

Calendar of Customs and Festivals.

March 2.

ST. NUNNE, or Nuanita, daughter of an Earl of Cornwall and mother of St. Patrick. Two wells were sacred to her, one at St. David's, one in Cornwall, at Alternon, the latter having miraculous powers of curing insanity.

March 4.

From Feb. 25 until Mar. 4 (O.S.) is a period of eight days and seven nights known in Algiers and Morocco by various names, such as *lä-hsüm* or *tamgart*, meaning 'the old woman,' presumably because the winter is coming to an end, or the 'Master of the Snow,' *Haiyan*. This period, which is represented as a bitterly cold time of the year, is marked for its rain, wind, and snows, dangerous to people, animals, and crops. No one cares to travel, agricultural operations are suspended, and flocks and herds are kept under shelter so far as possible. A thunderstorm at this time is hurtful to little children, animals, and bees, and makes milk and honey scarce; but if an east wind blows, the year will turn out good without scarcity. It is believed that the world will come to an end during this period. Moreover, legends indicate that this is a period of 'borrowed days.'

Variants current in the East, and especially a Palestinian version, put the matter clearly. An old woman, while feeding her flocks, mocked February because he had sent no rain. Three days only of the month remained. February borrowed three days from March and sent rain for six days, which washed the old woman and her flocks into the sea. Therefore the first three days of March are known as *El Mustakridät*—the 'Lent out ones' (see Westermarck, "Ritual and Belief in Morocco," vol. 2, p. 174 *sqq.*). In England, March 'borrows' days from April.

March 5.

ST. PIRAN, PERRAN, or PERAN.—One of the many Irish saints who are conspicuous in Cornish hagiology. Very little is known of his life and acts. He is said to have been born in Cork or Ossory about A.D. 352, and after passing the greater part of his life in Ireland, to have retired to Cornwall, where he lived near Padstow and died at the age of two hundred years. This remarkable span of life may be an attempt to eliminate chronological inconsistencies in the lives of the saint which appear to confuse him with St. Kieran, the precursor of St. Columba, who went to Scotland in the year A.D. 560.

St. Piran is an important figure in Cornish legend. His miracles in Ireland and his voyage to Cornwall on a millstone have already been mentioned (NATURE, Jan. 21, p. 121). At least three localities in the country are known by his name, Perran-aworthan (Perran on the noted river), Perran-uthno (Perran the lesser), and Perran-Zabulo (S. Perran-in Sabulo—Perran in the Sands), where he lived. The Church of Perran is also associated with the cult of St. Agnes. St. Piran is the patron of the miners, and Mar. 5 is kept as a holiday in his honour. According to the legend, he discovered tin; a black stone which he used in building his hearth melted and produced a beautiful white metal. St. Chiwidden, to whom he communicated his discovery, devised a method of producing the metal in quantity. The saints imparted their knowledge to the Cornish people and the occasion was celebrated by great rejoicing so that 'as drunk as a Piraner' became proverbial. The fame of Cornish tin spread far and wide, eventually reaching Tyre and giving rise to the Phœnician trade. To protect the sources of tin from foreigners, the

markets for this trade were confined to the islands, and the tribes of St. Piran and St. Agnes built the rounds and earthworks as a further protection. St. Piran is thus anachronistically associated with two phases of Cornish prehistory—the discovery and working of tin, and the construction of prehistoric forts and earthworks.

Although it is possible that this story may be merely a piece of folk mythology of comparatively modern origin, it is also possible that it preserves a tradition from an older dispensation. St. Chiwidden is an entirely mythical personage, but Chi-wadden means 'a white house,' *i.e.* the blowing or smelting house, and in the corrupt form of Jewwhidn or Jew's house is applied to the old blowing houses. St. Piran was patron of a holy well at Perranzabulo, which had the property of healing sick children, and here may certainly be regarded as the representative of an earlier local deity.

ST. CASIMIR OF POLAND.—Son of Casimir III., King of Poland, b. 1458, d. 1483, led a life of abstinence and chastity, studied to advance the Catholic religion in Poland and drive out heresy. Thirty-six years after his death he appeared in glittering armour, gallantly mounted, and led the Poles across an impassable river to defeat the Muscovites. In the following year he marched before the Poles in the air and again defeated their enemy. One hundred and twenty years after his death, his body and the rich stuffs in which it was wrapped were found entire and a sweet smell exhaling therefrom.

March 10.

THE FORTY MARTYRS OF SEBASTE suffered at Sebaste in Lesser Armenia, A.D. 320, under the Emperor Licinius. The history of their martyrdom is chiefly remarkable for a novel form of torture devised by Agricola, Governor of the Province. They were exposed naked for three days on a frozen pond outside the walls of the town, in the blast of a bitter north wind, a warm bath being placed nearby. Only one of their number weakened, but he expired as he entered the warm water. His place was taken by the guard, who had been converted in the meantime by a vision. The relics of these martyrs, portions of which reached Constantinople, performed many miracles and healed many sick.

ST. MACKERROGE or KERROCK, bishop in the Province of Levin and Boin in Scotland, A.D. 560, illustrious for miracles. Under his counsel the pious King Congal II. ruled with prudence, zeal, and sanctity. The Scots for a time used his name as their battle-cry, but afterwards changed it for that of St. Andrew. St. Kerroge is sometimes represented in military habit with bent bow and arrow. His name has been given to a ferry (*Port a Chearaig*) and a market for hiring held at Callander, Perthshire, on Mar. 10, O.S. (Mar. 22). This fair is known also as 'tenth-day,' while a rock at the west end of the village is called by his name. "On the Feast of Kerrock every eel is pregnant," is proverbial in Gaelic.

ADDENDA.—THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT in one of the Roman Liturgies of 1496 is called *Les Brandons*. In the *Genileman's Magazine* for 1754 this is taken to refer to the custom among the French peasants of dancing around straw bonfires on this Sunday, and the brandon is said to be one of the sacred dances performed in church choirs as late as the seventeenth century, and only suppressed by ecclesiastical and civil authority after much popular opposition. (*Brandon*=lighted wisp of straw.) That the dance was regarded as an act of worship is shown by the popular Limousin liturgical response, "S. Martial pray for us and we will dance for thee."