

Calendar of Customs and Festivals.

August 26.

ST. ANNE DE LA PALUDE.—St. Anne in Brittany is the great healer, the waters of whose fountain were regarded by the peasants as effective in any disease or injury. The people believe her to be a Breton, confusing her with Anne of Brittany, wife of Louis XI. Driven out by her husband, it is said, she was carried out to sea in a ship under the conduct of an angel and conveyed to the coast of Judea where the Virgin was born. When old, she returned to Brittany and became the patroness of fishermen at Plounévez-Porzay, where one of the most important of the *pardons* of Brittany is held in her honour on the last Sunday in August. On the preceding day innumerable beggars, crippled and diseased, assemble. Part of the original foundation, and once known as Kings of the Palude, they demand alms as 'the right of the poor.' They disperse at night before the actual festival.

The specially maritime character of the *pardon* is shown by the models of anchors trimmed with pine branches and of ships hung in the church. On the walls are garlands of ivy and holly. In the procession, which is an essential part of the ceremony, all wear elaborate costumes preserved for the occasion, but the widows wear a grey hood, and the 'saved' the garments which they wore when St. Anne intervened to save them in shipwreck. Local legends make it clear that the festival perpetuates a festival of a sea goddess. The tradition is that Ahes or Dahut, daughter of King Gralon of Ker-Is, once frequented the wood of Ploumarech, where she, with her maidens, washed her royal linen. She was drowned by her father and became a siren who, with her beauty, wooed sailors to their destruction in the sea.

As Mary Morgan, a beautiful woman with golden hair, but below a fish-like monster, she lures young men with her passionate songs until they cast off their clothes and plunge naked into the sea. She is mentioned by Giraldus Cambrensis as a Celtic goddess, and in Arthurian legend is "Morgan le Fay."

THE *PARDON* IN BRITTANY.—The *Pardon*, that is, the assembly of pilgrims for the performance of religious exercises at the shrine of a saint, is as important an element in the life of the Breton peasant as the analogous *patron* or *pattern* once was in the life of the Irish peasant. The innumerable little shrines scattered throughout the country are visited by individuals, sometimes by proxy, at any time in performance of vows; but the greater ceremonies on the official saints' days are attended sometimes by as many as sixteen to seventeen thousand people, recalling the vast assemblies of many thousands which in medieval times were accused of being witches' sabbats. The pilgrimages are usually made on foot; but it was at one time the custom that the *Pardon* of the Midsummer Fire, at the festival of St. John in the vale of Traoun-Meriadec, should be reached by boat. The flotilla from each village was headed by a newly painted vessel, decorated with garlands and flowers, in which were conveyed the village priest and his assistants. The *Pardon* of the Midsummer Fire, at which a huge bonfire was lit on a once sacred hill, was dedicated to St. John; but his cult superseded that of an earlier, purely Breton saint, Meriadec, in the fifteenth century. The cult of Meriadec had undoubtedly incorporated features from an earlier worship of the sun-god Hoel, of which many traces still survive in the modern *Pardon*. The bonfire on the hill is connected with the tower of the church by a rope, along which the figure of an archangel travels to light the fire. When the fire used to be lit at

night, a fiery dragon swooped on to the pile to give the appearance of fire from heaven.

Several pardons of almost equal importance to that of the midsummer fires are held in the course of the year—the *Pardon* of St. Yves on May 19 at Minihy was especially devoted to the poor and the beggar. The *Pardon* at Rumengol was associated with the legend and tomb of Gralon, King of Ker-Is, whose daughter is identified with the sea-goddess Mary Morgan. Rumengol itself is stated in the legend to be the last refuge of the Druids, and even now it is thought that the poor of that place form a caste by themselves who have extraordinary and magical powers. The *Pardon* of St. Ronan involved a long and arduous procession over the mountains on the second Sunday in July. It included a visit to St. Ronan's 'stone mare,' a huge rock of eccentric form, which had conveyed him by sea from Ireland and followed him wherever he went. The privilege of bearing the banner in the procession is determined by a contest, the winning village holding the honour for seven years.

Of the lesser pardons, one which retained some remarkable primitive features was held in the mountains of Aré in honour of St. Servais 'The Little.' The people of Vannes and Cornouailles assembled in two distinct bands, carrying staves instead of the usual candles. Inside the church each party invoked the saint to avert the frost from themselves and send it to the other, granting oats and wheat to themselves. Finally, when the priest had passed in procession between the two parties, at the cry "Scatter the frost!" they fell upon one another and fought with their staves for the banner and the small figure of the saint which stood on a trestle. The figure of the saint was invariably torn to pieces in the struggle and many of the combatants injured; but whichever side won enjoyed a bountiful harvest. (See A. Le Braz, "The Land of Pardons," Transl. F. Gosling, London, 1912.)

August 29.

In Egypt the old variable solar calendar was abandoned in the year 30 B.C., and the fixed Alexandrian calendar was adopted. From that time forward festivals ceased to be movable in accordance with the procession of the seasons owing to the discrepancy between the actual date and the solar calendar. Accordingly the Egyptian New Year's Day fell on the date corresponding to Aug. 29.

AUGUST IN MACEDONIA.—The harvest operations having been completed in July, August is devoted to periods of alternate feasting and fasting. The month opens with the Feast of the Progress of the Precious and Vivifying Cross, when bonfires are lit and boys jump over them shouting "Dig up! Bury!" A fortnight's fast is followed by the Feast of the Repose of the Virgin; then comes the Return of the Virgin on Aug. 23, celebrated by solemn dances and songs, and on Aug. 29, the Cutting off of the Precious Head of St. John the Baptist, is a further abstinence. The first twelve days of the month are carefully watched as a prognostication of the weather, each day forecasting a month of the coming year.

The first three days of August are sacred to the Drymiais. No tree is cut for fear it should wither, and no one bathes in the sea for fear their bodies would swell, and no clothes are washed lest they decay. Bathers in August carry a rusty nail to protect them. A similar period is observed in March. The belief prevails elsewhere on the coast of Greece and in the Ægean islands. A similar belief has been noted in Ireland (see "Aynia," Aug. 3).