

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MONTHS AND REMARKABLE DAYS.

JANUARY.

The name is derived from the Roman God Janus, who was represented with two faces, one looking towards the old year, the other to the new.

1. *Feast of the Circumcision*: 8th day from the Nativity. *New Year's Day*: Generally observed as a holiday and day of rejoicing. In Scotland, there are many customs regarding this day still in use. In France, presents are universally made by and to every body.

6. *Epiphany*, or Manifestation to the Gentiles: The Queen still on this day presents gold, frankincense and myrrh at the Chapel Royal. *Twelfth Day*: A festival in England nearly as much observed as Christmas, especially by the young.

20. *St. Agnes Eve*: Young ladies, by the proper observance of certain ceremonies, will obtain dreams of their future husbands.

22. *St. Vincent's Day*: There is an old saying among the vine-culturing peasantry, that if the sun shines bright on this day "there will be more wine than water," that is, that the season will be dry and favourable for grapes.

25. *Conversion of St. Paul*: It was an article of constant belief in Western Europe, even down to the present day, that the condition of the weather on this day surely indicates the character of the whole year. Fair weather betokened a prosperous year, snow or rain an unfruitful and dear one; clouds, great mortality among cattle; and winds, war.

28. Pall Mall first lighted with gas, 1807, the first street ever so illuminated in any city.

30. *King Charles the Martyr*: On this day the Tories used to hang their houses with black and no meal of any sort was allowed till after midnight. Special services were held in the English Church, but were discontinued in 1859.

FEBRUARY.

Introduced into the Roman Calendar by Numa Pompilius. Its name arose from the practice of purification among the Romans at the beginning of the month. Among the Saxons, the month was called Sprout-Kale, from the sprouting of cabbage at this season.

2. *Candlemas Day: Purification of the Virgin*: In the Romish Church candles are blessed by the clergy and given to the people to be carried by them in solemn procession. Evergreens put up at Christmas used to be removed in England. The Christmas log was burned till sunset, and then laid away till next year. In Scotland, the children attending school make presents of money to their teachers, and have a bonfire in the evening. Good weather indicates a long winter and a bad crop; foul weather the reverse. The snow-drop was called the Purification Flower from blossoming about Candlemas.

Shrove Tuesday: May occur any day between the 2nd February and 8th March. It is generally a day of carnival-like jollity and drollery and eating of Pancakes. Cock fighting used also to be practised at Shrove-tide, but is now legally a misdemeanour.

Ash Wednesday: The first day of Lent may fall on any day from February 3rd to March 9th. The name is derived from the ceremony in the Romish Church of sprinkling ashes with holy water and marking

with them the cross on the forehead of the worshippers.

11. Death of Cædmon, the earliest English poet whose name is known, 680.

13. *St. Valentine's Eve*: At Norwich this eve is still kept as a time for general receiving of gifts. They are presented anonymously with "St. Valentine's love" and create much amusement.

14. *St. Valentine's Day*: The proper ceremony for St. Valentine's Day was the drawing of a kind of lottery, the names of the young men and maidens being written on separate bits of paper, rolled up, and drawn. The valentines then gave balls and treats to their mistresses, &c. In England, in the time of Charles the Second, married and single were alike liable to be chosen as Valentines, and the person so chosen was bound to make a present to the chooser.

26. This day used to be assigned for the Rooks to begin to build their nests, being the twelfth after Candlemas. Old style.

MARCH.

First month of Spring, dedicated by the Romans to Mars. Among the Saxons it was called Length-month, from the days getting longer, the origin of the term Lent.

1. *St. David's Day*: The Welsh on this day wear a leek in honour of their patron saint. The custom is said to be in honour of a great victory gained over the Saxons, in which the Welsh, by order of St. David, put leeks in their hats to distinguish themselves from their enemies.

2. *St. Chad's Day*: St. Chad was the patron saint of medicinal springs.

The fourth Sunday in Lent is called Mid-Lent or Mothering Sunday. This last name is derived from the practice in old times of servants going to visit their parents on Mid-Lent Sunday, taking with them some little offering. This was called "going a-mothering." There were several dishes also peculiar to the day, such as "furmety"—wheat boiled in sweet milk, sugared and spiced; steeped pease fried in butter, with pepper and salt; a peculiar kind of pancakes, called "Curlings" and "Simmel Cakes," which are a sort of rich and expensive cake still sold in Shrewsbury during Lent.

17. *St. Patrick's Day*: The patron saint of Ireland. His birthplace is disputed, but there is no doubt that he first introduced Christianity into Ireland. The last snake is said to have been imprisoned by him in Lough Dilveen, after all the rest were banished, and told to remain until Monday. Every Monday morning the serpent still calls out in Irish, "It is a long Monday, Patrick." In the early English calendars, the 17th of March was given as the day in which Noah entered the Ark.

On *Palm Sunday*, the last Sunday in Lent, many curious customs were formerly practised in England; one of these still survives at Caistor, in Lincolnshire, connected with the tenure of property. During the reading of the first lesson, a person representing the proprietor of Broughton comes into the porch of the Church and cracks a gad-whip three times, and then neatly folds it up. Retiring for a moment to a seat, he comes during the second lesson to the Minister, holding the whip upright, having on its upper end a purse with 30 pieces of silver; he then kneels before the clergyman, waves the whip three times around his head, and so remains till