

Calendar of Customs and Festivals.

October 14.

PACK FAIR.—At Sherborne, on the first Monday after Old Michaelmas Day. Popular tradition held that it originated at the termination of the building of the church, when all the workmen packed up their tools and held a fair or wake. Up till the beginning of the nineteenth century it was held in the churchyard. For some three or four weeks before the fair, processions of boys paraded the town blowing cows' horns. At twelve o'clock on Sunday night the fair was proclaimed by the ringing of the church bell and the blowing of cows' horns. The streets of the town were paraded and bonfires were lit. At four o'clock the bell rang for a quarter of an hour, and the sale of oxen, sheep, lambs, and pigs began, usually being completed by twelve o'clock. Tradesmen's yearly accounts were settled on this day, when they provided beef and ale for their customers.

October 16.

A customary tenure of Eskdale, Yorks, is connected by tradition with this day, on which, in the year 1140, William de Bruce, Ralph de Percy, and a freeholder Allotson, while bear-hunting, assaulted a hermit with fatal results. As a penalty they held their lands of the Abbot of Whitby on condition that on Ascension Eve they should come to the wood of Strayheads, and at sunrise an officer of the Abbot should blow his horn and deliver to each a certain number of stakes, 'stowers,' or 'yadders,' "to be cut with a knife of penny price," which they were to take on their backs to Whitby before nine o'clock, and at low water fix them at the brim of the water so that they stood for nine tides while the officer shall blow 'out on you' nine times for their crime.

October 17.

St. Ethelreda, daughter of Annas, king of the East Anglia, born about A.D. 630 at Ixning, on the borders of Cambridge and Suffolk. She took the veil, and though twice married by the insistence of her parents, maintained her vow. She is therefore styled "twice a widow and always a virgin." She founded a convent in the Isle of Ely, where she died in A.D. 679. Her name is said to have been corrupted to Auldrey or Audrey, the name given to the annual fair held at the Isle of Ely. The word 'tawdry' is said to be derived from the fact that showy lace and similar articles were sold at St. Audrey's; but an alternative derivation connects it with her death from a swelling in the throat as a retribution for having been addicted to wearing fine necklaces in her youth.

October 17 (O.S.).

This day is regarded in Morocco as favourable for beginning the operations of the first of the two ploughing seasons provided rain has fallen. Of the days of the week, some tribes maintain that Thursday is more favourable than Sunday. With some, only the leading man of the village begins on that day. Certain rites, varying in detail from tribe to tribe, must be performed. A loaf of bread specially baked is taken to the field and either eaten by all present before ploughing begins, or after it has rested between or on the horns of the ox during the day; sometimes it is broken with the plough beam. Before sowing crops, excepting barley, some of the seed is picked up by the plough point, cooked and eaten. Pomegranate juice is sometimes squeezed on the horns of the oxen or rubbed on the neck and back to avert the evil eye.

Among the Ait Yúsi, as the farmer is about to set

out he says, "Come on and fetch water, O women," and they reply, "O wheat and barley, O Farmer." This is repeated three times. No water is fetched, but the dialogue in itself is supposed to ensure adequate rain and plentiful crops. Pomegranates are crushed on the plough point so that the grain may be as plentiful as the pips. Special magical efficacy is ascribed to the ceremonial meal as a means of securing the well-being of the crops. It is customary at the first ploughing to promise the grain from a certain portion of the field to a certain saint. This grain is presented to the descendants of the saint, who divide it with the scribes of his shrine.

With the Morocco ceremonial may be compared that of the Bhainas of the Central Provinces of India, which is performed at the shrine of Thakurdeo the day before the sowing begins. The priest makes an offering and repeats a charm, then kneeling, strikes the earth seven times with a ploughshare, and sows seven handfuls of rice, sprinkling water over the seed. Then the villagers walk seven times round the altar in pairs, one turning up the earth with a ploughshare, the other watering the seed.

October 18.

ST. LUKE'S DAY.—On this day a fair known as Horn Fair used to be held at Charlton, Kent. The name of the fair was derived from the custom of carrying or wearing horns, which were also displayed conspicuously on each stall. A reference to this custom dates from the year 1593. A long pole with reins woven on it was put on the shore of the river. It was at one time the custom for a procession to go from Bishopsgate Street to Charlton, where the procession marched round the church three times. It included a king, a queen, a miller, a councillor, and other characters, all wearing horns in their hats. On Blackheath females were whipped with furze and other 'indecent' performed, while it was also customary for men to go to the fair in women's clothes. There is also mentioned a procession from Cuckold's Point, near Deptford, through Greenwich to Charlton. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the fair was no longer held on the traditional site of the green opposite the church, but in a private field, horns still continued to be the most prominent article on sale, and most of those at the fair wore masks or dressed as women or some grotesque character.

The fair is evidently an institution of great antiquity. Early writers are prone to regard the fair as an exploitation of the usual jest, while others connect it with the ox, the symbolic animal of St. Luke. While the pole may well have a phallic significance, and the whipping of women and other 'indecent' customs on Blackheath are doubtless fertility rites, it is possible that the horns here, as well as the cow horns used in connexion with Pack Fair at Sherborne, may be connected with cattle sacrifices of the early winter festival.

A divinatory practice for marriage on St. Luke's Day—"fitter for this purpose than St. Agnes"—which strongly suggests its origin in the charm or love potion, is recorded. "Take marigold flowers, a sprig of marjoram, thyme, and a little wormwood, dry them before a fire, rub them to powder, then sift through a fine piece of lawn; simmer these with a small quantity of virgin honey in white vinegar over a slow fire; with this anoint your stomach, breast, and lips, lying down, and repeat these words:

'St. Luke, St. Luke, be kind to me,

In dreams let me my true love see.'

The charm goes further than most, for the character of the husband will be indicated, that is, whether he will be loving and true or unfaithful.