

June Days.

BY ELEANOR ROBINSON.

The month of June is rich both in memorial days of holy men and in anniversaries of famous deeds. On the 9th of June, 597, died St. Columba, the great missionary who, coming from Ireland, converted, with the help of his disciples, all of Northern Scotland to Christianity. On the island of Iona, Columba built a church and monastery, and for thirty-six years he laboured among the heathen Picts of the mainland, preaching and teaching, and by the holiness and beauty of his life winning reverence and love. On the 8th of June he was engaged in making a copy of the Psalter. When he had finished the verse of the 34th psalm, where it is written, "They who seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good," he said, "Here I must stop." He knew that his end was near, and early on the next day, which was Sunday, he passed away gently in his church at Iona.

June the eleventh is St. Barnabas Day. We first read of this apostle in the fourth chapter of the Acts, where it is recorded that he was a Levite, but born in the island of Cyprus; that he received the name of Barnabas, meaning *Son of Consolation*, from the apostles; and that he sold his land and gave the money to be distributed among the poorer disciples. He it was who brought St. Paul, after his conversion, to the apostles at Jerusalem, and he was associated with St. Paul on his missionary journeys for about fourteen years. After this the Bible tells us no more about him, but tradition says that he was stoned to death by the Jews at Salamis. The common belief, that he was a man of majestic presence and commanding countenance, is perhaps founded on the saying of the people of Lystra, who called Barnabas Jupiter (Acts xiv, 11, 12).

According to the old calendar St. Barnabas Day fell at the summer solstice. So we can understand the old rhyme, which ran:

Barnaby Bright,
All day and no night.

Or—

Barnaby bright,
The longest day and the shortest night.

Another rhyming saying was:

On St. Barnabas,
Cut the first grass.

The first Christian martyr on the island of Great Britain was St. Alban, who is remembered on June 17th. St. Alban, a heathen, and, according to most accounts, a Roman soldier, gave shelter to a Chris-

tian priest who was fleeing for his life, during the persecution of the Christians, under the Emperor Diocletian, in 304. The priest instructed, converted and baptized his host, and when, after a few days, soldiers discovered the Christian's hiding place, Alban put on his teacher's cloak and gave himself up in his stead. He was given a choice between sacrificing to idols and suffering a speedy death. As he was steadfast in refusing to sacrifice he was beheaded on a little hill outside the Roman town of Verulamium. After the departure of the Romans from Britain, Verulamium, which had been their most important city in the south of England, fell into ruins, but in the eighth century an English town grew up a little to the east of the Roman site, and Offa, King of Meccia, founded, in memory of St. Alban, a magnificent abbey on the supposed spot of the martyrdom. Town and church were given the name of St. Albans. The situation is about twenty miles north of London. From the churchyard can be seen some fragments of the wall of the Roman town.

Although the martyrdom of St. John Baptist is one of the four recorded in the New Testament, the day that has been celebrated in his memory since very early times commemorates not his martyrdom, but his birth. It is the 24th of June, often called Midsummer Day. An ancient Christian writer connects this day with the Baptist's own words: "He must increase, but I must decrease;" saying that from St. John's birthday the days decrease, while from our Lord's birthday they increase.

A great many curious customs and superstitions cluster round Midsummer Day, or more especially round Midsummer Eve. Some of these are no doubt closely connected with old pagan observances. In some parts of England it was a custom to wind a great wheel with straw, set it on fire, and roll it about; sometimes it was taken to the top of a hill and rolled down. This signified the sun, which had now reached its highest point in the heavens, and was beginning to descend. Ill-luck was thought to roll away with the wheel. Other ceremonies and beliefs connected with St. John's Eve are much like those of St. Mark's and All Hallow's Eve. And in some places green boughs were gathered and used for adorning the houses, as on May Day. An Irish superstition was that at this time souls are allowed to leave their bodies and wander to the place whence they are to be summoned from the earth. Sir Walter Scott has a grim ballad called "The Eve of St. John," in which he makes use of another form