

March and Its High Days.

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The Roman name of this month was Martius from Mars, the god of war. A more appropriate name in our climate is that given to it by the Anglo-Saxons, who called it *Hlyd Monath*, that is, the loud or stormy month. Among the Romans the year began in March, and in the English calendar March 25th was the first day of the year until 1752. Thus in modern editions of Pepys' Diary we find, for example, the days from January 1st to March 25th, 1664, with the date of both years, 1663-4. Both in England and Scotland there is an old saying which represents March as borrowing three days from April, and the last three days of March are called "the borrowed days. The old rhyme says:

"March borrowed from Averill,
Three days, and they were ill."

and another runs thus:

The first, it sall be wind and weet,
The next, it sall be snow and sleet,
The third, it sall be sic and freeze,
Sall gar (make) the birds stick to the trees."

And everyone is familiar with the image of March "going out like a lion."

Dry weather in March is favorable to the grain crops, hence the saying "A bushel of March dust is worth a King's ransom."

We find the days of the patron saints of Wales and of Ireland in March. The first day of the month is sacred to St. David. There are many legends about this patron of Wales, but very little is really known of his life. He is thought to have been a bishop in Wales in the sixth century, and the date of his death has been put at 601 A. D. His shrine is in the church at St. David's. In Shakespeare's "Henry V," Lluellen, the Welshman, says to the king: "I do pelieve your majesty takes no scorn to wear the leek upon St. Tavy's day." And the king answers: "I wear it for a memorable honor, for I am Welsh, you know, good countryman."

The traditional explanation of the wearing of the leek is that King Arthur won a great victory over the Saxons in a garden where leeks grew, and that St. David ordered that every one of the King's soldiers should wear a leek in his cap in honor of the victory.

Around the name of St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, has gathered a mass of legends, in which

false and true, beautiful and ghastly, foolish and instructive stories are brought together. This confusion is partly owing to the fact that the name Patricius seems to have been commonly used in the sense of nobleman or gentleman. Moreover, another Patrick was sent to Ireland as bishop by the Pope about the time that the subject of this sketch began his work there. Irish writers mention also a third ecclesiastic of the same name, so that it is not surprising that the accounts of the saint have been confused. The following facts, however, are pretty generally accepted. St. Patrick was born in Scotland at or near Dumbarton, about the end of the fourth century, and of Christian parents. When a boy of fifteen he was taken prisoner by pirates and sold as a slave in Ireland, probably in county Antrim. Here he tended cattle for six years, and then made his escape, but he soon formed the plan of going back to Ireland as a missionary. Where and how he was trained for his work is not certain. He lived among his relations in Britain for some time, and they begged him not to leave them, but he could not forget the needs of the Irish people, and in dreams he heard voices calling him to come to them. At last his plan was carried out. He says, "Thanks be to God, that after very many years the Lord granted unto them according to their cry." For over forty years he worked in Ireland, traveling from place to place, and risking death and slavery, teaching, baptizing, and founding churches. Traditions all agree that he died on the 17th of March. The year is uncertain, but 469 seems the most likely date; he was probably buried at Downpatrick. St. Partick was the first great missionary who went out from Britain, and this alone would commend his life, a holy and useful one, to our remembrance. The practice of wearing a shamrock on his day is thought to have begun from his habit of using the trifoliate leaf as an image of the Holy Trinity.

The 25th of March has been kept since very early times as the day on which is commemorated the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; that is, the event recorded in the first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, of the Angel Gabriel's coming to the Virgin with the message that the Saviour of the world was to be born of her. This event has been a favorite subject with artists, and is portrayed in some of the most beautiful pictures in the world. The day is commonly called Lady Day.