, 1879.

When William Prince of Orange came to England with the object of driving James II. from the throne, he landed at Torbay on November



3rd, 1680, and among the first to greet him was Sir Francis Warre, of Hestercombe. By the 2nd December he had advanced as far as Wincanton, where he came into contact with a squad of Royal Irish Dragoons sent forward to intercept him. The skirmish went in favour of the Prince, and by way of reprisal for Sedgemoor, the first blood drawn in the conflict which cost James his crown was thus shed on Somerset soil. The Prince slept in a house in South-street, where a room is still known as the Orange-room.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### BRIDGWATER WATERWORKS OPENED 1879.

Mr. S. G. Jarman, in his "History of Bridgwater," gives a full account of the construction and opening of the Corporation waterworks on the above date, which he describes as the largest and most important work ever engaged in by the Town Council of Bridgwater.

### DEC. 3.—DAMPIER REACHES NEW GUINEA, 1699.

Dampier, the great Somersetshire navigator, has not yet gained the place he deserves among voyagers, though his fame is growing. Born at East Coker about 1652 and orphaned early, he became a seaman, and sailed successively to Newfoundland, the East Indies, Jamaica, Bay of Campeachy, Darien, and the coast of Peru. Dampier joined the buccaneers, of whom he became one of the most famous. All the coasts of the Spanish Main knew him, from Hispaniola to the Horn, and from Magellan to Mexico. His adventures and exploits would fill columns. In 1686 Dampier joined some mutineers at the Manillas, and sailed to the Chinese coast, and then to the Pacific Islands, reaching Australia in 1688. Of that continent he was one of the pioneer discoverers, and was the first to describe the kangaroo. For a while marooned on the Nicobars, for three years longer he roamed the East Indies, arriving at length in England in 1691. In 1697 he published his interesting "Voyage Round the World." He afterwards commanded a king's sloop, the "Roebuck." Dampier sailed again from Britain in 1699, touched Brazil, reached Australia on 1st August, and coasting north arrived 3rd December, 1699, at New Guinea, which he coasted. His ship foundered on the voyage home, but we hear that he had command of another in the South Seas in 1705, and that he went with Woodes Rogers round the world as pilot in 1708-11. One of his comrades was Alexander Selkirk, the original of Robinson Crusoe. The works he wrote on his voyages, whilst plain, are interesting and

fairly reliable, and have been many times reprinted. The date of his death is uncertain, though believed to have been in March, 1715, but his fame is assured as a navigator, second only in England to the renowned Captain Cook. (The date used is that given in Ency. Brit., but is uncertain.)

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

### DEC. 5.—St. NICHOLAS-EVE.

The versifier of ancient customs, Naogeorgus, relates through the English of his translator, Barnaby Googe, a curious practice on the vigil of this festival:—

Saint Nicholas money used to give to maydens  
secretlie,  
Who, that he still may use his wonted liberalitie,  
The mothers all their children on the Eve doe  
cause to fast,  
And when they every one at night in senselesse  
sleepe are cast,  
Both apples, nuttes, and peares they bring and  
other things beside,  
As caps and shooes and petticoates, which secretly  
they hide,  
And in the morning found, they say, that this  
Saint Nicholas brought;  
Thus tender mindes to worship Saints and wicked  
things are taught.

St. Nicholas was born at Patara, a city of Lycia, and for his piety from a layman was made Bishop of Myra. He died on the 8th of the Ides of December, A.D. 343. He was chosen patron of schoolboys, and on that day Boy Bishops were elected in England, after the custom had been established on the continent. St. Nicholas is also the patron of sailors, his connection with seamen apparently having arisen from his having calmed the sea in a storm when on a voyage to the Holy Land. He is generally popular all over England, not more so in Somerset than elsewhere, about 370 churches being dedicated to him, many being in seaport towns. The churches in Somerset which bear his name are:—North Barrow, Bathampton, Brockley, Dinnington, Henstridge, Holton, Kelston, Kilton, Kittisford, West Pennard, Radstock, Sandford Oreas, Stoke Lane, Uphill, and Withycombe. In 1304 there was a chapel founded in honour of the Saint for the great mansion built by John de Beauchamp at Stoke-sub-Hamdon.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

Under the above heading Mr. Willis Watson refers to the Chapel of St. Nicholas at Stoke-sub-Hamdon as having been founded by John de Beauchamp in 1304, whereas there is ample

evidence that it was in existence many years previously, "standing in the curtilage of the Manor House." John de Beauchamp (I.) was buried there on October 31st, 1283. His son John then succeeded to the Beauchamp Manor House, a large and commodious residence at Stoke, where probably he entertained the King (Edward I.) when the latter visited the village on December 16th, 1286.

In 1304 John de Beauchamp (II.) "founded a chantry for the residence of a Provost and four priests, to say five masses daily in the Free Chapel, built in honour of St. Nicholas, on his domain at Stoke." The Chantry, of which the buildings still remain, was dedicated to St. Andrew.

In 1306 the Lord of the Manor of Stoke—John II.—was honoured by a knighthood from King Edward I., and in 1334 he "applied for and obtained license from the King (Edward III.) to embattle and fortify his mansion at Stoke."

\* \* \*

I am glad my reference to the foundation of this chapel, under date December 5th, in the "Calendar," has been corrected. One of the best results of the publication of these "Notes and Queries" is that erroneous statements stand a good chance of being amended, and, by the way, it would be a good rule for correspondents to adopt if they would record the corrections in the books from which they extracted the errors. Wade's "Somerset" led me astray as to the date of the foundation of St. Nicholas' Chapel. It serves me right; I ought to have gone to the Somerset "Proceedings," and either Batten's paper on "Barony of Beauchamp" (Proceedings xxxvi., ii., 20), or Walter's Contribution on "The Beauchamp Castle and Free Chapel at Stoke-under-Ham" (Proceedings xxxvi., ii., 49), would have saved a correspondent the trouble of stating that the chapel had been in existence many years previous to 1304. It was in that year John de Beauchamp (II.) founded a chantry there, but I would warn students of Somerset history that Wade, in his volume, and Black's "Somerset," informs the reader that the chantry was founded by Hugh de Gourney, "for the repose of the soul of his father, one of the murderers of Edward II." I am not clear as to where Hugh comes from. Thomas de Gournay earned an infamous celebrity as one of the murderers of Edward II. He had four sons—Thomas, John, George, and Matthew. It was not until the 15th century—the chantry was founded in 1304—that the manor of Stoke-sub-Hamdon passed into the hands of the Gournays.

W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

At the end of a further note on this subject Mr. Willis Watson says:—"It was not until the 15th Century that the Manor of Stoke-sub-Hamdon passed into the hands of the Gournays."

According to Mr. John Batten's paper on "The Barony of Beauchamp," to which Mr. Watson refers, Sir Matthew Gournay married the widow of John Beauchamp (IV.) in 1374, and became in right of his wife, possessed of the Manor of Stoke-sub-Hamdon, which was part of her dowry; but previous to this neither Sir Matthew nor any of his ancestors had any interest whatever in Stoke except, perhaps, as mortgagee.

Sir Matthew died September 26th, 1406, at the age of 96, and was buried in the Chapel of St. Nicholas.

Leland saw and described his tomb in 1540 as "even afore the Quier Doore but without it lyith a very grete flatte marble stone with an Image in Brasse flattely graven and this writing yn French about it." Here follows the inscription.

A portion of what is believed to be the stone choir screen, as seen by Leland, with its doorway, is now erected in the Parish Church at Stoke.

Mr. Batten goes on to say that "after his (Sir Matthew's) death Stoke came, subject to certain life interests, into the possession of the Crown, and thence to the Duchy of Cornwall," which has held the Manor ever since.

From this it is evident that, with the above exception, the Gournays were never Lords of the Manor of Stoke-sub-Hamdon.

### DEC. 6.—S. NICHOLAS.

In a December calendar one can hardly omit S. Nicholas—the original of Santa Claus, a corruption of his name. No saint is more widely known or has his patronage in wider request. He is the patron saint of Russia and Lapland, of Aberdeen and Moscow. He is the protector of children, students, virgins, brides, merchants, and sailors. All other saints may be neglected, but the time is far distant which will see the invocation of "Santa Claus" forgotten.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

### DEC. 7.—KING EDWARD I. at BATH, 1286.

Edward I., who had been at Bath on the 2nd and 3rd January, 1286, was again in the city on December 7th, remaining five days. He then went to Queen Camel, and thence to Somerton, where he stayed for five days—December 11th to the 16th. He proceeded to Stoke, and on the 17th reached South Petherton.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**DEC. 8.—CONCEPTION of the VIRGIN.  
JOHN PYM DIED, 1643.**

A once famous festival, instituted in 1356 in honour of the conception of the Virgin Mary.

**JOHN PYM DIED 1643.**

To the number of noteworthy men who led the way to or marked the course of the Great Civil War, Somerset contributed her full share. With Pride and Prynne we have recently dealt. This day is the anniversary of a greater man. On this day in 1643 died the great John Pym. Of a good Somerset family, he was born at Brymore in 1584. In 1599 he entered Oxford University as a gentleman commoner of Broad-gates Hall, now Pembroke College. After studying for the Bar, he married Anna Hooke, who died after a few years in 1620, leaving him with five young children. The following year he became M.P. for Calne, and five years later for Tavistock. He rapidly took a foremost position in the Commons, speaking with energy against absolutism, monopolies, papistry, and the Spanish Match, so that he was put in confinement for three months. In 1626 he was prominent in the impeachment of Buckingham, and later in that of Mainwaring. He ably advocated the Petition of Right, but it was not until 1640 that Pym came to his own. "King Pym" led the Commons in the early years of the Long Parliament. He took a leading part in the overthrow of Strafford and Laud, and was one of the famous "Five Members" whose arrest Charles attempted. In the Civil War Pym did not take the field, but only a month before his death he was named Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance of the Kingdom. Pym was moderate and single-minded—one of those rare characters, a calm reformer. A strong Presbyterian, his views might have been wider. Nevertheless, for three years he was the soul of the Parliamentary resistance to Royal authority, and his measures led the way to victory, though it was a victory he did not live to see. Beyond this, says Gardiner, "Pym was the founder of party government in England." Few men have greater epitaphs.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**DEC. 10.—EDWIN NORRIS, of TAUNTON,  
DIED 1872.**

**FATAL BALLOON ASCENT, 1881.  
ECLIPSE of the MOON, 1117**

Edwin Norris, the great Oriental scholar, who was born at Taunton in 1795, died on this day. A reference to him appears under date October 21st.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

### FATAL BALLOON ASCENT, 1881.

On the 10th December, 1881, the military balloon "Saladin" ascended from Bath and floated over Somerset. Its car held Mr. Walter Powell, M.P. for Malmesbury; Captain Templer, who afterwards became head of the Ballooning Corps of the British Army, and Mr. Agg Gardner, of Cheltenham. It descended near Bridport, and the two latter gentlemen were thrown out, one with a broken leg. The released balloon sprang into the air with Mr. Powell and was blown out to sea. Neither man nor balloon was ever found.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

### ECLIPSE OF THE MOON, 1117.

On December 10th, 1117, occurred a total eclipse of the moon—the second of the year. It is recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: "In the night of the 3rd of the Ides of December the Moon was far in the night as if it were all bloody and afterwards eclipsed."

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

DEC. 11.—KING JOHN at HENTON, 1204.  
EDWARD I. at SOMERTON, 1286.

DEC. 12.—KING JOHN at BRISTOL, 1204.  
SOMERSET CLERGY DEPRIVED,  
1640.

SOMERSET CLERGY DEPRIVED 1640.

In the Journals of Parliament occur the names of several clergy of Somerset deprived of their benefices for alleged "incompetence," or opposition to the anti-Royalist party. Most prominent of these was William Pierce, who had been translated to the Bishopric of Bath and Wells from that of Peterborough in 1632. Twenty years later Pierce was re-instated, and Pepys mentions having seen him officiate at a service in Westminster Abbey, October 4th, 1660.

Other deprived clergy were Henry Anketill, incumbent of Mells, Alexander Huish, parson of Beckington, and Richard Erle or Hele, of Hemington, but the two latter were re-instated after the Restoration.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

DEC. 13.—S. LUCY or LUCIA.

The feast of S. Lucy in former centuries marked the winter solstice. There are several coincidences about the name of Lucy or Lucia. In Latin lux or lucis signifies "light." S. Lucy is patroness of candle and lamp-makers. Dur-

ing her martyrdom she was deprived of sight, and is therefore one of the patron saints of the blind.

The old country rhyme for this day runs :  
 Barnaby bright, Barnaby bright,  
 The longest day and the shortest night ;  
 Lucy light, Lucy light,  
 The shortest day and the longest night.

(S. Barnabas' day was the old summer solstice, June 11th.)

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### DEC. 14.—RELIEF of TAUNTON, 1644.

During November the Civil War was proceeding in Dorset, and the map of England on the 23rd November, 1644, shows the rapidly dwindling territory still in the King's possession. But all Somerset, save Taunton, was in his hands. On the 14th December a relieving force reached Taunton, so gallantly defended by Blake, and having scattered the besiegers before them threw in the necessary supplies. They found the Castle in no great want of victuals, only of powder and salt. The town began to be in great distress ; and it was, reported Sir Anthony Cooper, almost a miracle to the relieving force that the besieged should attempt to keep the town—their works being for the most part but pales and hedges and no line about the town. The enemy twice endeavoured to force it, but were repulsed.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

#### DEC. 15.—EMBER DAYS.

The first of the three Winter Ember Days, which are the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after the feast of S. Lucy (December 13th).

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### DEC. 16.—KING EDWARD I. at STOKE, 1286. GREAT GALE, 1814.

A terrible gale raged on this and the following day, 1814. Immense damage was done.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### DEC. 17.—KING EDWARD I. at SOUTH PETHERTON, 1286. A SOMERSET CLIMBER.

Burns, in his "History of Parish Registers," records that on this day Roger Starr, baptised December 17th, 1604, "climbed up a ladder to the top of the house on the 23rd October, 1606, being seven weeks and odd days less than two years old." A Somerset celebrity, surely.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

**DEC. 18.—BRIDGWATER SCHOOLBOYS, 125  
YEARS AGO.**

The following lines, dated 1795, give some idea as to the way in which Bridgwater Schoolboys celebrated the approach of the Christmas holidays 125 years ago:—

“ A school there was within a well-known town,  
(Bridgwater call'd), in which the boys were wont,  
At breaking-up for Christmas lov'd recess,  
To meet the master, on the happy morn,  
At early hour; the custom, too, prevailed  
That he who first the seminary reach'd  
Should instantly perambulate the streets  
With sounding horn, to rouse his fellows up.  
And, as a compensation for his care,  
His flourish'd copies, and his chapter-task,  
Before the rest, he from the master had.  
For many days, ere breaking-up commenced,  
Much was the clamour 'mongst the beardless  
crowd,  
Who first would dare his well-warmed bed forego,  
And, round the town, with horn of ox equipped,  
His schoolmates call. Great emulation glowed  
In all their breasts; but, when the morning came,  
Straightway was heard, resounding through the  
streets,  
The pleasing blast (more welcome far, to them,  
Than is, to sportsmen, the delighted cry  
Of hounds on chase), which soon together brought  
A tribe of boys, who, thund'ring at the doors  
Of those, their fellows, sunk in Somnus' arms,  
Great Hubbub made, and much the town alarmed.  
At length the gladsome congregated throng,  
Toward the school their willing progress bent,  
With loud huzzas, and, crowded round the desk,  
Where sat the master busy at his books,  
In reg'lar order each received his own.  
The youngsters then, enfranchised from the  
school,  
Their fav'rite sports pursued.”

**DEC. 19.—WILLIAM EDWARD PARRY  
BORN at BATH, 1790.  
COATS and CLOAKS at TAUN-  
TON.**

William Edward Parry, one of the most famous of Arctic navigators, was born at Bath, December 19th, 1790, and educated in the Grammar School of that city. He joined the navy in his 13th year, and at the age of 20 reached the rank of lieutenant. After a long cruise in North American waters, he returned to England, and, hearing that the Admiralty were fitting out an expedition for discovering the North-West Passage, with an attempt to reach the North Pole, Parry offered



his services, and received an appointment as captain of the *Alexander*, under the command of Captain Ross, whose ship was the *Isabella*. The expedition reached the north of Baffin's Bay, and turned westward into Lancaster Sound, but Captain Ross, seeing some mountains ahead, thought they were the termination of the inlet, and that there could be no North-West passage in that direction. He, therefore, decided to return to England. Parry believed that Ross was in error, but he was not in command, and had to obey orders. Next year another expedition was sent out, with Parry at its head. He sailed straight for Lancaster Sound, passed through it from one end to the other, and discovered a number of islands, which to-day bear his name. In one of his voyages he made a gallant and determined effort to reach the Pole across the ice. George IV. conferred the honour of knighthood upon him. He reached the rank of admiral, and in his old age was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Greenwich Hospital, which position he held until his death in 1855.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

By sea and by land, in Arctic and Tropic, we find the sons of Somerset. Not the least of these travellers is William Edward Parry, born at Bath, December 19th, 1790, the son of a physician. Entering the Royal Navy as a midshipman he served against the Danes in 1808, and two years later went to the Arctic to protect the whaling industry. Five times afterwards did the lure of the Polar ice call him North. The first of these occasions was as second-in-command to John Ross to seek the North-West Passage in 1818. This expedition, through the decisions of its chief, was a failure, so Parry was given the command next year in a renewed effort. This had a large measure of success. Parry gained the reward of £5,000 offered by Parliament for reaching 110 degrees west. In 1821 Parry was sent North again on what is termed his "second" voyage, but two winters in the ice so enfeebled his crews that he was compelled to return. In 1824 he went on his famous and disastrous third voyage, during which one of his vessels was driven ashore and wrecked, despite desperate efforts to save her. Parry returned home defeated. Once more he made an Arctic journey, a determined struggle to reach the North Pole by sledges from Spitzbergen in 1827—an attempt foredoomed to failure. Defeat did not destroy his reputation. Parry was knighted in 1829, and rose to be Rear-Admiral and Governor of Greenwich Hospital. He was adviser to the

Admiralty on Polar matters, and a prominent member of the famous Arctic Council. He died in 1855.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### COATS AND CLOAKS AT TAUNTON.

In the year 1677 one Robert Meredith founded a charity in Taunton called the "Coats and Cloaks," and for many years the deserving poor of Taunton reaped the benefit of the good man's generosity, but somewhere about the middle of the last century the distribution of coats and cloaks appears to have ceased, and numerous enquiries through the columns of this paper about 20 years ago failed to throw any light on the matter. One of our correspondents found in an old scrap-book the following cutting from a newspaper printed in December, 1850:—"On Thursday last, the 19th inst., upwards of 500 cloth coats and cloaks were given away to as many old men and women by the constables of the borough, this mode of relieving the poor being adopted in accordance with the wishes of the testator. The different officers of the borough marched to church, followed by the happy recipients, by twos, where the respected Vicar of St. Mary's, the Rev. Temple West, preached an appropriate sermon."

We turned up the files of the *Somerset County Herald*, and found the following paragraph in the issue for December 21st, 1850:—"The annual charities at the disposal of the bailiffs, Messrs. Trenchard and Henderson, and the constables, Messrs. May and Sammerhayes, were distributed on Thursday. We cannot but express our satisfaction at witnessing the departure from the old system—that of indiscriminately giving to anyone who applied—and of conforming more to the will of the donor. The charity was confined to the parish of St. Mary's, and distributed amongst industrious widows and worthy old men who had not received parochial relief. After the distribution, it was exceedingly gratifying to notice the recipients, with their warm coats and cloaks, wending their way to St. Mary's Church, where an excellent sermon was preached by the respected Vicar, after which the money at the disposal of the churchwardens was distributed amongst them. We hope this admirable plan will be adhered to for the future."

Twenty-four years before this (on December 29th, 1826), the *Times* had thought it worth while to reproduce in its columns the following account of the "most meritorious and exemplary manner" in which "the newly-elected constables of Taunton last week distributed the town charities," which it lifted from the pages of the *Taunton Courier*:—"The sum received by the constables from the coffees was £188 13s 7d,

and was distributed by them, from house to house, to 744 men and women, in proportion to the extent of the family and according to the wants of the inmates, in sums from 1s 6d to 10s. In many instances a warm durable coat was also given to the men, and a cloak to the women, 88 of the former and 188 of the latter. These gifts have been disposed without the slightest regard to party feeling, and they have permitted to overflow the boundaries of the borough and pervade the whole of the parish. The great amount of benefit thus conferred on the poor beyond what has been usually received by them is to be ascribed to the reformed management of the funds. The garments were for the first time furnished by tender, and the gifts were not, as heretofore, distributed at a public-house, thus inciting the poor to indiscreet indulgence."

It would be interesting to know exactly when this distribution of coats and cloaks ceased, and by whom and by what means the money left for the purpose was diverted.

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**DEC. 20.—EGYPTIAN DAY.**

**“CONFIDENCE TRICK” AT  
MINEHEAD.**

**BRIDGWATER DISFRANCHISED  
FOR BRIBERY, 1869.**

This is the third Monday in December, and therefore the last of the three unlucky “Egyptian” days of the year. The ill name of these days dates from early times, and they are mentioned in ancient Saxon manuscripts. According to some writers, however, the day should properly be the last Monday in December (this year the 27th day), the reputed anniversary of the birthday of Judas Iscariot.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

**“CONFIDENCE TRICK” AT MINEHEAD.**

Among the records of the Quarter Sessions of Wilts is a remarkable example of a forged brief. It consists of a printed certificate headed with the royal arms, professing to be dated at Westminster, 20th December, 1660, and given by the King's Commissioners for redressing grievances. A pitiful tale is told therein of John Gray, merchant, and William Nottome, merchant, of the island of Ayre, who, when coming home in their ship, Mermaid, laden with bever, tobacco, &c., were captured by four Turkish pirates, and carried to Algier, where they were kept prisoners until they paid £200 for their ransom. Further a lamentable fire had consumed their dwelling-houses, warehouses, &c., to the value of £800. The bearers of the brief, being their wives, and

a son, Edmund Nottome, were allowed nine months to collect charitable offerings, and "the reverend dispensers of God's holy Word" were requested to publish the petitioners' grievances and the congregations to contribute liberally, and churchwardens, &c., to assist. An Edmund Nottome, of co. Kerry, was found distributing these briefs, and, being examined, he said they were given to him by the Edmund Nottome named therein, whom he met at the sign of the Ship at Minehead, and who said he would do him a courtesy by gathering money for him, being both of one name. He was committed on the charge of carrying false briefs, tried at the sessions, convicted as an incorrigible rogue and vagabond, and sentenced to be whipped in the market place of Warminster, and then to be passed to his own parish of Stock, in Yorkshire.

—H. W. KILLE.

#### BRIDGWATER DISFRANCHISED FOR BRIBERY, 1869.

A correspondent informs us that it was on the 20th of December, 1869, that Bridgwater was disfranchised for bribery. Mr. Jarman's "History of Bridgwater" records the fact that a general election took place on November 16th, 1868, and as the result of a petition both the members who were elected were unseated. The judge reported that corrupt practices extensively prevailed in Bridgwater, whereupon a Royal Commission of Inquiry was appointed and prosecuted enquiries in the town for nearly three months. The result of the enquiry was that the town was disfranchised, and it was fated that the Borough of Bridgwater was never again to return members to Parliament.

#### DEC. 21.—SHORTEST DAY.

St. THOMAS.

EARTHQUAKE in SOMERSET,  
1248.

MUMPING DAY.

GOODING DAY.

Plant shallots on the shortest day and harvest them on the longest.

\* \* \*

St. Thomas gray, St. Thomas gray,

The longest night and the shortest day.

\* \* \*

The day of St. Thomas's, the blessed divine,  
Is good for brewing, baking, and killing fat swine.

\* \* \*

On St. Thomas's Day or Mumping Day it was, until about 30 years ago, thought no dis-

grace for quite well-to-do people to go round begging.

\* \* \*

Mr. Jeboult, in his book on West Somerset, tells us that the following Wiveliscombe Charities, amongst others, were distributed on December 21st:—Holway's and Storry's, Maundown or North's, and Poleshill.

\* \* \*

On this date, 1248, there was an earthquake in Somerset. The Cathedral at Wells was much injured. The tops of houses were shaken and thrown down, and it is recorded "walls did cleave and the heads of chimnies and towers were shaken."

The churches in Somerset dedicated to St. Thomas include those of Cricket St. Thomas, St. Thomas, Wells, and Thurlbeare.

As to weather lore, we are advised to look at the weather cock on St. Thomas' Day at twelve o'clock, and see which way the wind is, for there it will stick for the next (lunar) quarter.

St. Thomas is the patron saint of architects. The tradition is that Goidoforus, King of the Indies, gave him a large sum of money to build a palace. St. Thomas spent it on the poor, "thus erecting a superb palace in heaven." The symbol of St. Thomas is a builder's square.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

To-day is the Festival of S. Thomas. According to the new style Calendar it is the shortest day, and therefore a great year-mark for all rural folk. It is celebrated, too, as "Mumping Day." "To mump" is to beg, and the poorer country people—in some districts old women only, as Kingsley seems to imply, in others old men, in Somerset adults and children alike—went from house to house begging. In olden days they asked for corn, in modern ones for daintier edibles or money in lieu, to celebrate the approaching festival. One genuine old mumping rhyme of the district ran as follows, it being adapted as required to suit the reciter's condition:

Christmas is comin', the beef is gettin' fat,  
Please to put a penny in the old man's hat.  
or poor man's hat.  
or little boy's hat, &c.

Every passer-by was bombarded with this, and it was extraordinary with what speed practice enabled them to rattle through the words.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### GOODING DAY.

Another local name for this day was "Goodin' Day." There is a distinction without much

difference between Mumping and Gooding. The day after the Christmas Festival is well-known as Boxing Day, and marks the time when Christmas Boxes, presents in money or kind, were formerly given. It was, however, more pleasant and convenient to have these bounties before rather than after Christmas. Tradesmen, therefore, gave presents to their customers before Christmas on Goodin' Day. Many of the poor deferred their shopping to that day in order to receive these presents, and even relied on them for the materials for their Christmas pudding. Grocers commonly gave half-a-pound of raisins, or in local phraseology "figs," half-a-pound of currants, two ounces of "candy-peel," and a packet of spice. In later years these quantities were doubled. Bakers gave as goodin' a quatern or quarter of a peck of flour; ironmongers or china-dealers a cup and saucer or a plate. Tradesmen known to be liberal at Goodin' time received accession of customers just before Christmas. Gradually Goodin' Day extended up to Christmas Eve, whilst Boxing Day was neglected save by postmen. Then the almanac crept in. Every shopkeeper must issue a coloured almanac, the gaudier the better, and covetous mothers of families could be seen going home with their little brood laden with nearly half-a-score of rolls of fearful and wonderful almanacs, which they had collected from various confiding tradespeople. Thus fell Goodin' Day from its high estate.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

DEC. 22.—ECLIPSE of the SUN, 968.

ECLIPSE of the MOON, 1135.

RICHARD ALLEINE DIED, 1681.

An eclipse of the sun occurred this day, 968, in the reign of King Ethelred I. It was noticed soon after sunrise, and the line of totality passed over South-West England. Concerning this eclipse it may be remarked that an observer of it, though a foreign one, made the first detailed mention of the "corona."

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

ECLIPSE OF THE MOON, 1135.

It is said, though the statement has been disputed, that there was an eclipse of the moon this day, 1135, the coronation day of King Stephen.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

RICHARD ALLEINE DIED, 1681.

Richard Alleine was one of the sons of a Somerset clergyman of the same name, who for half-a-century was rector of Ditchat. Richard, the younger, was born about 1611, and took his

degrees at Oxford, becoming assistant to his father, and moving the county with his eloquence. In March, 1641, he removed to Batcomb as rector, succeeding the well-known Richard Bernard. He subscribed to "The Testimony of the ministers in Somersetshire to the truth of Christ Jesus." After twenty years at his quiet rectory he was among the ministers ejected upon the Act of Uniformity. He removed to Frome Selwood, and preached there and in the neighbourhood until his death, December 22nd, 1681.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

DEC. 24.—CHRISTMAS EVE.

ECLIPSE of the MOON, 828.

BEGINNING of the GREAT  
FROST, 1794.

REEVE'S FEAST AT NORTH  
CURRY.

Kirsmas Eve 'ool zoon be he-ar,  
This 'ool be my dezire—  
A piece o' burd and raw-mulk cheese  
An' a jolly good cup o' zider.

This is a very old Somerset rhyme, and will serve to introduce this day in December, a day among the Christmas days, which was always associated with jollity and hospitality. It was the day when, while the ashen faggot hissed and crackled in the chimney corner, the cider cup was handed round and round. But the fare provided in most houses was something more substantial than "burd and raw-mulk cheese," although the rhyme leaves on record the modest desires of the old Somerset labourer, one of the best, one of the most genuine and honest to be found throughout the country. Raymond, in one of his novels, has given us a delightful description of the burning of the ashen faggot—representing the Yule-log of other countries. He reminds us of the old custom of hooping the faggot with bands of the same wood, and that when placed on the fire fun and jollity commenced. Sports began—jumping in sacks, diving in water for apples. Every time a band cracked by reason of being burnt through all present were supposed to drink liberally of cider or egg-hot. The custom is alluded to in a poem by Romaine Joseph Thorn, published at Bristol in 1795.

Thy welcome Eve, lov'd Christmas, now arriv'd,  
The parish bells their tuneful peals resound,  
And mirth and gladness every breast pervade,  
The pondrous Ashen faggot, from the yard,  
The jolly farmer to his crowded hall

Conveys, with speed : where, on the rising flames  
 (Already fed with mossy brands)  
 It blazes soon : nine bandages it bears  
 And, as they each disjoin (so Custom wills),  
 A mighty jag of sparkling cyder's brought,  
 With brandy mixt. to elevate the guests."

Then, later on, the apple-trees had to be was-  
 sailed—it was an offering to Pomona, the goddess  
 of fruit trees. Then came the carol singers or  
 the handbell ringers, and at midnight if one  
 went to the cattle stalls one would expect to find  
 the oxen kneeling in adoration of our Lord.

The blossoming of the Glastonbury Thorn on  
 Christmas Eve has been dealt with under date  
 January 5th

Some readers will recollect that in the tragedy  
 of Hamlet Shakespeare refers to ancient and  
 still existing tradition that at the time of cock-  
 crowing the mid-night spirits forsake these  
 lower regions, and go to their proper places ;  
 and that the cocks crow throughout the live-  
 long nights of Christmas—a circumstance observ-  
 able at no other time of the year. Marcellus  
 refers to the vigilance of this bird, previous to  
 this solemn festival, as follows :—

Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes  
 Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
 This bird of dawning singeth all night long ;  
 And then, they say, no spirit stirs abroad ;  
 The nights are wholesome ; then no planet  
 strikes ;

No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,  
 So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

"No Man's Land," between Holford and  
 Castle Comfort, is the site of an old legend or  
 superstition which says that every Christmas-  
 eve at midnight, a coach and four black horses  
 drive up there, turns round on the green, and  
 drives back whence it came.

\* \* \*

A story told by the people of Duddlestone,  
 near Corfe, is that if you go at midnight on  
 Christmas-eve into Duddlestone field, there you  
 may see a man without a head, riding on a  
 beautiful horse, with a long cloak flowing behind  
 him.

\* \* \*

#### ECLIPSE OF THE MOON, 828.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says, though  
 it is a year out in the date, which it gives as  
 827 :—"In this year the Moon was eclipsed on  
 Mid-winter's Mass-night, and the same year King



Egbryht subdued the kingdom of the Mercians, and all that was South of the Humber." It is Lynn who gives Mid-winter's Mass-night as Christmas Eve.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### BEGINNING OF THE GREAT FROST, 1794.

This day began the great seven weeks' frost, 1794. The severe weather lasted till February 14th of the following year, with the intermission of only one day's thaw.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

#### REEVE'S FEAST AT NORTH CURRY.

It would be easy to fill several columns with particulars of the interesting ceremonies connected with the famous Reeve's Feast at North Curry on Christmas Eve, but for the present we content ourselves with the following brief account taken from Jeboult's chapter on North Curry in his work on West Somerset:—"There is a curious custom observed here, called the Reeve's Feast, which by a statute of King John is to be provided by the Reeve and certain other tenants of the manor, some finding money, some wheat, &c., in proportion, on the day before Christmas, at which certain other tenants called "The Jack of Slough" and "The Jack of Knapp" are to be masters of the ceremonies, and are to distribute portions of three bullocks and some loaves of bread, to be provided by the Reeve, among the tenants of the Manor, in proportion to their holdings; and after preserving a portion for the feast, the remainder is to be given to the second poor of the parish. On the day after Christmas Day a feast is held, when an effigy of King John is placed on the table, serving as an ornament to an immense mince pie. According to the charter a toast is to be drunk to the memory of King John, and liberty is given to drink until two candles of one pound weight each are burnt out."

#### ONE SERVICE A YEAR.

The following notes appeared in "Tit Bits" some years ago, but we believe the services referred to are no longer held:—

There stands upon a Hill in the village of Uphill, in the county of Somerset, a small and very old church, which is surrounded by caves in which the bones of all kinds of animals have been discovered. This historic place of worship, which looks down upon Uphill Castle and the village itself, was at one time the only place of worship for miles round.

For several years no Sunday services have been held within its walls, and the only time that the public are allowed to worship there is one night

in the year—on Christmas Eve—when the Vicar of Uphill or some other clergyman officiates. There is a footpath leading up the hill to the church, but as the hill is a very steep one, and the distance great, very few people visit the church. It is by order of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners that it is opened to the public once a year.

Curious stories are told regarding this interesting edifice, one of which is to the effect that the church was purposely built on the top of the hill, so that the preacher could feel convinced of the sincerity of the faith of those who accomplished the task of climbing to it. The church has been visited by people from all parts of the world. It is the only building in England—probably in the world—in which Divine service is conducted only once a year.

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#### SOME SUPERSTITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF CHRISTMAS EVE.

Several of our most popular customs and superstitions connected with Christmas were fully dealt with in January last under the dates of Old Christmas Eve and Old Christmas Day, and we do not think it necessary now to repeat the information which we then gave.

\* \* \*

It is said that ghosts never appear on Christmas Eve.

\* \* \*

It is considered unlucky to start decorating the house before Christmas Eve.

\* \* \*

If a West Country maiden sleeps on Christmas Eve on a bed unadorned with a holly spray, she is quite certain to be visited with all manner of evil spirits and goblins to punish her for her omission of the time-honoured sacred rite.

\* \* \*

At the first stroke of midnight on Christmas Eve the master bullock in every farm cowshed—that is, in West Country phrase, the finest and strongest animal amongst the cattle on each farm—will low musically and distinctly three separate times, and then go down solemnly on his knees before the manger. Mr. J. W. Ll. Page, writing in 1890, said that a few old folk who still cherished the superstition would even then steal on Christmas Eve to the cattle shed to see the oxen bow the knee in worship of the Infant Saviour.

#### MUMMERS.

Preb. Hancock, in his "Wifela's Combe," writes as follows:—"Then, too, as Christmas drew near, the local mummers began to prepare for

their yearly exhibition. The play they performed was always very popular in West Somerset. It was supposed to represent the rescue of a Christian maiden by a bold English knight from her Turkish captors. On Christmas Eve the band of mummers appeared at country houses and neighbouring farms and performed their play. Some of us can, perhaps, remember being admitted, half frightened and wholly awed, to the servants' hall, to see a crew of dark-visaged villains drag in their white-clothed and fainting captive with devilish glee, and then the rush of heroes, clad and armed in a very motley fashion, it must be confessed, who, with much boasting, and after a fierce resistance, at length over-power them, and triumphantly carry off the rescued maiden amidst the plaudits of the excited audience."

#### THE WAITS.

A correspondent writing in these columns in 1897 carried his memory back 60 or 70 years, and described one Christmas Eve when he was about ten years of age, and was allowed by his mother to stay up to hear the waits. These he described as "two musicians," viz., a blind fiddler named Woollen and "Pumpy Allen," who beat the tambourine. On this particular occasion, however, he was disappointed, for someone had placed grease on Woollen's bow, and he was unable to play. For some time before Christmas this odd couple would go round the town about midnight playing various hymns and Psalm tunes, and then in the interval Woollen would call out "Twelve o'clock and a stormy night," "One o'clock and a starlight night," and so on as the case might be, with "All's well" by "Pumpy Allen." After playing together for years they quarrelled and fought. A very ludicrous sight, Woollen being blind, and "Pumpy Allen" having a club foot and paralysed hand.

#### THE ASHEN FAGGOT FESTIVITIES.

We dealt fairly fully in January last with the old Somerset custom of burning the ashen faggot on Christmas Eve. Many of our readers will know that the faggot was composed of ashen sticks, hooped round with bands of the same tree, nine in number. When placed on the fire fun and jollity commenced. Master and servant were then all on an equal footing. Sports began—jumping in sacks, diving in the water for apples, and many other innocent games engaged the attention of the rustics. Every time the bands cracked by reason of the heat of the fire all present were supposed to drink liberally of cider or egg-hot, a mixture of cider, eggs, &c. In many farm-houses and family circles no Christmas Eve was considered to be properly kept unless the ashen faggot was burnt. The reason generally

given for the ashen faggot was that the Blessed Virgin being cold and suffering from the scanty shelter of the stable on the first Christmas Eve, S. Joseph collected a bundle of sticks to make a fire, but selected the ash twigs in preference to others because he knew they were the only green ones that would burn.

Mr. C. S. Whittaker has kindly sent us an extract from Vol. I. of the "Somerset Archaeological Society's Proceedings," which suggests another origin of the custom of burning of the ashen faggot. It says:—"A custom prevails at Tarrton down to the present time of holding a ball, in the cold season of the year, called the Ashen Faggot Ball, in memory of the delight which King Alfred's men, coming up cold and hungry to the rendezvous (at Brixton Deveil, previous to the battle of Ethandune) all through the night, felt at finding that the ash-trees, common to the neighbourhood, would burn with ease, though green. This was a novelty to them, coming mostly from Somersetshire, where there is little wood but the elm, which burns with difficulty even when dry."

Miss Alice King, writing in 1891, says "And now the most important West Country custom, indispensable on Christmas Eve in every properly constituted West Country farm-house, is at hand. The door of the kitchen is opened wide, and the oldest labourer on the farm walks majestically in, carrying a huge ashen faggot on his shoulders. No West Country farmer would have any good luck throughout the coming year if the ashen faggot was not duly burned in his house on Christmas Eve. The faggot—which is a goodly load of wood, such as might be a respectable burden for a Spanish mule crossing the Sierras—is set on fire with much pomp and circumstance in the broad hearth; there is a furious crackling and snapping of the branches, and a roaring of the blaze up the wide chimney, such as might reasonably arouse uncomfortable fears in a nervous guest, and the Christmas family bonfire is burnt with peals of riotous laughter, and merry jests, and brisk volleys of fun, among young and old, master and men, mistress and maids, together. Among the elder folk there is much handing round of 'coblers punch,' a West Country mixture of cider and gin, and much singing of songs. These songs are many of them very quaint as to words; the two most characteristic, perhaps, are a song, the chorus of which imitates all the noises made by the different animals on a farm, the whole party going into the performance when the chorus comes round with right good heart and will; and a song which glorifies the good qualities and useful properties of the horned Exmoor sheep. The songs are

interspersed with Christmas carols, some of which are very ancient and curious, and the music of which has never probably been printed, but lives in the minds and hearts of the people alone, re-echoing on from Christmas to Christmas, backward and backward, until, as we strain our ears to catch the sounds, they are at length lost in the murmur of the waves of time.

Mr. F. T. Elworthy, in "The Evil Eye," says:— "The old West Country custom of burning an ashen faggot on Christmas Eve points to the sacredness of the ash. From it, an old Norse tradition says, that man was first formed. . . . It is supposed that misfortune will certainly fall on the house where the burning is not kept up, while, on the other hand, its due performance is believed to lead to many benefits. The faggot must be bound with three or more "binds" or withies, and one or other of these is chosen by the young people. The bind which first bursts in the fire shows that whoever chose it will be the first to be married. Hence, at the breaking of each bind the cider cup goes round to pledge the healths first of the lucky ones and afterwards of 'our noble selves,' &c."

About 18 years ago the *Birmingham Evening Despatch* printed the following brief account of the Devon and Somerset custom of burning the ashen faggot on Christmas Eve:—The faggot consists of green ashwood, cut lengthways, and neatly fastened into a bundle with withy bands. At eight o'clock in the evening this is placed on the fire with much ceremony, when the family and invited guests are gathered round the ingle-nook. The flames lick round the bundle, and when the first green withy holding the faggots bursts, glasses are raised and emptied to "A Merry Christmas." The breaking of each bond is a signal for a fresh toast. Legend accounts for this custom by the story that a fire of ashwood warmed the stable at Bethlehem, while local tradition tells of a greenwood fire kindled by Alfred the Great during his lonely wanderings in Somerset.

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**DEC. 25.—CHRISTMAS DAY.**  
**EARTHQUAKE in SOMERSET.**  
 1081.  
**KING JOHN at BRISTOL, 1208.**  
**FLOWERING of the GLASTON-**  
**BURY THORN.**  
**COLDEST CHRISTMAS, 1860.**

Christmas Day! What memories it recalls—the bells ringing in the church tower before morning had well dawned, the bursting stockings

hanging at the foot of the bed which Santa Claus had stuffed to bursting point during the night, the Christmas cards bringing old friends nearer to one at the very threshold of the great festival; the "Happy Christmas" from father and mother, brothers and sisters, the red holly and the pearly berried mistletoe, the decorated church and the singing of the Christmas hymns, the turkey at the head of the dinner table, the plum pudding flying the Union Jack, the games afterwards, the iced cake at tea on which was perched Robin Redbreast, then more games, another look at the presents, followed by snap-dragon, then the loving "Good-night," the snow-white bed, and sweet sleep. What happy Christmas Days were those we youngsters in our dear old Somerset enjoyed years ago. They are not the same to-day: they cannot be. The wheels of time have travelled on and change has succeeded change. The things which gave the greatest possible delight to the children of years ago would be scorned by the superior children of to-day. But are the latter any happier? Are they as happy as when they made their own enjoyments, made their own Christmas decorations, when mothers made their own Christmas puddings, when father made the arrangement by which the Christmas-tree revolved? This latter incident has recalled to my wife, sitting by my side, a real native of Somerset, the Christmas parties of her youth, some 50 years ago, when she and the other members of the family regularly visited a fine old Tudor farm-house in the neighbourhood of Chard. Here resided a good farmer and his wife and family—a son and a daughter. They, too, were of the Somerset breed—with hearts as true as gold, full of hospitality, and especially happy when others were also happy. There was a lovely old home, with mullioned windows, and a great water wheel at the side used to drive the mill. The children were fetched in a dog-cart, and on arrival were warmly welcomed. What a dinner was provided—real old-fashioned fare of roast goose and Christmas pudding. The great kitchen was gaily decorated with holly, mistletoe, and evergreens. Then, later on, they wended their way to the dining hall to revel in the delights of the Christmas-tree. The youngest member of the party drew aside a hanging curtain very slowly, and what a sight met their gaze! There was a great Christmas-tree, lighted by coloured candles. From the branches depended the most beautiful articles. Hours had been spent in its decoration. There were little figures of Father Christmas, old men and women and children, dangling at the end of elastic, bobbed, and winked at the merry youngsters, as if to welcome them, silver and gold tinsel

made the little parcels which contained the most delightful prizes sparkle in the light, and as the tree revolved a veritable fairy scene met the view of the children. Their wonder found expression in various ways, and shouts of delight volleyed and thundered around the walls of the room upon which days had been spent in making it a veritable Christmas picture. For weeks the good hostess and her friends had been busily engaged in threading holly berries, which now formed all kinds of designs and spelt out words of seasonable welcome. The excitement of the youngsters increased when the time came for stripping the tree. Bags containing numbers corresponding with numbers attached to the articles on the tree were passed round, and each little visitor drew one. What prizes were won amid shouts of delight! All had as many as they could carry. One little maid received from the tree a robin standing on a log of wood, and inside the log was a bottle of scent. She loves robins to this day; another a cloth hedgehog, with its back stuck full of pins; yet another, an egg on a rustic stand, from underneath which a mouse was peeping; others had boxes of bricks. A gun fell to the lot of a bonny boy, and "thousands of cats" he shot with it in the days which followed. What a chatter, what laughter, what joy. These were happy days. Then there were games of forfeits, crackers were exploded, and the little ones adorned their pretty little selves with aprons, caps, and jewellery, which were found in the innermost recesses of the crackers. And how lovely were the sugared almonds; there are none like them to-day. And how the little figures danced on the glass covering the large musical box. Everyone was merry, the hostess perhaps most of all, for she was delighted when entertaining children. Then tea, then games, then oranges and muscatels, everything to make their young hearts glad. And Father Christmas looked down at them from the top of the tree and veritably smiled, for is he not the god of the children? And the robins among the sparkling frosted holly leaves seemed to chirrup with delight. And, of course, there were Christmas cards, and one which came from this dear old farm-house was carefully treasured for many years. It bore a picture of a little girl dressed in a blue frock, a white coat, and ermine muff, and a pale blue hat with a band of fur, a crown of red velvet, and a blue feather. The little fairy was walking down the steps of a house carrying a bunch of holly and mistletoe. After 50 years that card is still remembered, still treasured in memory. Perhaps the dear old hostess, still alive, may have forgotten this card, but the recipient has not. What a number of things

there were to do on this Christmas Day besides stripping the Christmas-tree. The blue roan pony, "Daniel," had to be visited in his stall, the turkeys and geese inspected, the water wheel visited, and the birds had to have their Christmas dinner. The old squire has passed away, but the good dame still lives, and those children who are left of that merry party still bear in fond remembrance the happy times spent in the old Tudor house. Never a Christmas comes round but the merry scenes are re-called—the happiest Christmas festivals of their lives. It may be to-day there are far grander presents, far grander parties, but the spirit of hospitality shown by the old folks has never been finer, for they had hearts of gold. How delightful to re-call the old days in dear old Somerset, the days of one's childhood, the days when merry Christmas was a real children's festival.

There is much weather lore attaching to Christmas Day. A green Christmas is said to make a fat churchyard, and at Easter we may anticipate frost. A clear and bright sun on Christmas Day foretells a peaceable year and plenty, but if the wind grow stormy before sunset it betokens sickness in the spring and autumn quarters. If the sun shines through the apple tree on Christmas Day there will be an abundant crop in the following year.

\* \* \*

Light Christmas, light wheatsheaf.  
Dark Christmas, heavy wheatsheaf.

\* \* \*

If windy on Christmas Day, trees will bring much fruit.

\* \* \*

Christmas in snow, Easter in mud.  
Christmas wet, empty granary and barrel.

\* \* \*

If it snows during Christmas night the crops will do well.

\* \* \*

If at Christmas ice hangs on the willow, clover may be cut at Easter.

\* \* \*

If ice will bear a man at Christmas it will not bear a mouse afterwards.

\* \* \*

A windy Christmas is a sign of a good year.

\* \* \*

Thunder during Christmas week indicates that there will be much snow during the winter.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

The year 1860 is noteworthy as having had the coldest Christmas Day known in the British



Isles ; 45 degrees of frost were registered on this day.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

CHRISTMAS PROVERBS, WEATHER-  
LORE, &c.

A light Christmas a heavy sheaf.

\* \* \*

A green Christmas a good harvest.

\* \* \*

A white Easter brings a green Christmas.

\* \* \*

After Christmas comes Lent.

\* \* \*

Come, Christmas, come, and bring friends home.

\* \* \*

A mild Christmas makes work for the saxon  
(sexton).

\* \* \*

If the ice will bear a duck at Christmas it won't  
bear a mouse afterwards.

\* \* \*

A black (or green, *i.e.* without snow) Christmas  
makes a fat churchyard.

\* \* \*

At Christmas play and make good cheer,  
For Christmas comes but once a year.

\* \* \*

If the sun shines through the apple trees on  
Christmas Day an abundant crop of apples may  
be expected the following year.

\* \* \*

Light Christmas, light wheatsheaf ;

Dark Christmas, heavy wheatsheaf.

(Referring to full or new moon at Christmas).

\* \* \*

At Christmas a capon, at Michaelmas a goose,  
And somewhat else at New Year's Tide for fear  
the lease flies loose.

\* \* \*

If Christmas Day on a Sunday fall  
A troublous winter we shall have all.

\* \* \*

If Christmas Day on a Monday be  
A great winter that year you'll see.

\* \* \*

Christmas Day is the eve of St. Stephen ;  
hence the couplet :—

Blessed be St. Stephen,  
There is no fast upon his even.

\* \* \*

Christmas comes but once a year ;  
And when it comes it brings good cheer ;  
But when it's gone it's never the near.

This forms the conclusion of one of the old Christmas mumming plays, and Brand supposed the expression to refer to the coarseness of the dresses worn by the characters in the rustic pageant.

\* \* \*

Christmas Day, 1920, came very near breaking the record for temperature. A maximum in the shade of 54deg. was registered in a London suburb, and at night the minimum temperature of the screened thermometer was as high as 46deg., both the maximum and minimum being 12deg. above the normal temperature for the end of December. Readings above 50deg. are very rare at this time of the year, and the highest Christmas Day temperature during the last 70 years at Greenwich was 56deg., in 1852.

## CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS.

### THE FIRST CHRISTMAS.

The first festival of Christmas held in Britain was in the year 521. Previous to that the 25th of December used to be dedicated to Satan.

### CHRISTMAS CANDLES.

Sixty or seventy years ago people expected every Taunton grocer to make his customers a present of a tall, thick candle, the size of an altar candle of to-day. This candle was set on the Christmas table, and looked very noble to the 20's and 24's to the pound.

### BAKED PEAS AND MEAT.

An old Tauntonian, writing in these columns about 20 years ago, referred to an old custom which prevailed in Taunton many years before, when the landlords of the different hostleries used to bake peas and meat and give away at Christmas time to their customers.

### SIMLINS.

The late Mr. G. P. R. Pulman described a "simlin" as a kind of bun sold only at Christmas, as hot cross buns are sold only on Good Friday, and Easter cakes at Easter. At Axminster the "simlin" was merely a common halfpenny bun with a raisin in the centre. In other places it was, and perhaps still is (1871), a superior kind of confectionery.

### OUR FIRST CHRISTMAS-TREE.

Ninety-one years ago this Yule a Russian Princess introduced the first Christmas-trees into Windsor Castle. Rumour gives precedence to a German, but the Princess Lievens forestalled Queen Caroline's Teutonic courtier by seven years. The first Christmas-tree in England is

said to have been displayed by the Princess in the Cowper family's Herefordshire home.

#### DOUBLE RATIONS FOR ANIMALS.

Miss Alice King tells us that on Christmas morning no farmer, however niggardly disposed in his inmost mind, would neglect the custom of giving every animal belonging to him a double portion of food. He has a fixed belief that if he did not do this no good fortune would attend him in the course of the coming year; his lambs would die in spring time, heavy rains would wash his hayfields, his cattle would be sickly in autumn.

#### MINCEPIES AND CHRISTMAS PUDDINGS.

There is an old belief that a mincepie eaten in a different house on each night of the Twelves (days between Christmas Day and the Epiphany) ensures twelve lucky months. On no account should the mincepies be eaten before Christmas, as that will break the charm and bring bad luck. There is a variant of this in Somerset, where many young people try to taste twelve of their friends' and neighbours' Christmas puddings on the plea of a similar belief. Mincepies were formerly made "long-shape" instead of round, because it was said that they were intended to represent the cratch or manger in which the infant Saviour was laid.

#### A FORGOTTEN CAROL?

The late Mr. G. P. R. Pulman spoke of the many rural customs in celebration of this festive tide which in his day were dying out every year under the influence of what he described as "the half-heartedness and shams of a pretended enlightenment." He said "formerly the following lines were sung by women when making household preparations on Christmas morning for the festivities of the day. I have no idea as to what they refer, nor, in all probability, had the singers themselves. But here they are:—

Christ did reyde (read)  
An' ez mawther did write,  
Ver 'tis Kursmas day in th' mornin'!

#### A ROSE SUPERSTITION.

Miss Alice King gives the following delightful sketch of one of our West Somerset superstitions:— "Long ago, in the bright summer time, Bessie gathered a bush rose on Midsummer Day, and stealthily, secretly, so that not even her mother could know, she laid it by carefully in the inmost recesses of her drawer. She has thought of that rose all through the golden harvest weather, and dreamed of it at night, and now, on Christmas Eve, she has taken it out from its hiding place, and to-morrow she will go to church with the

withered rose in her breast. Robin is paying a Christmas visit to his uncle, and Bessie fully believes that if in reality he loves her, he will be compelled by the virtue of that charmed, withered midsummer rose, to go up to her when he meets her on Christmas morning and take it from her bosom, and this will be an infallible sign that his heart is her's, and they will be married before another Christmas day comes round."

#### MIRACLE PLAYS IN CHURCHES.

The Rev. Wm. Hunt, in his "Diocesan History of Bath and Wells," says:—"Another custom offensive to our ideas of reverence was the representation of miracle plays in the churches. These plays were performed at Wells by the vicars from Christmas to the end of the octave of the Holy Innocents, and at other festivals. By the end of the thirteenth century they seem to have degenerated into an unseemly exhibition, and in 1300 were forbidden by a statute of Dean Godelee. Old customs, however, did not yield easily, and fifty years later the performance of plays and the sale of goods in the church were again forbidden. Plays were acted in many churches, especially at Christmas. . . . At Tintinhull there were no fixed seats before 1500 and no seats were sold till 1613. The churchwardens there, who, by the way, were sometimes women, realised 6s 8d by a Christmas play, which they put towards the purchase of a new rood-loft."

#### KISSING UNDER THE MISTLETOE.

A correspondent kindly sends us the following legendary account of the origin of the custom of kissing under the mistletoe, which we need hardly say prevails in Somerset:—

Why should men kiss girls who stand under mistletoe?

Every kiss under the mistletoe, however, is a kiss which celebrates one of the most charming events in Christmas tradition.

The romance goes back to the days of the gods of Scandinavia, when Baldur the Beautiful was shot by Locke, the spirit of Evil, with an arrow of mistletoe. But his mother, Venus of the North, restored him to life by saluting with kisses all who passed beneath a branch held aloft in her hand.

Thus it became an emblem of love and happy celebration. Ancient races held the plant in great veneration, particularly the Druids, who went in procession into the forests to collect it.

After New Year's Day it was distributed among the people as a sacred and holy plant. If any part of the mistletoe touched the ground it was regarded as an omen of impending evil.

## CHRISTMAS CARDS A SOMERSET IDEA.

The following paragraph appeared in our Notes and Queries columns in January, 1904:—The sending of Christmas cards, though they now inundate our shops in millions, is a custom of comparatively recent introduction. It was in 1846 that the first of these cards was printed in England. This was drawn by J. C. Horsley, R.A., at the suggestion of Mr. (afterwards well known as Sir Henry) Cole. It was divided into three parts of a trellis-work design. In the two side panels were figures representing respectively "Feeding the hungry" and "Clothing the naked." In the centre was a merry family group of three generations, drinking in wine the wish printed below:—"A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You." Only 1,000 of these were issued. It was not until 1862 that Messrs. Goodall & Sons produced the first series that came into general use. These had border designs of holly, mistletoe, and robins. In a few years the firm relinquished this portion of their business to Messrs. Marcus Ward & Co., and under their auspices the designs and drawings, executed by distinguished artists, attained an excellence that has never been surpassed. Sir Henry Cole, K.C.B., who did so much for the promotion of international exhibitions and for the advancement of science and art in this country, was born at Bath in 1808, and died in London in 1882.

## MUMMING.

Dr. C. H. Poole, in his "Customs and Superstitions of Somerset," tells us that mumming, which is a relic of an old Roman Saturnalia, consists in persons concealing their appearance, and performing a drama which embodies the time-honoured legend of St. George and the Dragon, with many whimsical adjuncts, winding up with appeals for money, couched in rude verse, *e.g.* :

Here I am, little man Jan,  
With my sword in my hand,  
If you dont all do  
As you be told by I,  
I'll send ye all to York  
Vor to make apple pie.

Or:—

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Our story is ended,  
Our money-box is recommended;  
Five or six shillings will not do us harm,  
Silver or copper, or gold if you can.

A correspondent writing in these columns in 1898 suggested that "little man Jan" was none other than King John himself, and argued that it was more than probable that the verse was

written in connection with the North Curry feast, which was originated by King John when he dined at Curry on August 30th, 1205.

AN OLD CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Be merry all, be merry all,  
With holly dress the festive hall,  
Prepare the song, the feast, the ball,  
To Welcome Merry Christmas.

And Oh! remember, gentles gay,  
For you who bask in Fortune's day  
The year is all a holiday,  
The Poor have only Christmas.

From blazing loads of fuel, while  
Your homes with indoor pleasures smile;  
Oh! spare one faggot from the pile,  
To warm the poor at Christmas.

When you the costly dinner deal,  
To guests who never famine feel;  
Oh! spare one morsel from your meal,  
To feed the Poor at Christmas.

When generous wine you can control,  
And give new hope to happier soul,  
Oh! spare one goblet from your bowl,  
To cheer the Poor at Christmas.

So shall each sound of mirth appear,  
More sweet to Heaven than praise or prayer,  
And angels in their carols there,  
Shall bless the Rich at Christmas.

A WELLS CHRISTMAS CAROL.

John Jackson, who in 1755 walked from Yorkshire to Glastonbury to see the white thorn blossom on Old Christmas-day, took down what he called a carol at Wells. "When I got into Wells," he says, "I went by the Cathedral and did see the chorister boys in the surplices. Enquiring for lodging, I was directed to East Wells, and lay at Mrs. Mary Winter's, widow, and there was a woman that fought her husband and disturbed the house, and this was New Christmas-eve, and there was a woman that sung and dictated this carol:—

Jerusalem, Jerusalem,  
Jerusalem, said he;  
That kill'd the Prophets of the Lord,  
That once were sent to thee.

How often times would I  
Have kept thee from all ill,  
Even as a hen her chicken keep,  
But thou art stubborn still.

Thy lofty strong and stately towers  
With rockets shall confound;  
And make thy sumptuous buildings all  
Lye equal to the ground.

Because thou didst not know  
 The reasonable day,  
 In which the Lord thy God appeared  
 To wash thy sins away."

DEC. 26.—St. STEPHEN'S DAY.

BOXING DAY.

S. STEPHEN, PROTO-MARTYR.

BLEEDING-HORSE DAY.

REEVE'S FEAST AT NORTH  
 CURRY.

If you bleed your nag on St. Stephen's day  
 He'll work your work for ever and aye.

\* \* \*

The death of St. Stephen, the first Christian Martyr, is commemorated on the 26th December. Very little is known of his history and life, a few words in the Acts of the Apostles preceding the account of his martyrdom being all that is recorded of him. The custom of keeping this day and those of St. John the Baptist and the Holy Innocents on the three days immediately after Christmas Day is very ancient, and many explanations have been given to account for the arrangement. Most commentators agree now that it was so arranged without any special design; others say that it was to draw attention to the three special graces of self-sacrifice, love, and purity.

In ancient days it was considered good to gallop horses on this day till they were covered with perspiration and then bleed them to prevent their having any disorders for the ensuing year. This practice is said to have been brought into the country by the Danes. Blessings used to be implored upon pastures on this day.

In the early days of Christianity boxes were placed in churches for promiscuous charities, and opened on Christmas Day. The contents were distributed next day by the priests, and called the "dole of the Christmas box," or the "box money." It was customary for the heads of houses to give some small sums of money to their subordinates "to put into the box" before mass on Christmas day. Somewhat later apprentices carried a box round to their masters' customers for small gratuities.

Gladly the boy, with Christmas box in hand,  
 Throughout the town his devious route pursues;  
 And of his master's customers implores  
 The yearly mite.

Charlton Musgrove Church is dedicated to St. Stephen.  
 —W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

S. Stephen was once a popular saint in England. It was an old English custom, fond of blood-letting as the people were, to bleed horses on S. Stephen's Day, particularly in the rural districts. It was fancied that the operation was beneficial. The rite found particular favour just before the Reformation, but after it gradually declined. Hugh Latimer in one of his sermons inveighed against it. It is difficult to discover why S. Stephen was selected for this connection with horses. I believe it was Sir Thomas More who gave one rather lame reason: "We must let our horses blood with a knife, because St. Stephen was killed with stones." One would have expected that S. Blaise, who heals cattle, or S. Loy, the horse-leach and patron saint of horses, would either have been a more appropriate protector.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

\* \* \*

With regard to the custom of bleeding horses on St. Stephen's Day, it is mentioned by Barnaby Googe in the "Popish Kingdom":—

"Which being done upon that day,  
They say it does them good.

As if that Stephen any time  
Took care for horses here."

\* \* \*

But Barnaby and his original Kirch-meyer were probably ignorant of the fact that the Stephen who did take care for horses was not the deacon-proto-martyr, but a missionary in one of the Scandinavian countries (I forget which), who was a great lover of horses, and became a martyr somewhere about the ninth or tenth century.

—T. G. CRIPPEN.

\* \* \*

#### REEVE'S FEAST AT NORTH CURRY.

Mr. C. S. Whittaker kindly refers us to Mr. Jeboult's account of this feast, held on the day before and the day after Christmas, which we have quoted under the date December 24th. He also sends us the following extract on the same subject from Mr. Wade's "Rambles in Somerset":—"A tablet in the vestry of North Curry describes some peculiar church festivity, called the Reeve's Feast, which is said to have been held in the parish since the days of King John, but has now been allowed to lapse into desuetude. Richard I. in a fit of impulsive generosity gave the manor to the Dean and Chapter of Wells, and a charter confirming the gift was extorted from King John. The parish probably thought that such an unlooked-for act of grace from this



notorious despoiler of the Churen's goods was worthy of perpetual commemoration in some form or other. Hence the frolic." The account then continues very like Mr. Jeboult's. 221

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**DEC. 27.—St. JOHN'S DAY.**

Yule is come and Yule is gone,  
And we have feasted well,  
So Jack must do his flail again,  
And Jenny to her wheel.

\* \* \*

St. John the Apostle and Evangelist has 240 Churches in England named in his honour, Essex being the only county in which he is not commemorated. The Churches dedicated to him in Somerset are Cutcombe, Kenn, Milborne Port, and Wheathill—four in all, as against 27 dedicated to St. John the Baptist. His emblem is an eagle, sometimes a cup with a serpent, and sometimes a palm branch.

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**DEC. 28.—HOLY INNOCENTS' DAY.**

**CHILDERMAS.**

**WATCHET PIER DESTROYED,  
1900.**

This day, also called Childermas Day, is conjectured to have been derived from the masses said for the souls of the innocents who suffered from Herod's cruelty. It was formerly the custom to whip up the children on Innocents' Day morning in order "that the memorial of Herod's murder of the Innocents might stick the closer, and so, in a moderate proportion, to act over the cruelty again in kinde." The day itself was deemed of especial ill omen, and hence the superstitious never married on Childermas Day. Neither on this day was it lucky to put on new clothes, or pure the nails, or begin anything of moment. This superstition reached the throne: the coronation of King Edward IV. was put off till the Monday, because the preceding Sunday was Childermas Day. The Shepherd's Kalendar mentions that if it be lowering and wet on Childermas Day, there will be scarcity: while if the day be fair, it promises plenty.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

\* \* \*

A festival to commemorate Herod's destruction of the children. It was considered unlucky to begin any undertaking on this day, and this was further extended, so that no matter on what

day of the week it fell, Monday, Tuesday, &c., it was deemed unlucky to begin anything on that day of the week throughout the following year.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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Some 14 years ago the following paragraph appeared in the "Church Times" in a review of the late Rev. Dr. Raven's book, "The Bells of England":—"It will be difficult for the most experienced campanologist to find any bell subject of custom omitted in these comprehensive pages; but we have failed to find any reference to the singularly beautiful custom so prevalent in the further corner of West Somerset within memory of man, and which still lingers, we believe, in a few parishes, of ringing half-muffled peals throughout Holy Innocents' Day." We believe such muffled peals are still rung at intervals throughout the day at the parish churches of Wedmore and Rodney Stoke; if the practice has been discontinued it is only within quite recent years. The *Western Gazette* for December 31st informed us that in accordance with ancient custom a muffled peal was rung on Holy Innocents' Day in St. Giles' Church tower, Leigh-on-Mendip.

\* \* \*

On this day, 1903, as a result of a heavy gale the western breakwater of Watchet Harbour was totally destroyed in the course of a couple of hours, and subsequent gales partially destroyed the eastern pier. This disaster led to the formation of an Urban District Council, which became the Harbour Authority. A capital sum of over £16,000 was borrowed on the security of the harbour revenue and the general district rate for the restoration of the harbour. Unfortunately before the work could be completed the sea did further extensive damage until in the end the venture cost something like £25,000.

DEC. 29.—DEATH of JOHN DE VILLULA,  
1122.

THOMAS a' BECKET MURDERED,  
1170.

PALACE of WELLS SOLD, 1550.  
AGREEMENT between STRING-  
FELLOW and HENSON, 1843.

Dr. WILLIAM CROTCH DIED,  
1847.

John de Villula, Bath's greatest Bishop, was a physician of Tours. He succeeded to the See of Wells in 1088. On a vacancy in the Abbacy of

Bath in 1091 John obtained the house from Rufus, and moved his See from Wells to the church of the Abbey. He bought some lands round the city, and shortly after bought the city itself for 500 lbs. of silver. The grant of Bath and the removal of the See were further confirmed by a charter of Henry I. The Abbacy of Bath now ceased to exist as a separate office from the Bishopric; the highest monastic officer of the house henceforth was the prior. For a time also the Church of St. Andrew at Wells lost its position as the head of the church of the Diocese, and the Church of St. Peter at Bath took its place. John set about building a new church in the heavy Norman style of his age, raising a fabric so vast that the present Abbey Church represents merely the nave of its predecessor, and so solid that some remains of his work still exist. Bishop John died in 1122, and was buried in his new church at Bath (says Hunt), but in the "Lives of the Bishops of Bath and Wells," by Cassan, the year is given as 1123.

\* \* \*

#### ST. THOMAS A'BECKET'S DAY.

St. Thomas à Becket had a very close association with Somerset. His murder in Canterbury Cathedral was the work of men of our county. Two, if not three, of the knights who took part in the great event were Somerset men, while all four were connected with or had property in the county. Reginald FitzUrsc, of Williton, struck the first blow, and his family gave part of its endowment to the Church of St. Decuman's, together with land for a manse at Williton. Richard Brito, or le Bret, of Sampford Bret, gave the last blow, and his family gave the Church of St. Decuman's for a prebend in Wells Cathedral. William de Tracey, who gave the first mortal wound, and with whom Becket struggled before the altar and dashed on the pavement, was the third. His family also endowed the church with Bovey in Devon. Hugh de Morville, the fourth, was also connected with Somerset, but there is scant evidence that he actually struck at all. Some authorities allege that the various families of the assassins made atonement by the foundation of Woodspring Priory. I have dealt with this assertion at length in my "History of Woodspring Priory," and I have shown that in a letter written by William de Courtenay, the founder, written by him to Jocelin, Bishop of Bath and Glastonbury, nothing is said to warrant anyone supposing that the Priory was founded in expiation of the murder of Thomas à Becket, as had been said, and so very often repeated in various publications. If it had it would not have been remarkable. Becket was done to death in Canterbury Cathedral

in the December of the year 1170. A space of 40 years had but passed between that great historical tragedy and the expression of the desire of William de Courtenay to found this monastic establishment at Woodspring. He desired it should be dedicated "to God, the Blessed Mary, and the Blessed Thomas, Martyr," as so many churches were being dedicated at this time to the murdered Archbishop. The founder of Woodspring was not so closely allied to de Tracey, the murderer, as has been repeated so often. But he had direct relationship with those who effected the death of the Primate, inasmuch as he was the grandson of Reginald FitzUrse. He was also connected with Hugh Merville and Richard Brito, as Margery, a sister-in-law of Reginald FitzUrse, and widow of Richard Engayne, took as her second husband Geoffrey Brito. A curious association between Woodspring Priory and the murdered Archbishop is further suggested in an interesting discovery made in Kewstoke Church in the year 1849. Alterations were being made, and the 11th Century north wall was being removed, when a mutilated piece of carved work, built into it, was discovered. In a recess behind was found a small wooden cup, which, as described by Mr. Bidgood, the late Curator of the Taunton Museum, was believed to contain what is supposed to be the residuum of human blood, and surmised to be that of Thomas à Becket. At the time of the dissolution of the Monasteries it is conjectured that the monks of Woodspring carried away what they would prize most—the blood of their patron saint—and built it into the wall of the church at Kewstoke, which was near them, for safety. From the connection of the Priory with the murderers of Becket, and from the fact that the seal of the Prior contained a cup or chalice, as part of its device, there can be little doubt that this ancient cup was thus preserved at the time of the Dissolution as a venerable relic and that the blood which it contained was that of the murdered Primate.

A belief prevails throughout the Moor district of West Somerset that turnip seed sown on St. Thomas à Becket's Day never fails to produce a crop.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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#### PALACE AT WELLS SOLD, 1550.

Bishop Barlow having sold the Palace at Wells to the Duke of Somerset, this was confirmed by the Dean and Chapter on this date. The Manors of Wells and Westbury, the Hundred of Wells, and Wells Forum, and Westbury Park were included in the sale. The money paid by the Duke was £400, with a grant of the Deanery House for the Bishop's residence. It is said that

the purchase money originally agreed to be paid by the Duke to the Bishop was £2,000, but the Duke cheated the Bishop out of £1,600, making it up, in part, by the grant of the Deanery House, &c. The 6th August, 6 Edward VI., the Bishop recovered possession of the Palace, &c.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

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#### AGREEMENT BETWEEN STRINGFELLOW AND HENSON, 1843.

This day a memorandum of agreement was made between John Stringfellow, of Chard, and his friend, William Samuel Henson, an engineer, for a partnership for the construction of a model of an aerial machine, one of the earliest of English flying machines.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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#### DR. WILLIAM CROTCH DIED, 1847.

William Crotch, composer, was not a native of Somerset, being born at Norwich July 15th, 1775, the son of a carpenter. At three years old he could play on the organ: at four he was performing in London as a prodigy. At the early age of twenty-two he became Professor of Music at the University of Oxford, and took his Doctorate of Music there in 1799. In 1822 he became the first Principal of the Royal Academy of Music. Crotch did not achieve the greatness expected of him as a composer, but he was a skillful adapter of the compositions of older masters. He lectured and wrote much and ably on musical matters, and was also a fair landscape painter. The last years of his life form his claim to mention here, for they were passed at Taunton, where he died suddenly in the house of his son, the Rev. W. R. Crotch, two days before the close of the year 1847.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

#### DEC. 31.—NEW YEAR'S EVE. PUNCH NIGHT. S. SYLVESTER.

The year does nothing else but open and shut.

\* \* \*

Say no ill of the year till it be past.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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This is the last day of the year. And many customs are associated with it. There is, of course, the bell-ringing—"Ring out the old, Ring in the New;" there are the thousands of good wishes one proffers to the others, there are the merry parties—the seeing of the old year out and the new year in, and the clinking of glasses

as the clock in the old church tower tells the midnight hour. Our forefathers knew how to enjoy themselves, and on no night in the year was greater merriment, greater conviviality, and greater good-will expressed than on New Year's Eve. It was on this night that the village inns were scenes of jollity and fun. Old Bonifacio was then seen at his best—his hospitality was unbounded. Publicans are the bete noir of some folk, and the public-house is looked upon as a sink of iniquity. But at this season of the year one may reflect that the infant Saviour would probably have been born in an inn if the crowded condition of the house had not forced the Holy Mother to seek shelter in an adjoining stable. And one wonders exceedingly why some professing Christians have such strong feelings against a house which represents the birth-place of Christ. The man who fell among thieves was taken to an inn, and his wounds dressed. Probably that is the reason why to-day, in country places, especially if one desires to receive solace, comfort, and hospitality, one usually selects the village hostelry, and is not often disappointed at the reception accorded. But it is at Christmastide especially that the inn appeals to one's fancies. A picture which must ever attract the literary character is that of the Holly Tree Inn, drawn by Dickens. Here the guests were expected to join in the general "convivial" rather than to spend the idle hours alone with books. It was in such a house as this that at Christmastide the bowl of punch used to circulate, and it was a liquor described by Dickens as "uncommonly good Punch!" Yes, the words bring back happy memories of my native town in Somerset. Then it was genial landlords and landladies were wont to invite their customers on New Year's-eve to gather around the steaming bowl to partake of their hospitality, and, incidentally, to wish the worthy hosts the compliments of the season. The brewing of the punch was quite a ceremonial art. It was not concocted in a 20th century hurry, but deliberately each ingredient was carefully measured and mixed, and the brewing jealously guarded from outsiders. Its component parts were kept a family secret, and handed down by father to son, or, by purchase, from landlord to landlord of the inn which had earned a reputation for its punch. There were many such houses in Somerset; but none stood higher in the county—or, perhaps, in the whole of England—than the "George," at Crewkerne, in the days of old Mrs. Marsh, whose name and fame, 50 years ago, as a brewer of punch, prevailed the land. It is perpetuated in the pages of "Punch" that there were only two places at

which real, genuine punch could be obtained—the one was at the “George” at Crewkerne; the other at “Punch” Office, Fleet-street. There are still inns situate in Somerset where the old-time custom of free punch is observed on New Year’s Eve. “Success to old England” was always drunk in a steaming glass of punch, and if ever there were a beverage associated with Britain this is one. The mysteries of its manufacture were brought to this country by a British Jack Tar, and the real article to-day is dispensed from articles which have the closest association with our Colonies, and no connection with Germany. The custom of drinking punch on New Year’s Eve only dates back to the latter part of the 17th century. But it soon established itself, and was proclaimed the “King of Drinks,” among its devotees being Fox and Sheridan, and “all the statesmen of the Whig Party.” Not only was it a beverage with the “idle rich,” but the humble poor acquired the palate, and a punch bowl was found in the houses of many far beneath the rank and social status of the noble. The bowl often figured in the lists of wedding presents, and formed the gift bestowed upon men who had earned the respect and goodwill of their fellows. Punch accommodates itself to the means of all classes, rich and poor. As Leigh Hunt has said, “You may have it of the costliest wine or the humblest malt liquor.” In many a hostelry in Somerset one sees the old punch bowl occupying a place of honour in the “bar.” It remains to be gazed upon all the year round, or until some special event is celebrated or New Year’s Eve is honoured. Then it is taken down, carefully dusted, carried behind the scenes into an inner room or the kitchen—at all events away from the eyes of the public—and there the mystic rites are performed, something after the following formula:—

Whene’er a bowl of punch we make,  
 Four striking opposites we take—  
 The strong, the weak, the sour, the sweet,  
 Together mixed, most kindly meet;  
 And when they happily unite,  
 The bowl is pregnant with delight.

Even now the secret is not revealed, for the old published recipes vary in an extraordinary degree, and what ingredient it is which made a certain punch here and there along the countryside in Somerset more famous than the other was ever jealously guarded. There is little doubt that the old bowl of punch on New Year’s Eve is a continuation of the custom handed down from our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, who passed the wassail bowl on the vigil of the New Year to those assembled round the glowing hearth

to drown every former animosity. To-night in many an inn in dear old Somerset the punch bowl will be filled and pledges of friendship will be renewed and a custom which has existed in this country for certainly over fourteen hundred years will be perpetuated.

In the olden days the young women in our villages carried from door to door a bowl of spiced ale, the wassail bowl, which they offered to the inhabitants of every house they stopped at, singing congratulatory verses and hoping for small presents. Young men and women also exchanged clothes, which was termed mumming or disguising; and when thus dressed in each other's garments they went from neighbour's cottage to another, singing, dancing, and partaking of good cheer. Weather lore tells us that :

If New Year's Eve night the wind blow south,  
It betokeneth warmth and growth ;  
If west much milk and fish in the sea ;  
If north much cold and storms there will be ;  
If east the trees will bear much fruit ;  
If north-east flee it man and brute.

This is the night when the bells announce the departure of the year. From many towers in our county the message of the dying year will go forth, and 1921 will be heralded with joyful peals.

The task which I set myself a year ago is now completed. I have taken a part in compiling something of the history, the folk and weather lore, the superstitions, and of the remarkable occurrences which have taken place in our dear old land of Somerset during the ages. I have gone through the months when, in the words of an old rhyme taught to Somerset children in the schools in the days of my youth :

January falls the snow,  
February cold winds blow,  
In March peep out the early flowers,  
And April comes with sunny showers,  
In May the roses bloom so gay,  
In June the farmer mows his hay,  
In July brightly shines the sun,  
In August harvest is begun,  
September turns the green leaves brown,  
October winds then shakes them down,  
November fills with bleak and smear,  
December comes and ends the year.

To-night the year ends, and the hobby I have pursued—a delightful one indeed—must cease, with all my apologies for imperfections, but with my love for my native county wonderfully strengthened. “A Happy New Year” to all.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.



## S. SYLVESTER.

Saint Sylvester is the last in the Calendar, but in spite of his anniversary falling on New Year's Eve, a suitable day for a festival, this saint was never very popular in England. Living in the fourth century, he died as Pope Sylvester I. in 335. Only one church in England is dedicated to him—that of Chevelstone, Devon.

—EDWARD VIVIAN.

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## "SPIRIT WATCHING."

Mr. C. S. Whittaker writes:—Near Taunton I have heard the "spirit watching" superstition, mentioned under St. Mark's Eve and Midsummer Eve, also connected with New Year's Eve. After fasting, the watcher should go and stand in the church porch. It is said that when the clock strikes midnight the spirits of those parishioners who will die during the coming year will walk up and knock at the church door in the order of their passing away.

\* \* \*

## WATCH-NIGHT SERVICES.

Mr. C. S. Whittaker kindly sends us the following query relating to Somerset, which he informs us appeared some time ago in the *Birmingham Weekly Post*:—Can any reader inform me when watch-night services were first held, and whether there is any foundation for the common report that converted colliers at Kingswood, near Bristol, transferred their meetings from the public-house to the school-house, where on Saturday evenings they sat up till early morning praying and singing hymns? Wesley, who was importuned to stop the gatherings, recommended the men to meet less frequently and near the full moon. I know Southey in his biography of Wesley denounced watch-nights as one of the divine's "objectionable institutions." My own idea is that the watch-night service sprang from the Christmas Eve Mass, but I may be wrong.—  
CONGREGATIONALIST.

\* \* \*

## THE LEGEND OF POPHAM'S PIT.

This place is a scarp on the face of the Wellington Hill spur of the Blackdowns, in the copse above Park Farm, just west of the Monument. At its foot is a muddy pool, locally reputed as one of the mouths of the Nether Pit—and therefore bottomless.

A carter of Park Farm told me "the place hadn't got no bottom, cos one o' maister's yeppers falled in there one day, and he was gone avore they could get en out, and they poaked the place wi' apple poles, but they couldn't find nothing

but zoft and all the way down. Then they tied two together, and 'twas just the same, there wadnt no bottom to 'em."

Sir John Popham, the great Lord Chief Justice, was said to have fallen over the cliff while hunting, and to have been killed there. Of course, public opinion of lawyers denies them a right to enter Heaven, but the spirit of Sir John, for the goodness of his wife, was permitted to leave that entrance to the Lower Regions which lay nearest Wellington, and which he had fallen through by a just decree of fate, and to make its progress, a cock stride a year, on each New Year's Eve, towards the Popham family tomb in Wellington Church, three miles away. The whole journey accomplished, the troubled spirit should win its rest.

Up to about 40 years ago the portion of the pilgrimage achieved had brought the spirit of Sir John to the farm-house, which lay in the direct route, and the tenant of the place told me he was bothered almost every night with noises and scratchings, and couldn't sleep for them. The place was fair haunted, so he had got a white witch to come and help him. He had paid the man well, and he put the spells on the ghost, and "wished 'em back to the pit again."

Perhaps they never thought of it, but it seems a tragic pity that the two couldn't have managed it so that the spell would have speeded instead of hindered the re-union of such a devoted couple as Sir John and Lady Popham must have been.

F. W. MATHEWS.

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## THE WILD HORSEMAN OF LANGFORD HEATHFIELD.

We are indebted to Mr. F. W. Mathews for the following story, which he gives substantially as he heard it many years ago from an old friend, now departed:—

"There was a wicked old squire out about Waterrow way, back in the old days: he was a hard rider to hounds, and would go anywhere. He used to take a terrible lot of wine, too, when he was a-minded, and he used to be a fair madman then. Well, once, on the last day of the year it was, he had followed the hounds all day, and they had killed close to Chipley, which was a fine gert house then, and the whole company stayed at Chipley till late, drinking, and it was getting close on for midnight when he left for home. Some of his friends told him he would have to be careful how he rode, as robbers were about, it was a long way home, and the roads were bad. He said he didn't care for the devil himself, he should ride his own way, if it took

him till Doomsday, and he didn't care a ---- if he broke his neck. As he got out of the gateway by "Young Oaks" (a copse near Chipley, on the Milverton-road) a couple of belated hounds startled his horse. He cursed them, and shouted at them to go to H---- (not Heaven). He slashed at them, they yelped, and his horse dashed on. Over the hill it went, up the village to the common, tripped, broke its neck and its rider's, and both were found dead next day. Now, on New Year's-eve, the horse with its rider gallops up and down the road over the heath from Carrier's Gate to Frenchnut tree, and the hounds dash out from Young Oaks, and join the ghostly pair in their awful race to and fro till dawn, baying as they run. And so the wild horseman will do once a year till Doomsday."

Mr. A. L. Humphrey, in his "History of Wellington," refers to this legend in the following words:—"On the road from Wellington to Milverton is a small cover known as "Young Oaks." From here it is asserted that 'Hell Hounds' used to issue forth at night, and rush along the roads at a furious rate, breathing out fire as they went, compelling all who saw them to rush into the hedges for safety, and then vanishing as suddenly as they appeared. These 'Hell Hounds' are described as being perfectly white, with mouths always wide open, and tongues of flame proceeding therefrom. It is stated that they sometimes would dash through the villages of the district in the night at a fearful pace terrifying all who saw them."

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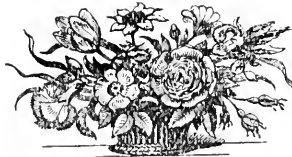
With this instalment we write *finis* to an extensive record of events and festivals, sayings and superstitions, which we can only hope will prove of interest and use to many of our readers. In doing so, we extend hearty and sincere thanks to our friends who have given such generous and able assistance in the compilation of the Calendar. So far as it has succeeded in reaching the object we had in view when we started it twelve months ago—and readers will, we think, agree that it has gone a long way in this direction—any measure of success is almost entirely due to the invaluable assistance given by many helpers. Amongst these, the untiring energy in research by Mr. Willis Watson, added to his already extensive knowledge of all matters of interest relating to the county, has been a constant source of admiration to many of our readers, and an ever-ready help to ourselves. Only a man with a deep love for Somerset, its people, and its history could have done what he has done towards the compiling of this Calendar. And this

is not all, for in addition to his apparently inexhaustible and welcome contributions to the text, he has sprung another surprise on us by sending us a "table of contents" of the year's calendar, which he has compiled by making a list of the most important headings which have appeared under each date during the 12 months.

Before distributing the type of the many articles and records of events which have appeared under this heading during the past year, we have made every week a number of re-prints, and Mr. Watson has now taken upon his own shoulders the task of making a complete index to this re-print of the Calendar. We hope to print his index and to bind it up with the Calendar in book form. Those of us who have experienced the task of accurate indexing will appreciate this further effort of his to make as complete as possible the production of the record to which he has so largely contributed.

Our best thanks are also due to Mr. Edward Vivian, Mr. H. W. Kille, Mr. F. W. Mathews, Mr. C. S. Whittaker, Mr. W. S. Price, the Rev. T. G. Crippen, and to many other friends, without whose kindly aid the Calendar would have been far less complete than it is.

ED., N. AND Q.



# CALENDAR OF SOMERSET,

AS COMPILED FOR THE YEAR 1920.

## JANUARY.

- 1.—New Year's Day.
- 5.—Hansel Monday.  
Old Christmas Eve.  
Glastonbury Thorn Blossoms.  
Apple Orchards Wassailed.  
Ashen Faggot Burnt.
- 6.—Old Christmas Day.
- 7.—Muchelney Abbey Dedicated, 939.
- 9.—St. Brithwald.
- 10.—E. T. Elworthy born, 1830.  
Penny Post introduced, 1840.
- 12.—Plough Monday.
- 14.—Bishop Beckington died, 1465.
- 17.—Old Twelfth Day Eve.
- 20.—St. Agnes' Eve.
- 21.—St. Agnes' Day.
- 25.—St. Paul's Day.
- 29.—St. Gildas.

## FEBRUARY.

- 1.—Candlemas Eve.  
St. Bridget's Day.
- 2.—Candlemas Day.
- 3.—St. Blaize's Day.
- 5.—S.S. Infracr and Dominica.
- 8.—Athelney Abbey Surrendered, 1539.
- 9.—St. Apollonia.
- 12.—St. Eulalie's Day.  
Suppression of Taunton Priory, 1539.
- 13.—"Orator" Hunt died, 1835.
- 14.—St. Valentine's Day.
- 16.—Collop Monday.
- 17.—Shrove Tuesday.
- 18.—Ash Wednesday.
- 20.—Elizabeth Rowe died, 1737.  
St. Ulrich.
- 21.—Lenten Veils.
- 22.—Sydney Smith died, 1845.
- 23.—Ashbrittle Fair.  
St. Matthias' Eve.
- 24.—St. Matthias' Day.
- 28.—St. Wulfrie died, 1154.

## MARCH.

- 1.—St. David's Day.
- 2.—St. Chad's Day.  
Bridgwater Castle ordered to be dismantled,  
1646.
- 3.—Monmouth's Tree, Whitelackington, blown  
down, 1897.
- 8.—Old St. Matthew's Day.  
Wembdon Church Burnt, 1867.
- 12.—St. Gregory.
- 13.—Herschel discovered Uranus at Bath, 1781.
- 14.—Mothering Sunday.  
Rose Sunday.
- 15.—Aristobulus, Bishop of Glastonbury, died 99.  
Dr. John Bull died, 1628.
- 17.—St. Joseph of Arithmathea.  
St. Patrick's Day.
- 18.—Edward, King and Martyr died, 979.
- 19.—Bishop Ken died, 1711.  
John Wesley at Pensford.
- 20.—St. Cuthbert's Day.  
Death of Henry Norris, 1870.  
Taunton first Incorporated, 1627.  
Montacute Priory Surrendered, 1539.
- 21.—St. Benedict's Day.  
Care Sunday.
- 23.—Castle Cary Fair.  
"Little Weaving Tuesday."
- 25.—Lady Day.  
Axbridge Fair.  
Bridgwater Docks opened, 1841.
- 28.—Palm Sunday.  
Borrowed Days.
- 29.—King Edward 1. at Coker, 1297.
- 30.—Bath Prophecy Unfulfilled, 1809.  
Somerton Fair.

## APRIL.

- 1.—All Fools' Day.  
Maundy Thursday.  
Skirmish at Wincanton, 1645.  
Glastonbury Abbey Purchased by the  
Church of England, 1909.
- 2.—Good Friday.
- 4.—Easter Day.
- 5.—Easter Monday.
- 6.—Easter Tuesday.
- 8.—King Edward 1. at Bruton, 1278.
- 9.—King Edward 1. at Camel, 1278.
- 11.—Low Sunday.  
Foundation Stone, Taunton Hospital Laid,  
1810.
- 12.—King Edward 1. at Somerton, 1278.
- 13.—King Edward 1. at Glastonbury, 1278.
- 15.—Cuckoo Day.  
Earthquake in Somerset, 1185.
- 16.—Earthquake in Somerset, 1752.

**APRIL** (*Continued*).

- 18.—Death of Judge Jeffreys, 1689.  
Fairfax at Chard, 1646.
- 19.—St. Alphege.  
Ina became King, 688.
- 20.—Hocktide.
- 21.—King Edward I. at Wells, 1278.
- 22.—King Edward I. at Bruton, 1278.  
Fall of Dunster Castle, 1646.  
Fielding born at Sharpham, 1707.
- 23.—St. George's Day.
- 24.—St. Mark's Eve.  
Lord Chief Justice Dyer died, 1582.  
Garibaldi at Taunton, 1864.
- 25.—St. Mark's Day.
- 27.—Hinton St. George Fair.  
Civil War, 1645.
- 30.—Miracles at Glastonbury.

**MAY.**

- 1.—May Day.
- 3.—Kidney Bean Day.
- 5.—Total Eclipse of the Moon, 1110.
- 10.—Rogation Day.
- 11.—Edgar crowned at Bath, 973.  
Relief of Taunton, 1645.
- 13.—Ascension Day.
- 14.—Tom Coryat commenced his wonderful  
Walk, 1608.  
Great Eclipse of the Sun, 1230.
- 17.—Death of Rajah Brooke, 1917.
- 18.—Wellington Parish Bounds Beaten, 1903.
- 19.—St. Dunstan's Day.
- 21.—Culmstock Fair.
- 22.—Total Eclipse of the Sun, 1724.
- 23.—Whit-Sunday.
- 24.—Whit-Monday Village Club Day.
- 25.—St. Aldhelm.  
Glastonbury Abbey burnt down, 1184.
- 26.—St. Augustine.  
Minehead Fair.  
Churchstanton Club.
- 28.—Jocelin Consecrated Bishop of Bath and  
Glastonbury, 1206.  
Death of Lord Daubeney, 1507.
- 29.—Oak Apple Day.
- 31.—Richard Lovell Edgeworth born, 1744.

**JUNE.**

- 1.—Stoke St. Gregory Club.  
G.W.R. to Bridgwater opened 1841.
- 3.—King George V.'s birthday.  
Corpus Christi.  
William Hone born, 1780.
- 4.—Civil War in Somerset, 1643.
- 6.—Owen Parfitt disappeared, 1768.

JUNE (*Continued*).

- 8.—William Dampier baptised 1652.  
Cavari Enthroned Bishop of Glastonbury, 1192.
- 10.—George Earle Buckle born, 1851.  
Wellington Parish Bounds Beaten, 1844.
- 11.—St. Barnabas.  
Hay-making Time.  
Rebels at Wells, 1497.  
The Glastonbury Walnut.
- 12.—Samuel Pepys in Somerset.
- 13.—Thos. Young born, 1773.
- 15.—St. Vitus.
- 16.—Sir Anyas Poulett Knighted, 1487.  
Monmouth at Chard, 1685.  
SS. Quiricus and Julitta.  
Eclipse of the Sun, 1406.  
Eclipse of the Moon, 1117.
- 17.—Taunton Fair.
- 18.—Battle of Waterloo, 1815.  
Monmouth Reaches Taunton, 1685.  
Wellington (or Waterloo) Fair.
- 19.—Letting the Puxton Dolmoors.  
Monmouth and the Taunton Maids, 1685.
- 20.—Monmouth Proclaimed King at Taunton, 1685.  
Somerset Regiment Formed, 1685.  
Translation of St. Edward the Martyr, 982.
- 21.—Monmouth Proclaimed King at Bridgwater, 1685.  
Longest Day.
- 22.—Prince and Princess of Wales at Wells and Glastonbury, 1909.  
Duke of Monmouth at Glastonbury, 1685.
- 23.—St. John's Eve.  
Prince of Wales born, 1894.  
St. Ethelreda.  
Eclipse of the Sun, 1191.
- 24.—Midsummer Day.  
Clipping the Tower.  
Father Robert Parsons born, 1546.  
Feast of St. John.
- 25.—Sheep Shearing.
- 26.—Duke of Monmouth at Norton St. Phillip, 1685.
- 27.—Alienation of the Hospital of Whitehall, Ilchester, 1600.  
Samuel Viscount Hood died, 1816.
- 28.—Hottest Day, 1826.
- 29.—St. Peter's Day.  
Langford Revel.  
Bath Priory Surrendered, 1539.
- 30.—Eclipse of the Moon, 1349.



## JULY.

- 1.—Taunton Railway Station Opened, 1842.
- 1.—Monmouth's Followers at Wells, 1685.
- 2.—Monmouth Returned to Bridgwater, 1685.
- 3.—Second Siege of Taunton Raised, 1645.  
Dog Days.
- 4.—Fairfax at Crewkerne, 1645.
- 6.—King John at Wedmore, 1204.  
Battle of Sedgemoor, 1685.  
Duke of Monmouth Fugitive at Downside,  
1685.  
South Petherton Fair.
- 5.—Battle of Lansdown, 1643.  
Great Fire at Minehead, 1791.
- 7.—Battle near South Petherton, 1645.  
St. Botolph's Fair, Taunton.
- 8.—King John at Ilchester and Stoke, 1204.  
Blake captured Taunton, 1644.  
Battle near Ilminster, 1645.  
Death of Sir W. E. Parry, 1855.
- 9.—Fairfax on the March, 1645.  
Colonel Kirke at Taunton, 1685.
- 10.—Battle at Langport, 1654.  
Royal Agricultural Show at Taunton, 1875.
- 12.—Earthquake at Taunton, 1747.  
Mrs. Wyndham's Love Token to Cromwell,  
1645.
- 13.—Boroughbridge surrendered, 1645.
- 12.—Two Suns at Chard, 1662.
- 14.—Three Moons at Chard, 1662.
- 15.—St. Swithen.  
King John at Bridgwater and Glastonbury,  
1204.  
King Charles I. at Bath, 1644.  
Duke of Monmouth executed, 1685.  
Sir Henry Cole born, 1808.
- 17.—King John at Wells and Bristol, 1204.
- 18.—King Charles I. at Mells, 1664.  
Prince Charles at Witham, 1644.  
Reform Bill Festival at Taunton, 1832.
- 19.—King John at Bristol, 1216.  
King Charles I. at Bruton, 1644.  
Two Suns at Chard, 1662.
- 20.—Remarkable Appearance at Chillington,  
1662.  
King Charles I. at Ilchester, 1664.  
St. Margaret's Day.
- 21.—Honiton Fair.
- 22.—St. Mary Magdalene.
- 23.—Surrender of Bridgwater, 1645.
- 24.—King Charles I. at Chard, 1644.
- 25.—King John at Glastonbury, 1204.  
Earthquake in Somerset, 1122.  
St. James's Day.
- 24.—"Crying Murder" at Old Cleeve, 1624.
- 26.—Parliamentary Army at Martock, 1645.  
Dr. Ralph Cudworth died, 1688.

**JULY** (*Continued*).

- 27.—Connop Thirlwall died, 1875.  
 28.—Taunton Volunteers formed, 1794.  
 29.—Bath Captured, 1645.  
 30.—Burmese Memorial Unveiled at Taunton, 1889.

**AUGUST.**

- 1.—St. Peter and Vincula.  
 Lammas Day.  
 Civil War commences in Somerset, 1642.  
 Fairfax's Army at Wells, 1645.  
 North Curry Fair.
- 2.—Skirmish at Marshal's Elm, 1642.
- 3.—Cheddar Valley Railway opened, 1869.
- 3.—Historical Meeting of Bishops at Glastonbury, 1897.
- 4.—Hannah More's Sunday School Treat, 1791.
- 4.—Civil War. First blood shed in Somerset, 1642.
- 5.—Troops on the Mendips, 1642.  
 A. W. Kinglake born, 1809.
- 7.—Robert Blake died, 1675.
- 9.—Stag Hunting commences.
- 10.—St. Lawrence.  
 Geraint killed at Langport, 522.
- 12.—St. Clara.  
 Robert Southey born, 1774.
- 13.—Great Fire at Bruton, 1647.
- 14.—Eclipse of the Sun, 733.
- 15.—St. Mary.  
 Assumption of the Virgin.  
 De Quincey born, 1785.
- 17.—Sir H. Stafford executed at Bridgwater, 1470.
- 21.—Priddy Fair.
- 22.—King Henry VII. and his Queen at Brislington, 1502.  
 Queen Elizabeth at Bath, 1574.
- 23.—A Miracle at Porlock, 1499.  
 St. Bartholomew.  
 First Yeovil Fair, 1402.  
 Axbridge Fair Charter granted, 1279.
- 25.—Duke of Monmouth at Whitelackington, 1680.  
 Sir Francis Drake married, 1595.
- 26.—Helen Mathers born, 1853.
- 27.—St. Decuman.  
 King John at Wells, 1216.  
 King James at Bridgwater, 1686.
- 28.—King John at Bath, 1216.  
 David Hartley died, 1757.
- 29.—John Locke born at Wrington, 1632.  
 King John at Ilchester, 1205.
- 30.—King John at Curry Mallet, 1205.
- 31.—James Lackington born at Wellington, 1746.  
 King John at Taunton, 1205.  
 Admiral Arthur Philip died, 1814.  
 Henry Byam born, 1580.

## SEPTEMBER.

- 1.—St. Giles.  
King John at Bridgwater, 1205.  
Eclipse of the Sun, 536.  
Eclipse of the Moon, 806.
- 2.—Alice Lisle executed, 1685.
- 3.—King John at Glastonbury, 1205.  
New Style Calendar began, 1752.
- 4.—Crewkerne Fair.
- 5.—King John at Wells, 1205.  
British Association Meeting at Bath, 1888.
- 6.—King John at Harptree, 1205.  
King John at Holwell in Blackemore, 1207.
- 7.—Stephen Hales born, 1677.  
North Curry Fair.  
Battle of Babylon Hill, Yeovil, 1642.  
Death of Hannah More, 1833.
- 8.—King John at Bristol, 1205.  
Earthquake in Somerset, 1692.
- 9.—Westonzoyland Fair.
- 10.—John Wesley at Wellington, 1775.
- 11.—St. Michael's, Glastonbury, destroyed, 1275.
- 12.—The Busse of Bridgwater, 1578.  
Benjamin Hewling executed, 1685.  
Old St. Giles' Day.  
Bradford Revel.
- 13.—King John at Wells, 1207.  
Tor Fair, Glastonbury.  
Thanksgiving Prayer, 1801.
- 14.—Holy Rood Day.  
King Edward I. at Frome, 1276.  
British Association Meeting at Bath, 1864.
- 15.—Ember Days.  
John Manning Speke died, 1864.  
King Edward I. at Bath, 1276.
- 16.—King John at Harptree, 1207.  
King John at Wells, 1208.  
King Edward I. at Keynsham, 1276.  
King Charles II. a Fugitive at Castle Cary, 1651.
- 17.—King Edward I. at Shepton Mallet, 1292.  
Judge Jeffreys at Taunton, 1685.  
Henry Norris born, 1789.  
St. John's Hospital, Bridgwater, submitted to the King, 1531.
- 18.—King Edward I. at Publow, 1292.  
Nunney Castle attacked, 1615.
- 19.—Glastonbury Fair.  
King John at Henton, 1207.  
King John at Bruton, 1207.  
King John at Bridgwater, 1208.
- 19.—Hartley Coleridge born, 1796.
- 20.—St. Matthew's Eve.
- 21.—St. Matthew's Fair, Bridgwater.
- 22.—Arrest of Abbot Whiting, 1539.  
Royalist Troops Encamped at Bradford, 1642.

**SEPT. 22** (*Continued*).

- St. Matthew's Day.  
 King John at Castle Cary, 1207.  
 Flight of Perkin Warbeck from Taunton, 1497.  
 Bloody Assize opened at Wells, 1685.  
 23.—Suppression of Canyngton Priory, 1536.  
 25.—King John at Newton, 1208.  
 Somerset Archaeological Society Inaugurated, 1849.  
 27.—King John at Taunton, 1208.  
 29.—Michaelmas Day.  
 Henry VII. at Bath, 1497.  
 30.—King Henry VII. at Wells, 1497.  
 King Charles I. at Chard, 1644.  
 29.—Foundation Stone of Taunton Hospital laid, 1772.  
 30.—19 Persons Executed at Taunton, 1685.

**OCTOBER.**

- 1.—King Henry VII. at Wells, 1497.  
 3.—Return of Tom Coryat to Odecombe, 1608.  
 4.—King Henry VII. at Taunton, 1497.  
 Francis William Newman died, 1897.  
 6.—Total Eclipse of the Moon, 1609.  
 Fairfax at Chard, 1645.  
 Earthquake in Somerset, 1868.  
 8.—St. Keyna.  
 Henry Fielding died, 1754.  
 10.—Wolsey Instituted Rector of Limington, 1500.  
 Dr. Walter Raleigh died, 1646.  
 11.—St. Ethelburgh's Day.  
 Old Michaelmas Day.  
 12.—Axbridge Fair.  
 Crispin Hall, Street, Opened, 1835.  
 13.—St. Edward King and Confessor, 1066.  
 Death of Henry Irving, 1905.  
 Thomas Haynes Bayly born, 1797.  
 14.—Samuel Daniel died, 1619.  
 Death of Harold the Saxon.  
 17.—St. Audrey.  
 18.—St. Luke's Day.  
 Beau Nash born, 1674.  
 20.—Foundation Stone Wellington Monument laid, 1817.  
 21.—Edwin Norris born, 1795.  
 Earthquake in Somerset, 1859.  
 22.—Edward Thring died, 1887.  
 23.—Wells Cathedral Consecrated, 1239.  
 Thomas Pride died, 1658.  
 24.—William Pryme died, 1669.  
 25.—St. Crispin.  
 Hannah More's First School opened at Cheddar, 1789.  
 28.—John Locke died, 1704.  
 Death of King Alfred, 901.  
 St. Simon and St. Jude.  
 30.—Earthquake at Bath, 1868.  
 31.—Allhallow's Eve.

## NOVEMBER.

- 1.—Allhallow's Day.
- 2.—All Souls.
- 4.—St. Withold.  
Revolution Day.  
Eclipse of the Sun, 1668.
- 5.—Guy Fawkes Day.  
Mrs. Leakey Buried, 1634.  
Bridgwater New Town Bridge Opened, 1883.
- 6.—St. Leonard.  
Shipham Fair.  
First Yeovil Fair.
- 7.—St. Congar, 711.
- 8.—W. Clark Russell died, 1911.
- 9.—St. Benignus.
- 10.—Nunney Fair Established.
- 11.—St. Martin's Day.
- 13.—St. Bryce's Day.  
Massacre of the Danes, 1002.  
Doomsday Book completed, 1086.
- 14.—Great Earthquake, 1318.  
Abbot Whiting Arraigned, 1539.
- 15.—Execution of Abbot Whiting, 1539.  
Great Floods at Langport, 1894.
- 17.—St. Hugh.  
Joseph Alleine died, 1668.
- 18.—Colonel Wyndham made a baronet, 1673.
- 20.—Chatterton born, 1752.  
St. Edmund King and Martyr.
- 21.—St. Columban died, 615.
- 22.—St. Cecilia.
- 23.—St. Clement's Day.  
Eclipse of the Moon, 755.
- 25.—St. Catherine's Day.
- 26.—Great Storm, 1703.
- 27.—Dr. Kidder, Bishop of Bath and Wells,  
killed, 1703.
- 28.—Henry Fielding married, 1734.
- 29.—Edward Thring born, 1821.
- 30.—St. Andrew's Day.

## DECEMBER.

- 2.—Prince of Orange at Wincanton, 1688.
- 3.—Dampier Reaches New Guinea, 1699.
- 5.—St. Nicholas's Eve.
- 6.—St. Nicholas.
- 7.—King Edward I. at Bath, 1286.
- 8.—John Pym died, 1643.
- 10.—Death of Edwin Norris, of Taunton, 1872.  
Fatal Balloon Ascent from Bath, 1881.  
Eclipse of the Moon, 1117.
- 11.—King John at Henton, 1204.  
Edward I. at Somerton.
- 12.—King John at Bristol, 1204.  
Somerset Clergy Deprived, 1640.
- 13.—St. Lucy.
- 14.—Relief of Taunton, 1644.

- 15.—Ember Days.  
 16.—King Edward I. at Stoke, 1286.  
 Great Gale, 1814.  
 17.—King Edward I. at South Petherton, 1286.  
 19.—William Edward Parry born at Bath, 1790.  
 20.—Egyptian Day.  
 21.—Shortest Day.  
 St. Thomas' Day.  
 Earthquake in Somerset, 1284.  
 Mumping Day.  
 Gooding Day.  
 22.—Eclipse of the Sun, 968.  
 Eclipse of the Moon, 1135.  
 Rd. Alleine died, 1681.  
 24.—Christmas Eve.  
 Eclipse of the Moon, 828.  
 Beginning of Great Frost, 1794.  
 Reeve's Feast at North Curry.  
 25.—Christmas Day.  
 Earthquake in Somerset, 1081.  
 King John at Bristol, 1208.  
 Flowering of Glastonbury Thorn.  
 Coldest Christmas, 1860.  
 26.—St. Stephen's Day.  
 Boxing Day.  
 Bleeding Horse Day.  
 Reeve's Feast at North Curry.  
 27.—St. John's Day.  
 28.—Holy Innocents' Day.  
 Childermas.  
 Watchet Pier destroyed, 1900.  
 29.—Death of John de Villula, 1122.  
 Thomas à Becket Murdered, 1170.  
 Palace of Wells sold, 1550.  
 Agreement Between Stringfellow and Hen-  
 son, 1843.  
 Dr. William Crotch Died, 1847.  
 31.—New Year's Eve.  
 Punch Night.  
 St. Sylvester.

—W. G. WILLIS WATSON.

## CORRIGENDA.

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- P174, line 24, for "designed" read "designated."
- P252, line 8, add Langford Budville.
- P271, line 19, delete "annually."
- P272, line 38, for "diverged" read "converged."
- P284, line 34, for "150" read "15."
- P310, line 16, for "Doomsday Book," read  
"past ages."
- P341, line 11, for "armed" read "harned."
- P346, line 31, delete "not."
- P346, line 32, delete "not" in two instances.
- P364, line 32, for "next month" read "November  
15th."
- P394, line 52, after Alfred insert "who was  
buried."
- P395, line 41, for "National Eve" read "National  
Enc." (Encyclopedia).
- P402, line 34, for "Saturday" read "Saturdays."
- P412, line 16, for Chitwood read Chelwood.
- P465, line 46, for "skitch" read "sketch."

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