

herbs. "Sir," says Robin Hood, "we outlaws usually breakfast upon venison, and have no other food to offer you." Of venison, therefore, and wine, the visitors partook and departed. On their return they were met by two ladies, representing Lady May and Lady Flora, both richly apparelled, riding in an open chariot, drawn by five horses, on each of which sat a lady.

The sports of the chimney-sweepers—Lamb's "innocent blacknesses"—are too well known to require description. Of the same character was the Milkmaid's Festival, now, we presume, totally lost. They borrowed from their friends all the silver plate they could, and with this and various domestic articles of the dairy, they decked out a kind of pedestal of green boughs, round which they danced at every door, receiving generally, in return, a small gratuity. The celebrity of Robin Hood and his maid Marian, caused the lord and lady of the May to be named after them, and also to introduce characters representing Robin's followers, Friar Tuck, Little John, etc., who were all arranged in the green forester's dress, and served, with the unfailing hobby-horse and dragon, to swell the pageantries of the festival. Gradually the queen of May ceased to be distinguished for the poetical elegance of her character, and degenerated into a performance by a clown, whose fun was not remarkable for its delicacy. The morrice-dancers appear, from time immemorial, to have formed part of the May sports. The actors were fantastically arrayed, and bore bells of different tones, by which they were distinguished, as first tenor, etc. Their leader was splendidly apparelled.

A curious custom observed on this day, is recorded in the *Morning Post* of May 2, 1791, as follows: "Yesterday, being the first of May, according to annual and superstitious custom, a number of persons went into the fields and bathed their faces with the dew on the grass, under the idea that it would render them beautiful!" This is certainly the most poetical of cosmetics; and taking into consideration the circumstances under which it is applied, we should say the most effectual.

But the more remarkable of the customs observed on this day, are those which so strikingly exhibit their pagan origin, remaining apparently unchanged from the remotest periods of our history; while religions and feelings from which they sprung have been totally swept away. Pennant mentions the following: The herdsmen of a particular hamlet [in the Highlands], meet at some concerted spot in the open air, and dig a square trench, the part within being left with its turf untouched. On this a fire is made, and a large caudle prepared of eggs, butter, oatmeal, and milk. This being ready, the rites commence. Cakes of oatmeal, on which are nine square knobs, dedicated to the influences which are supposed to protect or injure the cattle and flocks, are produced; each person, with his face towards the fire, breaks off a knob and flings it over his shoulder, saying, "This I give thee," naming some benign influence to whom that knob is devoted; "preserve thou my horses." "This I give thee, O fox," breaking off another; "spare thou my lambs." This part of the rites over, the caudle is drank, and the affair terminated. Here we have the exact principles of pagan worship—the benevolent deities honoured, the vindictive propitiated. The *Statistical History of Scotland* says, that "at Callander, in Perthshire, the youth meet in the moors, and cut a table in green sod, of a round figure, by making a trench of a corresponding shape for them all to sit in. They then kindle a fire, and with eggs and milk prepare a custard. They also knead a cake of oatmeal, which is afterwards toasted. The custard is then eaten, and the cake divided into as many pieces as there are members of the company. One piece is daubed over with charcoal till it is quite black, and then put with others in a bonnet. Each youth then, blindfold, draws one piece, and whoever obtains the black is the sacrifice to Baal, that is, he is made to leap three times through the flames! Baal, in Gaelic, means globe. The festival had its origin, doubtless, in the sun worship of the ancients, whose returning warmth they chose this day to commemorate. In the Survey of Ireland, we find traces of a similar idolatry. The first of May, in the Irish language, is denominated La Beal time, that is, the day of Beal's fire. Apollo was sometimes called Belinus. The gods of Tyre were called Baal: the scriptural allusion will recur to every one. In Munster and Connaught, the peasantry have been seen to drive their cattle through the fire, hoping thereby to preserve them from disease the ensuing year. This ceremony is derived from the Druids, by whom, says General Vallency, it was regularly observed. At Cambridge a custom was noticed, in 1802, of chil-

dren having a figure dressed in a grotesque manner, called a May lady, before which was placed wine and meats.

We have only to add, that May-day, so peculiarly a lover's time, was esteemed by the ancients an unlucky day for marriages. —*Home Magazine*.

AGRICULTURAL AND HORTICULTURAL MEMORANDA.

THE SUN FLOWER.—Those who are most experienced in the cultivation of this plant, are sanguine that, with a proper soil and proper cultivation, it is more profitable than wheat or corn. The seeds are more oleaginous than those of the flax plant, and combine the qualities for table use of the best olive oil; for burning, of the best sperm, without its smoke; and for painting, it is said by painters who have used it, to be superior to linseed, as it is more rapid in drying, equally easy in spreading, and without forming a much denser coat. Prepared and eaten as artichokes, the young cups of this plant are very esculent and pleasing to the palate, the stalks are an excellent substitute for hemp or flax, and for bee pasturage, it is equal to any plant, yielding, from its luscious and numerous nectaries, an abundance of the best and most palatable honey. A writer in one of our agricultural exchanges, says, that, on suitable soil, with proper cultivation, it will yield, on an average, from eighty to one hundred bushels of seed to the acre. From five to seven quarts of oil are calculated on, per bushel. If this is not over-estimating its productiveness, and it can be raised as cheaply as wheat or Indian corn, ordinarily considered the most expensive crops cultivated, the sun flower must be a very profitable production. We have heretofore cultivated it on a small scale, usually in vacant spots, by the fences and in places where the cultivation of other vegetables was ineligible, and so far as our experience goes, it corroborates the above assertions. We find that the green leaves are very excellent fodder for cows, especially when the feed in our pastures gets low in seasons of scarcity and drought. We generally commence plucking them in July, taking the lower leaves first, and feeding them out at night, or, if the scarcity of feed is great, in the morning before turning them from their yards. We have sometimes given them corn-toppings and the leaves of the sun flower at the same time, and have found that the latter are invariably preferred. The seed of the sun flower is a most desirable food for poultry, its highly oleaginous nature wholly superseding the necessity of animal food.

TO DESTROY THE CURCULIO.—A gentleman of this city informs us, that a lady of his acquaintance has, for several years past, practised hanging one or more bottles, filled with sweetened water, or the like, among the branches of her plum trees, and the result has been an abundant supply of both curculios and plums. The curculios are caught in the bottle, and the plums left to ripen without suffering from the curculios' usual depredations. Some little attention is necessary to note when the bottles get filled, and then, of course, they must be emptied, and filled afresh. The gentleman says that this course has been fully successful; resulting in abundant crops from trees so managed, while others around had their fruit entirely destroyed. The remedy as stated is a simple one, and so easily adopted that if in other cases it should not succeed, its expense will be very trifling.—*Cleveland Herald*.

CRANBERRIES ON UPLANDS.—A. Burnham states, in the *Massachusetts Ploughman*, that he sets out cranberries from the swamps, on good corn ground, of a loamy character, in hills to admit the cultivator, and clean hoeing. A part had six inches square of muck on the roots, and others none; both did equally well. The transplanting was done early in spring; they bloomed about mid-summer, and bore fruit the same year. "The fruit," he states, "is large and handsome, many of the hills yielding a pint of berries."

TO DESTROY MILDEW.—Mr. Haggerston, who obtained, a few years ago, a premium from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, for the discovery of a mode of destroying the rose slug, says, that a weak solution of whale oil soap, in the proportion of two pounds of soap to about fifteen gallons of water, or weaker, will check and entirely destroy the mildew on the gooseberry, peach, grape vine, etc.

A PRAIRIE ON FIRE.

(Extract of a Letter from Illinois.)

A Prairie on fire! Did you ever see one, Messrs. Editors? No! Well then, come stand with me at the door of this log