

the end of the lesson, when he retires. This is supposed to have some reference to the ancient custom of the Procession of the Ass.

Easter Day: Old Easter customs vary considerably in different parts of England. Eggs are distributed among the peasantry in Lancashire. In some counties the custom of "lifting" is practised. On Easter Monday the men lift the women, two men joining their hands across the wrists and lifting her aloft two or three times. On Easter Tuesday, the women return the compliment by lifting the men in the same manner. In Durham, on Easter Monday, the men take off the women's shoes, and on Tuesday the women retaliate. Tansy cakes and tansy puddings are favorite dishes in many parts at Easter. In Devon, the clerk carries round to every house a few white cakes as an Easter offering. In the Tyrol, bands of musicians traverse every valley, singing beautiful Easter hymns to their guitars, calling the people to the doors to join them in their choruses. Baskets of Easter eggs are ready prepared by the good wives, to which the better farmers add wine, and the singers are regaled in return for their carols.

The three last days of March are called in Scotland "Borrowed Days." There is a popular notion that they were borrowed from April by March, with a view to the destruction of a parcel of young sheep. Among the Highlanders the borrowed days are reckoned between the 11th and 15th of February, and if these days prove fair, it is said there will be no more good weather that spring; if on the contrary they are stormy, it is accounted a favorable sign for the ensuing year.

APRIL

The name by some is supposed to be derived from the verb *Aperio* I open; by others from the Greek *Aphrillis*, from *Aphrodite-Venus*. The month was dedicated to *Venus*. The Anglo-Saxons called it "Oster-Monath"—the month in which east winds prevailed, and the term "Easter" probably comes from the same origin.

1. **April Fool's Day:** The practice of playing off practical jokes on this day is of very ancient origin and of very general observance. Among the Hindoos the 31st of March, which terminates their *Huli*, is spent exactly in the same way as our first of April.

Hock Tide: A fortnight after Easter a popular anniversary used to be celebrated called *Hock* or *Hoke* tide, and occupied two days—Monday and Tuesday, though Tuesday was the principal day. The women went out into all the streets and stopped and bound all the men they met, holding them till they purchased their release by a small contribution of money. The money was given to the Church, and was usually applied to the repairs of church buildings.

14. **Black Monday:** On this day, 1360, King Edward III, with his army, lay before Paris, and the day was dark with mist and hail, and so cold, that men died on their horses backs with cold; from which the day has got the name of Black Monday.

20. **Cuckoo Day:** There is a belief in Worcestershire, England, that the Cuckoo is never heard before the 20th of April nor after the 26th of June. In Norfolk, there is a saying that whatever you are doing when you first hear the Cuckoo, you will do most frequently of any thing during the year. Another, that an unmarried person will remain single as many years as the Cuckoo, when first heard, utters its call. There is a similar superstition among the Danes. In

Shropshire, the labourers used to leave their work and claim a holiday the rest of the day.

23. **St. George's Day:** The patron saint of England. He was held in great honour in England from a very early period, and is said to have appeared to *Cœur de Lion* before *Acre* as the precursor of victory. Sicily, Arragon, Valencia, Genoa, Malta, and Barcelona also looked up to him as their guardian saint, and several other nations besides the English have Orders of Knighthood in his honour.

25. **St. Mark's Eve:** In the North of England it is believed that if a person, on the eve of St. Mark's, watch in the Church porch from eleven till one, he will see the ghosts of all who are to die in the ensuing year. St. Mark's Eve also enjoyed a large share of the privileges later accorded to Halloween. At Alnwick, on St. Mark's Day, persons who are to receive the privilege of *freemen of the common* ride on horseback with great ceremony, dressed in white, to a large dirty pool on the border of the common, and deliberately walk through it, coming out dripping and begrimed with mud; then hastily changing their clothes, they make a round of the common, and return into the town, where they are received by fantastically dressed women, and end by calling and drinking at each other's houses. The custom is said to date from a visit King John paid to Alnwick.

MAY.

The name was given in honour of the "Majores," the Senate in the original Constitution of Rome. Among the Saxons it was called *Tri-Milchi*, from the cows being now milked three times a day. Among the old Romans, and the notion is still prevalent in Europe, it was thought unlucky to be married in May. In old England, May Day used to be universally a day of festivity and merry making, but few of the old customs still survive. The chimney sweepers celebration is the only relic of them now left in London; but within the present century the milkmaids also had their celebration. A milch cow, garlanded with flowers, was the principal object in their procession. In Scotland, the only relic of the old May Day observances left is that of young women going out at an early hour, to wash their faces in May dew. The custom of enthroning the May Queen still survives in France, and between Munich and Salzburg may be seen many villages each rejoicing in its May-pole. In some parishes in England little girls go about from house to house on May morning, carrying garlands and singing songs or carols.

Rogation Days: called by the Saxons *Gange days*, from *gangan*, to go. It was formerly the custom that on these days the people of a parish, headed by the clergyman, should walk about the parish, making its entire circuit, and then returning to the Church to common prayer. The 103d Psalm was to be said, and the people to be admonished to give thanks to God. Refreshments were provided at different parts of the parish. The custom has been revived of late years in many parishes. In Dorsetshire, on Rogation Monday, a festival was held called the *Bezant*. It was an offering from the town of Shaston to the Lord of the Manor, for the privilege of using his wells at *Emmore Green*. The *Bezant* was a sort of trophy four feet high, adorned with flowers and feathers, on which was hung jewels, coins, &c.