

Calendar of Customs and Festivals.

July 29.

ST. MARTHA was specially venerated in Provence, where she converted the inhabitants to Christianity after her landing at Marseilles in the company of Mary (transformed into St. Mary Magdalene) and Lazarus. She is especially identified with Tarascon and Beaucaire, a famous fair being held at the latter town on her feast day. At Tarascon the saint slew the *tarasque*, a fearsome dragon-like monster which was devastating the country. This victory was afterwards celebrated in an annual procession of the *tarasque*, a representation of the monster, for long an object of great veneration. In the Revolution it was burnt by the people of Arles. A second, made some four years later, was also seized and conveyed to Beaucaire.

THE FEAST OF CHERRIES.—At Hamburg, on the feast of St. Martha, it was a custom for the children to parade the town bearing green boughs decked with cherries. This was said to commemorate the successful intercession of the children of the town in 1432, when it was threatened with destruction by the victorious Hussites.

July 30.

MACE MONDAY.—On the first Monday after St. Anne's Feast there used to take place at Newbury a mock election of 'the mayor of Bartlemas.' A dinner was provided at which bacon and beans were the chief dish. A procession took place in the course of the day, at which a cabbage on a stick took the place of the mace. Records from other localities, for example, Devonshire, indicate that bacon and beans formed the recognised dish marking Mace Monday.

August 1.

S. PETRI AD VINCOLA.—A feast in veneration of the chains with which St. Peter was bound in prison, one of which was deposited at Rome and one at Constantinople. The filings from these chains were of special virtue; but they were not available for every suppliant, the use of the file at times producing no result.

GULE OF AUGUST: LAMMAS.—Various explanations have been given of these names applied to the first day of August. Medieval expositors connected gule with *gula*, and said it was so called from the cure of the daughter of the tribune Quirinus of an affection of the throat by kissing the chains of St. Peter on this day. A more probable derivation connects it with the Celtic *Guyll* or *Wyl*, a feast.

An obviously popular etymology derives Lammas from *Lamb mass*, explaining the name as based upon a payment of a live lamb as a condition of tenure of land to the diocese of York, to be made to the Cathedral of St. Peter at York on this day. St. Peter's Pence were payable in England on the same day. In the Sarum Manual it is given as the day of the blessing of the first fruits, and it is therefore suggested that it is the *Hlaf* or loaf mass, the day of the offering of the first corn, or alternatively from *La-ith-mas*, a fanciful interpretation, based upon a meaning of *ith* as grain, especially wheat, and *mas* meaning 'mast.' In the Highlands the day is known as *Lunasdal*, not a Celtic term, which connects it with moon-worship, and it is suggested that the English name may have a similar derivation from *Lunamas*.

The first day of August, called *Lugnasadh*, was one of the Celtic quarter-days, but, with the February quarter-day, was of later introduction than the six-monthly division at May and November. It was the occasion of a number of great fairs in

Ireland, and was devoted to games of a communal character. A fair was held at Taitlin, in Co. Meath, a centre of great sanctity in early times, at which Lug, the sun god, instituted games in honour of the dead. There were others almost equally celebrated at Cruachan in Roscommon and at Carman, near Wexford. These fairs, if properly observed, were reputed to ensure plenty in corn, milk, fruit, and fish, as well as prosperity generally and peace. All were connected with the cult of the dead. In the Isle of Man there are traces of a ceremonial observance in the custom of rising early on the morning of Aug. 1, climbing to the top of a high hill, and returning with water from a well known for its curative properties.

The games of the Irish fairs and feasts find a parallel in Scotland as part of a curious custom noted at the end of the eighteenth century by Dr. James Anderson. Early in the summer the herdsmen of the Lothians used to form themselves into bands according to locality, and began to build, approximately in the centre of each district, forts or mounds of turf of conical shape, rising to seven or eight feet, which were surmounted by a flag post. During the time of building, these structures were jealously guarded, as to destroy the fort of a rival faction was a great honour. On the day of the festival each band marched out from the village under a captain, armed with staves, and bearing a flag. They took up their position at the mound, and until midday either attacked another party or waited to be attacked. They then returned, and the rest of the day until sunset was taken up with games, the prize of the first race being a bonnet ornamented with ribbons and exhibited on a pole, a feature which is curiously suggestive of a head-hunting celebration.

In the Highlands, cattle were sained at Lammas. Tar was put on the tail and ears, charms said at their udders, and red and blue threads put on their tails. The vessels in which milk and butter were kept were protected from evil influences by various ceremonies with balls of hair, plants, and fire. Curds and butter were specially prepared for a feast, at which it was important that everyone should get as much as he wanted. Menses were smeared on doorposts and window frames to keep away evil influences.

In Ireland, according to Cormac's glossary, Lammas was one of the four great festivals of the Druids, which fell in February, May, August, and November, and at which fires were lighted up.

August 3.

In Ireland on the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday following Lammas, it was believed that the influence of Aynia was peculiarly potent. Aynia was one of three 'hags' or witches who were especially prominent in Irish popular belief, Aynia more particularly in the north. The three hags, Aynia, Bav, and Vera, are survivals of three pagan goddesses, Bav being the goddess of war, and Aynia the goddess of the moon. She is still regarded as closely connected with lunatics. A lunatic escaping control will make his way to 'Aynia's seat' at Dunany. Should he succeed in sitting in the 'seat' three times, he will never recover. All the rabid dogs of Ireland are drawn to the same spot. Aynia was also a patron of letters, and it is she who introduces men of learning to the next world. She possessed unbounded influence over the human form, being regarded as the vital spark which once in twenty-four hours traverses the human frame. On this account the blood-letter would never work on the days sacred to her. It was also believed that on these three days it was dangerous to bathe, nor would fishermen put to sea; if they did, one or more would be drowned before their return.