

## Calendar of Customs and Festivals.

November 25.

St. Katharine: saint and martyr, next to the Virgin Mary the most celebrated of female figures in Christian hagiology. She was martyred at Alexandria under Maximus after this emperor had commanded a company of the ablest of heathen philosophers to dispute with her. These she converted, and they too suffered martyrdom. She was bound upon an ingeniously contrived engine of four wheels set with spikes intended to tear her to pieces when they moved, but the cords were broken asunder by the power of an angel. Hence St. Catherine's wheel and her patronage of those who use the wheel for spinning, rope spinners, and spinsters. She is also the patroness of Christian philosophers.

Though the cult was introduced late into England—in the twelfth or thirteenth century, it is thought by the Crusaders—in a short time it became widely popular. On St. Katharine's eve, Strype records, "The 24th (1556), . . . at six of the clock at night St. Katharine went about the battlements of St. Paul's Church accompanied with fine singing and great lights; this was St. Katharine's procession."

St. Katharine was especially the patroness of spinsters, hence the proverbial expression of *coiffer Ste. Catherine* to express the state of an 'old maid.' It was customary for young women to gather together for merrymaking on this day, the special form of entertainment being divination of their future state in regard to wedlock. This custom was known as 'Kathar'ning.' One charm consisted in a number of young women, not exceeding seven nor less than three, assembling in a room at eleven o'clock at night. A sprig of myrtle which had been borne in the bosom all day was wrapped in paper, and then each girl burnt nine hairs from her head, the parings of toe and finger nails, with myrrh and frankincense on a brazier of charcoal. The myrtle was fumigated over the charcoal and then placed under the head of the inquirer as she went to bed on the clock striking twelve. She dreamed of her future husband. In Ireland women used to fast all the year round on Wednesday and Saturday and on St. Katharine's day. This got them good husbands or, if they were married, a better one.

For the survival of the custom of 'Catterning' among children in the Midlands, *see* under St. Clement (Nov. 23). At Worcester Cathedral the chapter prepared a rich bowl of wine and spices, called the 'Cathern bowl,' for the inhabitants of the college and precincts. At Peterborough the tallest of the female children in the workhouse was selected as queen and adorned with crown and sceptre. Then all the children, dressed in white with scarlet ribbons, went in procession around the city, stopping at the principal residences and reciting verses in honour of St. Katharine.

St. Katharine was specially honoured by the lace-makers in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire. In Buckinghamshire on 'Cattern Day,' the lace-makers held merrymakings, at which cakes called 'wigs'—a kind of light gingerbread with curled edges—and ale were consumed. The rope-makers of Woolwich Arsenal had a procession very similar to that of the smiths on St. Clement's two days previously, in which a female represented 'Her Majesty,' dressed in white, with sceptre and crown and Roman banner. The carpenters of Chatteris in Cambridgeshire held a feast on St. Katharine's day, while the carters of the Isle of Thanet used to place a small figure on a wheel on the front of their cart sheds on this day.

The importance of nuts, and more particularly of

apples, as articles of diet in earlier days may be gauged from their prominence in the survivals of the customs of Hallowmas, St. Clement, and St. Katharine, and also in certain municipal customs. A feature of the 'Lawless Hour' at Kidderminster (*see* Oct. 1) was the showering of apples on the bailiff from each house he visited. At Newcastle-under-Lyme the election of Mayor on the Tuesday after Michaelmas Day (later moved to the Tuesday after Nov. 9) was accompanied by the custom of 'clouting out,' when boys visited the tradespeople in the expectation of receiving nuts and apples, for which they scrambled. The apples collected at 'souling' on Nov. 1 or Nov. 2 were used in various forms of divination and for games. They were also required for the making of 'lamb's-wool,' a bowl of hot spiced ale and roasted apples. The custom of hanging apples on strings or placing them in bowls of water and catching them with the teeth—'bobbing'—a game played on all these festival days—was responsible for the name Bob Apple Day or Bite Apple Day applied in Staffordshire to St. Clement's Day. Sometimes they were roasted on a string before the fire, stuck thickly over with cloves and allowed to fall into a vessel beneath, while set verses in honour of "Catt'n and Clement" were sung. Another method of preparation was to use oats instead of cloves, afterwards spitting the apples on a wooden skewer and dredging them over with flour.

November 30.

St. Andrew, the Apostle martyred A.D. 69 at Patræ in Achaia on a cross in the form known as decussate, *i.e.* X, which hence became his emblem. Relics of the saint were brought to Scotland in 369 and deposited at the spot where St. Andrews now stands. The saint became the patron of Scotland and of the Knights of the Golden Fleece, as well as titular saint of Russia.

The close relation of St. Andrew's Day to the beginning of Advent, a period in the Church of fast and solemn observance, marks it as a time appropriate for divination. Martin Luther refers to the custom in his country of young maidens stripping themselves naked and reciting a prayer addressed to St. Andrew in order to learn what kind of husbands they should have, and from other references the custom appears to have been widespread. The injunction of nudity as part of the ritual points to an early stratum of belief, as it is often an essential element in magic rites of a very primitive character.

It is recorded that singed sheep's heads used to be borne in procession before Scots in London on St. Andrew's Day—a custom which may be connected with the Martinmas sacrifice and slaughter of cattle and sheep. In the "Statistical Account of Scotland," it is stated that citizens of Edinburgh used to resort to Duddingston, near that city, to feast on singed sheep's heads, which were thus disposed of after the sheep from the neighbouring hills had been slaughtered and the carcasses sent to market. Though a summer custom without reference to Martinmas, that feast may possibly have been the origin of the practice.

Although St. Katharine as the patron of spinners was honoured by the lace-makers of Northamptonshire, they specially regarded St. Andrew and celebrated him in a festival to which the name 'Tandrew' or 'Tander' was given. The connexion has been conjectured to be due to the forms assumed by threads in the making of pillow-lace. The day was given up to drinking and merrymaking, and in the schools 'barring out' the master. In the evening men paraded in women's clothes and the women in those of men. Visits were paid from cottage to cottage to drink 'eldern wine,' and mumming followed.