

THE MONTHS.

Our arbitrary division of the year into twelve months has manifestly taken its origin in the natural division determined by the moon's revolutions.

The month of nature, or lunar revolution, is strictly 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, 3 seconds; and there are of course twelve such periods, and rather less than eleven days over, in a year. From an early period, there were efforts among some of the civilised nations to arrange the year in a division accordant with the revolutions of the moon; but they were all strangely irregular until Julius Cæsar reformed the Calendar, by establishing the system of three years of 365 followed by one (bissextile) of 366 days, and decreed that the latter should be divided as follows:—

Januarius 31 days, Februarius 30, Martius 31, Aprilis 30, Maius 31, Junius 30, Quintilis (altered to Julius) 31, Sextilis 30, September 31, October 30, November 31, December 30.—Total 365 days.

The general idea of Cæsar was that the months should consist of 31 and 30 days alternately; and this was effected in the bissextile or leap-year consisting, as it did, of twelve times thirty with six over. In ordinary years, consisting of one day less, his arrangement gave 29 days to Februarius. Afterwards his successor Augustus had the eighth of the series (Sextilis) called after himself, and from vanity broke up the regularity of Cæsar's arrangement by taking another day from February to add to his own month, that it might not be shorter than July; a change which led to a shift of October and December for September and November as months of 31 days. In this arrangement, the year has since stood in all Christian Countries. The Roman names of the months, as settled by Augustus,

have also been used in all Christian Countries excepting Holland, where the following set of names prevails:—

January.....	Lauwmaand.....	Chilly month.
February.....	Sprockelmaand.....	Vegetation month.
March.....	Lentmaand.....	Spring month.
April.....	Grasmaand.....	Grass month.
May.....	Blowmaand.....	Flower month.
June.....	Zomermaand.....	Summer month.
July.....	Hooyzmaand.....	Hay month.
August.....	Oostmaand.....	Harvest month.
September.....	Herstmaand.....	Autumn month.
October.....	Wynmaand.....	Wine month.
November.....	Slaghtmaand.....	Slaughter month.
December.....	Wintamaand.....	Winter month.

These characteristic names of the months are the remains of the months of the ancient Danish titles, which were also used by our Anglo-Saxon ancestors.

"Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November;
All the rest have thirty one,
But February twenty eight alone,
Except in leap-year, once in four
When February has one day more."

Sir Walter Scott, in conversation with a friend, adverted jocularly to 'that ancient and respectable, but unknown poet who had given us the invaluable formula, Thirty days hath September, &c.' It is truly a composition of considerable age, for it appears in a play entitled: *The Return from Parnassus*, published in 1606, as well as in *Winter's Cambridge Almanac* for 1636.

THE CALENDAR.

Principal articles of the Calendar for the year of our Lord, 1868.

CHRONOLOGICAL CYCLES.

Golden.....	7.	Dominical Letters.....	E. D.
Epaet.....	6.	Roman Indiction.....	II
Solar Cycle.....	1.	Julian Period.....	6581.

EPOCHS.

The year 5639 of the Jewish Era commences on September 17th, 1868. Ramadan (month of abstinence observed by the Turks) commences on December 16th, 1868. The year 1235 of the Mahomedan Era commences on April 24th, 1868.

CHRONOLOGY.

From the Creation of the World, 5872. From the first Olympiad, 2644. From the Foundation of Rome, 2621. From the discovery of America, 376. From the Independence of the United States, 93. From the Cession of Canada to Great Britain, 105.

FIXED AND MOVEABLE FESTIVALS, ANNIVERSARIES, &C., &C.

New Year's Day*.....	January	1	Waterloo (1815).....	June	18	
Epiphany*.....	"	6	Accession of Queen Victoria.....	"	20	
Sextagesima Sunday.....	February	9	Proclamation.....	"	21	
Quinquagesima.....	"	23	St. John Baptist.....	"	34	
Ash Wednesday.....	"	26	St. Peter & St. Paul*.....	"	29	
St. David.....	March	1	DOMINION OF CANADA.....			
Quadragesima, 1st Sunday in Lent.....	"	1	St. James.....	July	25	
St. Patrick.....	"	17	St. Bartholomew.....	August	34	
Annunciation*.....	"	25	Canada ceded to Great Britain.....	September	7	
Palm Sunday.....	April	5	St. Michael.....	September	29	
Good Friday*.....	"	10	Trafalgar (1805).....	October	21	
EASTER SUNDAY.....	"	13	Hallowe'en.....	"	31	
Low Sunday.....	"	19	All Saints Day*.....	November	1	
St. George.....	"	23	Birth of Prince of Wales (1841).....	"	9	
St. John the Evangelist.....	May	6	1st Sunday in Advent.....	"	29	
Ascension Sunday.....	"	17	St. Andrew.....	"	30	
Ascension Day*.....	"	21	Conception of Virgin Mary*.....	December	8	
Birth of Queen Victoria.....	"	24	St. Thomas.....	"	21	
Pentecost—Whit Sunday.....	"	31	CHRISTMAS DAY.....			
Trinity Sunday.....	June	7	St. John.....	"	27	
Corpus Christi*.....	"	11				

The feasts and anniversaries marked with an asterisk * are legal holidays in Lower Canada, or as now, the Province of Quebec. The only legal holidays observed in the Province of Ontario are New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Ash Wednesday, Queen's Birthday, Christmas Day, and any day set apart by proclamation.

ECLIPSES.

In the year 1868, there will be two Eclipses of the Sun, and a Transit of the Planet Mercury over the Sun's Disk. I.—An Annular Eclipse of the SUN, February 22-23, 1868, invisible at Greenwich. Begins on the earth generally, February 22, 23h. 17m., Greenwich Mean Time, in longitude 78° 8' W., and latitude 12° 54' S. Ends on the earth generally February 23, 5h. 25m. in longitude 8° 49' E., and latitude 17° 59' N. Invisible in Canada.

II.—A Total Eclipse of the Sun, August 17, 1868, invisible at Greenwich. Begins on the earth generally August 17, 14h. 34m., Greenwich Mean Time, in longitude 49° 35' E., and latitude 11° 13' N. Ends on the earth generally in longitude 148° 59' E., and latitude 15° 23' S. Invisible in Canada.

III.—A Transit of Mercury over the Sun's Disk, November 4th, 1868, partly visible at Greenwich, also in Canada. Mercury is a Morning Star in January; towards the end of February he sets about 1½ hour after the Sun, and can then be well observed. He is inferior conjunction with the Sun on the 8th of March, stationary among the stars on evening of the 23th. In April he is a Morning Star, and is near Jupiter on the 13th and Mars on the 17, and is also a Morning Star in May, an Evening Star in June, and well situated for observation. In August he is a Morning Star. In September and October he is not favourably situated for observation, but is well situated for observation from the middle to the latter end of November, and in December again becomes a Morning Star.

Venus is an Evening Star in January, February, March, April, May, and will be at her greatest brilliancy on June the 9th. In July she is an Evening Star, and continues so for the rest of the year. On the 17th of October she is near Mercury, on the 18th near Saturn, and on the 28th near Jupiter. Jupiter is an Evening star in January, February and March, until the 10th; a Morning Star in April, May, and June; in July and August he is visible nearly all night. In September he rises as the Sun sets. In October he is an Evening Star, and is very favourably situated for observation, and continues an Evening Star for the rest of the year. Saturn is a Morning Star in January, February, and March; in April, May, June, and July, visible during the night. In August, September, and October, he is an Evening Star, and on the end of November, the Sun and planet rise nearly together, and during the month of December he rises before the Sun and is a Morning Star.