ABOUT FOYS.

HUNDREDS of foys are held on hundreds of farms north of the Forth on the night of the 21st of November, the evening preceding the great service term of Martinmas. The society of rustic labourers is then on the eve of a great change. There is to be a rearrangement of its units which the next four-and-twenty hours will effect. And, meanwhile, the occasion is seized of parting company with the old arrangement and bidding it formally farewell. The custom—a time-honoured one—though no longer retaining its ancient vigour, is still far from destitute of vitality. To a town-dweller the name and the nature of the institution will scarcely now be known.* Briefly described, a foy is a farewell entertainment given to former associates by the person or persons leaving. It is of rural growth, and is in an especial sense a ploughman's institution. It originated, doubtless, in the shifting nature of his employment. Fee'd by the year, the young ploughman at the end of his

* "If you're my friend, meet me this evening at the Rummer. I'll pay my *foy*, drink a health to my king, prosperity to my country, and away for Hungary to-morrow morning."—FARQUHAR'S *Constant Couple*, Act i. sc. 1. The word is French—*foi*, faith. Leigh Hunt's edition of Farquhar gives '*way*'—a misinterpretation.

term longs for change of scene; the monotony of life oppresses him; he is eminently social, and has little outlet for his social instincts; he seeks service on another farm, but not till he has taken kindly leave of his last year's companions on the farm he is quitting. He is besides in a position, pecuniarily, to give the leave-taking entertainment: his year's money is (or rather *was—tempora mutantur!*) paid down to him at the end of his service in a solid and unbroken sum.

Though primarily a ploughman's institution, it is not confined to farm servants. It is occasionally observed by gardeners, hedgers, and foresters, on the occasion of their leaving one district for another. There used also to be 'prentice foys in the homes of blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and such-like country craftsmen. Tam or Wull had "served oot his time;" he was now "getting up his indenture," preparatory to starting for himself as a free journeyman. In his case the master, to whom he had been bound from boyhood, provided the entertainment; and reasonably. He had made considerable profit by his apprentice, especially during the last two years or so. The system of apprenticeship by indenture is now pretty rare. It was a legal bond by which the master undertook to instruct his apprentice in the methods and mysteries of his handicraft, the apprentice on his part undertaking to make out and conclude the period of his apprenticeship. The length of apprenticeship varied, according to the nature of the craft, from four to seven years. Each party provided caution to the amount of from £10 to £20 that he would fulfil

his part of the contract. The cost of the stamped indenture, thirty shillings or so, was borne mutually His indenture saved a wayward apprentice from the grasp of the recruiting officer, but only while it ran If he had imprudently taken the shilling at some market or merry-making, he was liable in military service as soon as his term of apprenticeship was up. The lifted indenture, of course, relieved both master and apprentice; their mutual agreement was satisfactorily concluded, and they were in a position to appreciate the simple festivity of the foy.

Partaking of the nature of the foy were certain old drinking customs that used to be known to the various "trades" by whom they were practised, as the "foondin' pint," "the bindin' spree," "the spreadin' drink," etc. They speak to the sociality of the old days no doubt; but they look to us terribly like ingenious excuses for a dram.

To return to the foy proper—the ploughman's foy. It is, and it was, long looked forward to as an agreeable break in the monotony of social life in the country. It used to rank with *waddin's* and *maidens*—that is, penny weddings and harvest homes. It was the epilogue of field service. There was a prologue, too, "the welcome hame," which was usually given "an eight days" or so after the arrival of new ploughmen. As the name indicates, the expense of the welcome hame was borne, or supposed to be borne, by the "remaining" ploughmen—those, namely, who took service on the same farm for another year; but as a matter of fact, each man at a welcome hame, new comer and old hand, bore his own share of the

expense of the simple entertainment. It was by means like this that ploughmen got to be acquainted with each other on adjoining farms. Markets were another means of drawing them socially together. They are a social people, ready at all times and places to introduce themselves to each other, and quick to recommend their several acquaintances. Sometimes, but rarely, it would happen that a welcome hame would be diversified by a quarrel or a fight. Some vain or cantankerous ploughman would only settle into what was called "good neibourhood" after he had endured one or two "good lickings." Good neibourhood was always achieved by Hansel Monday at latest; but there might intervene between Martinmas and that day the social diversion of a more or less bloody *tulzie.*

The great foy time, as we have said, was and is at Martinmas. This is the great "flitting" term in the rural districts north of the Forth. It is not so in the south country, whatever it may have been; Laidlaw, it is to be remembered, represents Lucy in the ever-popular ballad as flitting at Martinmas—

"'Twas when the wan leaf frae the birk-tree was fa'in'
An' Martinmas dowie had wound up the year,
That Lucy row'd up her wee kist wi' her a' in,
And left her auld maister an' neibours sae dear."

And Laidlaw was a south-country man; but it does not follow that the scene of Lucy's "flittin'" was the south country. We have heard south-country people express their strong disapproval of a custom which made "flitting" imperative at a time of the year when only wet or broken weather, with all its inconveniences,

could be expected. North-country people, again, regard their southern friends as singularly unfortunate in having to remove to new quarters at Whitsunday. What advantage, they ask, can any one have in a kailyard that cannot be delved and planted till the end of May? "Ilka land," says the old proverb, "has its ain laugh and its ain law."

It depends a good deal on the departing ploughman's character, or rather disposition, whether his foy at Martinmas is big or little. His comrades like a social fellow, who has no meanness or treachery with him. Burns's estimate was the ploughman's estimate of a man :—

> "The social, friendly, honest man,
> Whae'er he be,
> 'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,
> And none but he."

As many as eight or nine men, with as many of the maid-servants additional, may take part in a Martinmas foy. The entertainment could not begin till the horses on the farm were "suppered"; but beginning at nine P.M., a late hour for a ploughman, it might go on till one or two next morning. Before 1853 the foy was usually held in some neighbouring alehouse; if held there after the Forbes Mackenzie Act came into operation, adjournment would be made at eleven to some neighbour cottar or ploughman's. Not seldom the farm foreman's house was the scene of the foy. The entertainment was of the simplest—whisky diluted with "sma' ale," and the never-failing fare of the country, "cheese and bread." There was plenty of talk. It would begin with the new place Jocky was

going to, include a description of the pair of horses he was to have in charge, and speculate as to the names and nature of his new neighbours. He might be entrusted with messages to this or that person supposed to be residing in the locality to which he was going—verbal letters of introduction recommending himself. Songs would be sung—ploughmen's songs: such as creep along the country-side and escape collection; sometimes, not often, one of Burns's. Burns's songs were well known, and required good style in the singer to make them acceptable; whereas a new song or ballad might be indifferently rendered—its interest was largely its novelty. They would dance, as the night wore on—mostly to their own rough and ready music. A ploughman with a little whisky in his pulse needed little invitation to the dance. Foursome reels were the favourite dance. Occasionally they would order their steps to the rhythm of the bagpipe, played by some Highland shepherd or ploughman. Towards the close of the foy, tenderness would begin to manifest itself, and a great deal would be said and done in the strictest confidence. A "greetin' match," as Jocky took farewell of Jenny in the midst of their friends, was not uncommon. Sometimes not love, but friendship, was the *motif*. And often tears were shed at parting with a favourite horse. It might be, "Man! a'm vexed at pairtin' wi' yon Bob horse!" Bob, it is to be explained, was a willing worker associated with a lazy mate. He would enlarge on what Bob could do at "leading" time—how many thraves of wheat he could lead at one rake, and never turn a hair! There

were few presents interchanged, none costly, at the parting scenes. A comrade might present Jocky with a "snuff-pen;" or Meg or Jenny might extend the gift of a riband—red, or green, or black—for Jocky's watch.

Next morning about eight o'clock Jocky got away, if he was on terms of good agreement with his master. If not, he might be kept at his work till noon. He was in high spirits; his year's fee was in his pocket. The ploughman was counted weirdless who broke on his fee while it was in his master's hands. A "single" ploughman had only two items of luggage—his kist and his meal-stand. The latter was a padlocked barrel for his oatmeal. These he would commission the carrier to call for and convey to his new bothy. Or, if he were removing only a few miles away, he would himself fetch them in the evening with the help of his new horse. His departure was quietly taken at last. Sometimes two or three ploughmen, all leaving together, would go in company for a mile or twain, separating where their common road divided, or at the quiet four-ways, each to his own destination at some distant farm. Years might elapse till chance brought them together again.

HOGMANAY.

THE customary observances at Hallowe'en, remarks Carlyle, passed and re-passed in rude awe and laughter from the times of the Druids without receiving poetical commemoration till the genius of Burns once and for all appropriated the interesting subject. A theme of equal interest and as ancient and mysterious an origin remains unutilised to this day in the usages and ceremonies proper to Hogmanay. This hoary institution, with which the nation has not yet quite broken, was celebrated, as every Scot even in this revolutionary nineteenth century knows, on the last day of the dying year. This used to be a day, more especially in rural Scotland, of extreme sociality among friends and "auld acquaintance," and of profuse, if somewhat rough and ready, hospitality even to the stranger poor. Every house of any pretension to prosperity and respectability made the chance-comer welcome to food and drink. The feeling of brotherhood seemed to be general. The rich and the well-to-do seemed on that day to make haste to entertain their less fortunate brothers of mankind—in many instances they would let them go only after loading them with gifts. The respectable poor, on the other hand, laid aside for the day their honest pride, that would not let them

beg, and accepted that entertainment and those gifts in the spirit in which they were offered. The cause of this prevalent generosity of feeling, affecting all classes, has long been matter of discussion, in which, as was perhaps inevitable, the name of the institution figured prominently. They find, for example, in "Hogmanay" a corruption of the French words "Homme est né," and account for the public rejoicings by a reference to the nativity of Christ. It is supposed to be no bar to this interpretation of the institution and name of Hogmanay that the traditional anniversary of the birth of our Lord is the 25th and not the 31st of December. "Many superstitious ideas and rites pertaining to Yule," says old Dr Jamieson, "have been transferred to the last day of the year." While some are satisfied with the theory of a Christian origin for Hogmanay, others claim for both name and institution a much more ancient descent. They trace the word variously to a Celtic, a Scandinavian, a German, even a Greek root, and agree only in this, that the rejoicings associated with the name are of Pagan birth. There seems to be some reason for connecting Hogmanay with the *gui* or *guy*—to whatever speech the word originally belongs—the name of the mystic mistletoe. But the whole subject of derivation and original meaning is wrapt in obscurity. One is on firmer and safer ground in speaking of the manner in which Hogmanay was more recently celebrated.

It has been said that customs properly belonging to Yule, or Christmas, have been transferred to the last day of the year. But the very term of "Yule" itself

was synonymous with Hogmanay in many, if not most, of the districts of central Scotland at the commencement of the century. Certain it is that it was no uncommon practice some sixty years ago to invite a person to his "Yule," as the entertainment was called, on the last day of December, in many parts of southern Perthshire. It would be interesting to know whether Yule was held in Ayrshire on the last night of the old year in the time of Burns. If it was, then Burns's only allusion to Hogmanay is under this name. It was on "blythe Yule nicht" that young Duncan Gray came (*sc.* soberly) "to woo" Maggie, and it was then that the too social company at the house of his *inamorata* were undeniably drunk.* It was the general practice—where the custom was known—for the farmer to give his servants their "Yule" or "Hogmanay" on the closing night of the old year. This consisted at least of a dram of whisky, with "cheese and bread." The same entertainment was repeated on the first Monday morning of the new year. A very noticeable feature of Hogmanay used to be the numerous gangs of respectably-dressed grown-up people, who, from early morning till night, perambulated the countryside, "thigging." Churlish and parsimonious farmers, like Nabal of old, spoke of the practice as wholesale begging, and probably the bad name they sought to fasten on the practice had

* It may have been on the same occasion, but of a much earlier year, that Robin's Jock came to woo "our Jenny," and it is interesting—if not satisfactory—to know that on that "feast even" also the company were "fou." See *The wooing of Jock and Jenny*, preserved by Bannatyne, printed in Ramsay's *Evergreen*.

the effect of checking it a good while before the Legislature made begging a crime. It was mainly engaged in by the respectable poor, whose industry kept them beyond need of parish support. As they were resident in the district in which they practised thigging, they were, of course, well known, and a good reputation for respectability commonly stood them in good stead. They carried with them bags and napkins for the conveyance of the expected gifts. These consisted in all cases of articles of food. At one farmstead a single thigger might have the gift of a peck, or even two pecks, of oatmeal, or a cheese, or half a ham, or a string of hog's puddings. As a rule, he did not need to introduce himself; he would be welcomed with the words, "Ye'll be come for your Hogmanay, na?" By nightfall many thiggers who had been supplied at each place of call on some such scale as I have quoted would be laden like little "cuddies," and have some difficulty in conveying their provisions home. Liberality like this, freely offered as a rule and frankly accepted, kept the neighbourhood in good agreement for the rest of the year. The Yule or Hogmanay thiggers were grown up; the Hansel collectors, again, were chiefly young people, and the gifts, freely enough bestowed upon them, were on a much smaller scale—though, if numerous enough, the sum total was considerable.

Another prime feature of a Hogmanay celebration was "the guising." The "guisards" were maskers, who, disguising their features and figure, visited their friends and acquaintance by night, and made mirth by singing, dancing, and acting, and by defying their

entertainers to find out who they were. The practice was in great favour with the youth of both sexes, who, under cover of darkness, and with the freedom of a perfect or even doubtful disguise, and stimulated besides by the hilarious spirit of the season, occasionally ran to licentious lengths in both speech and action. Because of the scandal which seemed inseparable from guising, the Church sternly opposed the practice. If the Scots borrowed the custom of guising at Yuletide, they were probably indebted to France for it. In that country it was extremely popular, and was conducted with such irreverence that the Papal clergy were constrained—but to little purpose—to interfere, and the practice was at last prohibited by the civil law towards the end of the seventeenth century. Guising in Scotland was the most picturesque feature in the celebration of Hogmanay. The maskers, who might be of any age from fifteen to five-and-twenty, usually went in pairs, but gangs of five or six were by no means uncommon. They were, of course, variously disguised, nearly all fantastically, and very many grotesquely. Sometimes, but rarely, they were "got up" to represent brutes—the swine and ass being the favourites. The simplest and easiest disguises were "cooming" the face with a burnt cork, or anointing it with a mixture of grease and soot, and turning the clothes of everyday wear inside out. But an old military uniform or the cast garments of old people of both sexes were to be seen on figures equally unaccustomed to the upright bearing of the soldier and the decrepitude of stooping age. Wherever they came they sang, and their preference

was usually for "character" songs, though any piece that happened to be popular at the time was readily drawn into their service. All classes, "wauf" and well-to-do alike, were found among the guisards. Many went masking for the fun of it, and were content with the entertainment which was set before them in the kitchens or parlours where they were received. But those who were willing to accept gifts were supplied with them, and money was sometimes added to the ordinary gift of "singing" cakes and cheese. Part of the fun—no inconsiderable part—on the entertainers' side was to identify the guisards. Young people of very tender age were allowed by their parents to go a-guising, but never to houses more than a few yards from their own homes. A little bodies' lilt to intimate they would now be glad to have their "Hogmanay" was

> "Around the midden a' whippit a geese (*sic*)—
> A'll sing nae mair till a' get a bit 'piece!'"

Older guisards, who were still new to the 'teens, were more explicit:—

> "Get up, gudewife! (*Llåfdige*) and dinna be sweir,
> An' deal your gear as long's you're here;
> The day will come when ye'll be dead,
> And ye'll need neither meal nor bread."

But every district has its own *repertoire* of guisin'-e'en rhymes, which might be worth the collecting even yet. In towns the practice of guising is confined to young children, who make it the merest excuse for begging. They further seek to extend the practice beyond its proper bounds. In the country also the

younger guisards in their impatience would anticipate the recognised date by a night or two. But the practice received no encouragement from sticklers for the regular game. The youngsters would be dismissed ere they had well shown their smutted faces or opened their mouths, with an "Awa'; this is no guisin'-e'en!"

One or two strange domestic customs connected with Hogmanay, and probably still practised, may be noticed. One deals with fire, the other with water. Great care was taken on the last night of the old year not to let the fire die out in the grate. It was "gathered," for the purpose of preserving it, by means of peat or coal. No harm was supposed to attach to letting the fire out *per se;* but there was the well-known difficulty of getting a light from a neighbour's fire next morning. It was not only certain to be grudged by the neighbour, but was likely to be refused. The old "freit" or superstition on the subject declared that whoever gave fire from his house on New Year's Day would have his house burned over his head before the year was out.

The "water" custom of Hogmany night was to slip from the house when the clock pronounced the doom of the old year, and, pitcher in hand, make for the nearest well in time to secure, before any of your neighbours, what was variously called the "crap," the "floo'er," and the "ream" of the water for the New Year just begun. The custom was restricted to the women of the hamlet or homestead; in some localities only the young unmarried women. The ream of the well brought good fortune for the year. Some

antiquaries connect this, and the "fire" superstition, with classical usages of ancient Italy. Be that as it may, the "water" custom was still active, in my own knowledge, in a Perthshire hamlet not many years ago. The winner of the "well ream" for the year was known as the wife "wha gaed to the water wi' a pitcher an' brocht hame the ream o't in her pooch!" A wreath of snow lay across the well-mouth, concealing the limit of safety, and like poor Leezie in "Halloween"—

> "In the pool
> Out owre the lugs she plumpit
> Wi' a plunge that nicht!"

HANSEL AND HANSEL-MONDAY.

> "O gie the student his degree,
> The advocate his hansel fee!"

In the time of Allan Ramsay the term *hànsel* in its ordinary use signified, in Ramsay's own words, "the first money that the merchant gets." This meaning of the word, exactly as Ramsay restricted it, still obtains among the old-fashioned shopkeepers (*merchants* by courtesy) of the High Street of Edinburgh. The first coin received into the retail trader's till of à Monday morning is regarded as the hansel of the week's drawings. "How's business to-day, Mr Luckenbooth?" asks Mr Traveller in his cheery way on a Monday forenoon. "Just deein' awa'," replies the despondent merchant; "my till's gapin' for its hansel yet!" It is interesting to observe that there is a good deal of the original meaning of the word in the shopkeeper's use of it. It is undoubtedly in its origin a commercial term. Clearly, the composition of the word is "hand" and "sell." As thus compounded, it probably applied to a transaction of primitive barter, in which the articles exchanged passed at once into the hands of the contracting parties. It was delivery (*i.e. sale*) by hand the moment the bargain was made. The next

stage in the development of the word was apparently to apply it to the first instalment of a bargain. A portion or sample of the goods was handed over to the purchaser, in earnest or as *arles* (the two words are identical) that the rest of the goods would follow in due course. As thus described, the ceremony of handselling—*minus* the sample or first instalment—may be seen any market day, where a couple of farmers are concluding a bargain. As everybody knows, this is done by touching or shaking hands. The bargain-makers do not necessarily part company at such a hand-shaking. It is not the ceremony of leave-taking that is gone through, but the *empty* form (which, however, is held as binding) of making offer on the one hand and accepting on the other. The hand-clasping at a marriage ceremony has the same meaning.

From its original commercial use, the word was soon applied in other relations. Thus, on the authority of Jamieson, a piece of bread eaten before breakfast used to be called a morning hansel by the people of Galloway. The stomach received an arles that a full meal was in preparation. It will be in the knowledge of every Scotsman that Burns's auld farmer hanselled in the New Year to his auld mare with a ripp of corn—*i.e.*, with a few handfuls of unthreshed oats. The gift was by way of promise or earnest to "Maggie" that her master should not see her come to want in the ensuing year—that her "auld days would not end in starvin'." And, indeed, though the action meant that, the auld farmer confirmed it with words of explicit tenderness—

> "My last fow—
> A heapit stimpart I'll reserve ane,
> Laid by for you."

Which means that if misfortune were to reduce him to his last bushel he should take good care to set aside a good half-peck of it for his "auld trusty servan'." Hansel is sometimes employed to signify the first act of using anything. Thus, at a railway station near Buckhaven the other day, a buxom fisher lassie was heard lamenting the loss of her umbrella:—"It was its hansel ootin'—its first hoist!"

The first Monday of the New Year has long been known in Scotland, more especially the northern half of the Lowlands, as Hansel-Monday, from the custom among people of the working class of asking or receiving gifts or hansel from their well-to-do neighbours, and from each other, on that day. It lingers in those rural districts where Christmas may pass unmentioned, and where New Year's Day is only marked by the luxury of an unaccustomed dram, and the interchange of good wishes at the libation of it. The sticklers for the retention of the Hansel-Monday festivities reckon, of course, by the old style; but the introduction in some quarters of the new way of reckoning, and the growing popularity of Christmas and New Year's Day, the latter especially, are confining the old-fashioned holiday of old Hansel-Monday to a continually diminishing area, and the probability is that the twentieth century, which is already within cry, will make quick and quiet work in dispatching it.

While the practice of hanselling and being hanselled was not so long ago pretty universal in the country,

and dates from times as ancient as Arthur of the Round Table (if I mistake not, there are incidental references to the practice at the court of King Arthur in the old metrical romances), the allocation of the first Monday of the year for the observance of the custom by servants calls for some explanation. It may be that the festivities of the first day of the year, as celebrated by the lords of the land, required the performance of extra duties by their servants, and that the latter had their turn of rejoicing and holiday-making on the first Monday after those festivities. This explanation hardly meets the case at all points, for when New Year's Day happens to fall on a Monday, it is kept in some districts as Hansel-Monday, while in others the holiday is deferred to the Monday following. It is thus a dispute whether Hansel-Monday is properly to be held on the first Monday of the New Year or on the first Monday *after* New Year's Day. The determination of the point must affect my explanation.

On farms, Hansel-Monday where it is kept is the great winter holiday of the year. Outdoor and indoor servants alike have a complete escape from bondage for the day, and many a farmer will own that the hardest day's work for him and his wife throughout the year occurs on Hansel-Monday. The necessary labours of the farm have to be done on that day by the members of his own household. Use and wont has given the day to his servants. Not only has he himself to help fill their place, but he is expected to hansel them, from foreman to herdboy, and part of the hansel almost invariably includes a gift of a little

money. In one view of the matter, it is a wholesome reversal of relations between rustics and their employers. A notable feature of the manner in which country people celebrate Hansel-Monday is their evident desire to enjoy the whole twenty-four hours of the holiday. They are astir at the sma' hours after midnight, and it is near midnight again before they think of lying down. In their impatience to have the holiday commence, young people usually waken the villages by kicking old tin pans at unearthly hours of the morning through the quiet streets. Thereafter they begin a house-to-house visitation for gifts, while their awakened elders spend the day in feasting and drinking; taking part in raffles for currant loaves, watches wheelbarrows, or pigs; and drinking toddy in turn at each others' houses in the evening.

ST VALENTINE'S DAY.

> " Yestreen at the valentines' dealing
> My heart to my mou' gied a sten,
> For thrice I drew ane without failing,
> And thrice it was written—*Tam Glen!*"

THE practice to which these well-known lines of Burns refer has clean passed away. It was common enough when they were written—now one hundred years ago—and in rural districts of Scotland was probably universal. In these districts it has lingered longest; and there must be many old or elderly persons amongst us who remember in their youth taking part in the practice. The century, when it was still among the "thirties," looked with no disfavour upon the rustic merriment that attended a "valentines' dealing." But its own inventions and scientific discoveries, its projects and its anticipations, have had the effect of breaking its connection with many a traditional and time-honoured institution, of which the great annual lovers' festival of St Valentine's Eve was one. Nobody keeps vigil for the 14th of February now. The festival has gone even more clean and completely than its more antiquated but not more joyous sister institutions of Hallowe'en and Hogmanay. The favourite sports and customs of this inventive

nineteenth century are almost entirely those of its own creation. It has broken with the mirth and sociality of the past more effectually than any of its predecessors.

It was the custom in every rustic community when Scotland was still ancient—that is, less than a century ago—for one or more companies of young unmarried folks of both sexes to meet together on St Valentine's Eve, in the house of one or other of their more socially-inclined neighbours, for the purpose of trying the award of fate in a drawing of valentines. The arrangements for the frolic were of the simplest. Yet they were sufficiently effective to secure a gathering. Then, at least, it was true that in the spring the young folks' fancy "lightly turned to thoughts of love." It was only necessary to provide two bags and a quantity of tickets bearing the names of eligible individuals well known in the community. The bachelors of the rustic gathering drew from the bag containing the female names, while the maids drew from that which held the names of the bachelors. At some assemblies the names were limited to the individuals constituting the company; but as it seldom happened that the company was equally composed of members of both sexes, and as it was necessary for the proper observance of the festival that each person should be provided with a mate, it was not unusual to add the names of absentees. Some of the absentees were—from advanced age, or evil temper, or bodily deformity or defect—anything but desirable partners: a circumstance which, of course, heightened the interest of the drawing, and gave greater variety to the blind awards

of the "poke" of destiny. Delight or dissatisfaction rarely failed to show itself in the countenances of the drawers, even when they sought to conceal the name on the ticket. One of two things could be inferred from the concealment of a name that had been drawn —either that fate's award was the object of special dislike or even aversion, or was the object of sincere but secret affection. It was usual to make appeal to the decision of the lot three times (they did the same in the "luggie" ceremonial at Hallowe'en) for better assurance of the will of fate; and his or her lot was, of course, fixed beyond all alteration who drew—as did Tam Glen's sweetheart—the one name "thrice without failing." As a rule, the result of each person's drawing was known to the rest; and it occasionally happened that the bashfulness of young people, quite prepared to become mutual lovers, was overcome by the decision of St Valentine, and that in this way real engagements were formed which by and by matured into matrimony. Married people, especially wives, belonging to the neighbourhood, attended those gatherings, and showed, as passive but by no means silent spectators, an interest in the awards of the love-lottery as keen as that of the most active of the young folks for whose behoof the day of St Valentine had been appointed. They encouraged the bashful girl and bantered the conceited bachelor, and generally kept the fun and excitement from flagging often till a late hour of the night. When the lottery was at last over, and some were happy, while some were disappointed, and all were excited, the homely entertainment of a few "girdle" cakes and a

"twalpenny's worth o nappy
Wad mak' the bodies unco happy."

They became hilarious, and sang and danced it off to the late long hour, heedless of the scowl of the Kirk, which was (neither divinely nor humanly) inimical to late hours, and expressly hostile to what it called promiscuous dancing.

This resort to lot and good St Valentine for a lover was by no means confined to rustic communities in Scotland. It was known and practised in England, and in several countries on the Continent, in mediæval times, and was very much in vogue among people of rank and riches in the 15th and 16th centuries. It seems to have been usual then for the lovers to exchange presents, and to maintain a kind of chivalrous bearing towards each other, of a nature which has been compared to the relation that existed between a knight of romance and his ladye-love, for at least one year—that is, till St Valentine permitted and provided a change. In the reign of the Merry Monarch it would seem from the Diary of that prince of tattlers, Mr Pepys, that married people could take part in the celebrations of St Valentine's Eve, and that the custom of presenting gifts had sunk, through inability or refusal to accept the award of the Saint, into the payment of forfeits—similar to the mail which spinsters, if they choose, may, in certain circumstances, levy on a 29th of February, only much costlier.

The practice of sending "valentine" letters by post was a later feature of the celebration of St Valentine's Day. It has not yet entirely disappeared, but every twelvemonth there is all over the country, in regions

where the custom lingers, a sensible diminution in the number of those fragrant billets. Whilom they were of aggregate bulk enough to break the postman's back; now he can carry them in the pocket of his vest, if the Government allow him one. Serving maids and men, but especially the former, in our larger towns, and a fraction of the peasantry inhabiting the more forlorn parishes, are the modern representatives—few in number—of those ancient lovers who yearly sought out and saluted their mates by favour of the post. Their missives, though calling in the art of both painter and poet, had yet a certain monotony of features which, for want of development, helped, we think, in some measure to put an end to the custom. The painter or designer confined himself to the representation of a pair of genteel lovers; a fat Cupid or two, drawing vigorous bows; and the never-failing emblem of a brace of bleeding hearts, pitifully pinned together. Roses filled the foreground, and a church-spire rose up as a signal of hope and help in the rear. The poet's part of the work was to condense as much sweet sentiment into two or four lines of verse as—with the aid of the united Nine, no doubt—he could possibly manage.

> "The rose is red, the violet's blue,
> Honey's sweet, and so are you!"

This was to the point without being epigrammatic. Or in a less luscious and direct, but more tender and somewhat forgetful strain—

> "Look on those eyes that ever gaze
> With truth and love on thine,
> The voice that wearies not in praise
> Of thee, my valentine."

(" He goes but to see a voice which he heard," says Peter Quince in the play !) We quote from a dainty but frail old print, with a deep border of paper lace-work, and a thin garland of roses and violets, enclosing the portrait of a languishing young Romeo-Adonis, whose eyes may be truthful and loving, but whose voice is scarcely visible. There can be no doubt that many an honest, simple-minded rustic, whose heart was seriously affected, believed in the institution and efficacy of the postal valentine. The male specimen—always the more lavish—has been known to expend five shillings, or even more, upon the print which best expressed, his fears and hopes, his general unworthiness, and his particular wishes; painfully to smear in the letters of his own name and those of his charmer; and with much sheep-stealing-like secrecy to commit the missive to the hands of the waylaid postman. Happy if in return he received a sixpenny leaf from his Dulcinea ! to take odd peeps at it among the February furrows, and at last to consign it to the "locker" of his kist as a valuable treasure scarcely inferior to his whole year's fee. Ridiculous and vulgar valentines came in among all this sweetly sentimental sort, and hastened that decay of the postal valentine which the monotony of the artists' imagery had already commenced. The Christmas card—a formidable rival, capable of expansive development, and of universal use throughout Christendie—crept rapidly into favour, and the valentine was doomed. It may be that, unless the card keep clear of the threatening taint of vulgarity, its doom may follow that of the valentine.

"Who was St Valentine?" is a question often asked

and often unanswered. Why *he* was selected to be the patron saint of youthful lovers is the more difficult query to answer. That he was a Christian priest who suffered martyrdom in pagan Rome, in the second or third century of our era, is generally believed; and we have the further information that he was killed with clubs and then decapitated, and that his death occurred some time in February. It was, I think, Douce in his "Illustrations of Shakespeare" that first connected the "valentines' dealing" with a very similar feature of the old Roman festival of the Lupercal, held in the middle of February. It has been suggested that the Church, being unable to abolish the popular old pagan custom of the Lupercalian games, contrived (*suo more*) to give them a Christian aspect by placing them under the presidency of a saint to whom a day in mid-February was dedicated. The Church had no choice; Valentine was the only saint in its calendar associated with February. Similarly the Scandinavian celebration of Yule was converted into the religious institution of Christmas.

It is out of place here to do more than refer to the many allusions to St Valentine's Day and its usages which are to be found in the pages of poet, romancer, and essayist, from Chaucer and Shakespeare continuously down to Charles Lamb and Sir Walter Scott. St Valentine had an ephemeral literature in the days of the missives. He has the honour of a standard literature of goodly bulk besides.

ALL FOOLS' DAY.

It is with a touch of characteristic humour that Lamb, in the delightful essays of Elia, makes incidental reference to All Fools' Day as "the general holiday." The expression may be said to imply sarcasm, but there is no sting in it—for it covers the speaker. It is genial and gently insinuated. As genially inclusive but more explicit is the testimony of Sir Walter: "All Fools' Day, the only saint that keeps up some degree of credit in the world; for fools we are with a vengeance." How different is the direct denunciation of Carlyle, that the population of these islands—a representative community—amounts to so many millions, "mostly fools!" One is certain the grim censor did not include himself.

There is a time for everything, says Solomon; and the world, in addition to indiscriminate and mostly unseasonable indulgence of the frailty, has even set apart a statutory time for the practice of folly. Even the grave and ponderous Roman, *dominus orbis terrarum*, stooped to hy-jinks, and found it sweet in its place; he permitted the Saturnalia, when Davus domineered, and he donned the demeanour of Davus, and topsy-turvydom reigned in the social world. Christianity, which put an end to the folly of Pagan worship, found

it a harder task to suppress the folly of Pagan fun, and was fain to compound for the loss of its dignity by a nominal control of the popular instinct. From the compromise are said to have sprung the institutions of Christmas and Hogmanay, and the figures of the Monks of Misrule and the Abbots of Unreason, and other similar mediæval phenomena. All Fools' Day, which for some centuries now has been associated with the first day of April, is believed by many to have been one of those phenomena. Nobody needs to be told that the essential feature of the celebration of All Fools' Day is to dispatch the simple or the unwary on some meaningless message or absurd errand. This feature of the festival is supposed to have been caught, by the old unregenerate heathen appetite for fun, out of the mysteries or miracle plays by means of which the early Church sought to combine religious instruction and amusement for the benefit of the masses. A favourite subject for such entertainment at Easter was the trial of Christ, in the course of which the impersonator of Jesus was sent backwards and forwards from tribunal to tribunal—from Caiaphas to Annas and from Herod to Pilate—in endless journeys, until it was decided in whose jurisdiction the trial was to proceed. The rude mob, it is argued, saw exquisite fun in those endless wanderings, and took to imitating it in the privacy of their own neighbourhood by practising upon some witless or simple-minded acquaintance. By and by the custom, from the very first an Easter one, got to be definitely associated with an easily remembered date, the 1st of April; and the connection once established, has

existed ever since. This explanation is probably more ingenious than genuine.

The Romans had their indulgence of foolery, as by law appointed, in December at the Feast of Saturn; over most, if not all, Europe at the present time, and for the last four or five centuries at least, the time for this indulgence has been fixed at the first day of April. It is impossible to say authoritatively when or why the change was made. Of course, it is possible that European contemporary nations of the Saturnalian age at Rome had their Fools' Festival, north of the Danube or west of the Rhine, at a different time of the year, perhaps even at a time corresponding to our 1st of April. It is certainly curious, and to the ethnologist suggestive, that from time immemorial the inhabitants of India, of all ranks, races, and religions, have kept a holiday of the same kind and at much the same season as All Fools' Day. This is the festival (in honour of Krishna and his son Kama, the god of love) variously known as the Holi, Huli, or Hulica. It begins about the middle of March, and continues for fifteen days, a special effort to accentuate the festival being reserved for the last day—which, it should be observed, is the day preceding the 1st of April. In the larger towns the British have restricted the holiday season, for various obvious reasons, to a couple of days or so. A learned authority on the large and labyrinthine subject of Hindoo Mythology writes as follows: "The Huli among the Hindus reminds one strongly of the Saturnalia with the Romans; people of low condition take liberties with their superiors in a manner not admissible

on other occasions. The chief fun in public is throwing coloured powders on the clothes of persons passing in the streets, and squirting about tinted waters. . . . Sending simpletons on idle errands contributes also to the delights of the Huli, and this is performed exactly similar to our English ceremony of making April Fools on the first of that month, and is common to all ranks of Hindus; and Mohammedans join in it." Elsewhere he writes: "During the whole period of fifteen days the people go about scattering powder and red liquor over each other, singing, and dancing, and annoying passengers by mischievous tricks, coarse witticisms, and vulgar abuse."

Each country in Europe would seem to have its own way of designating the simple-minded victim of the 1st of April. He is in France an April fish, in England an April fool, and a gowk in Scotland. The time-honoured institution of "fool-making" in England is as active as ever it was. But the practice, as in Scotland, is now chiefly confined to young folks and rustics. The liberties taken by the practitioners of the pastime are ridiculous, but harmless enough. *Punch's* sketch is a representative one. "Fust of Hapril, sir!" says boy in buttons, with a grin, as his high and mighty master breaks an empty egg at the breakfast table. To pin a piece of paper to the coat-tail of a grave senior; to leave on his back an impression in chalk of the legend *To Let;* to arrest his attention by the untruthful announcement that he has dropped his diary; at worst, to convey to him, with a serious face, the false message that Mr This or Mrs

That would like to see him immediately on a matter of importance—is generally the amount of the roguery. Now and again an absent-minded philosopher or simple-minded Nathanael is entrapped—without an occasional victim the game would die out—and great is the delight of the trickster. The victim, if he be wise, or has at least some lingering vestiges in his heart of a vanished youth-time, takes the innocent deception good-humouredly, as a sensible man in a frequented thoroughfare takes the liberty of the wind with his fugitive hat.

The age of the institution of fool-making in England has never been clearly made out. There are few traces of it in literature * or the social history of the country before the seventeenth century. Swift's ineffectual attempt to make April fools of fashionable London, by starting an absurd rumour, is well known. The great Dean was fond to a fault of practical joking, and if the project failed it was neither his nor his footman's fault; his fellow-conspirators forgot or neglected their part of the plot.

In Scotland the victim of an idle errand is called a gowk, and is said to "gang the gowk's ærend." Occasionally the daft-like errand consumes a solid day. As thus: Tammas, a sober and respectable peasant, who takes life somewhat too seriously, departs in his Sunday coat with a letter purporting (believe the apprentice!) to come from the local grocer, and

* Congreve, in *The Old Bachelor*, defines an April fool as a person who is "always upon some errand that's to no purpose, ever embarking in adventures, yet never coming to harbour."—Heartwell in Act I. scene iv.

addressed to a bonnet laird living some six or eight miles in the virgin wilderness. The laird spells his way silently through the enclosure ("Give the gowk his dinner and send him on!"), and, being equal to the occasion, keeps a composed countenance, scrawls a similar missive to a distant neighbour, and dispatches the gowk with it, perhaps six miles farther into a dreary upland of whaaps and whins. The game goes on while daylight endures, and at last, on the stroke of curfew, the half-suspicious and wholly bewildered wanderer returns to the local grocer, having accomplished his destined rounds. The local grocer reads the note he brings, and at a glance perceives the posture of affairs. He asks the bearer if he knows what is in the note, and handing it to him, remarks, in a tone meant to be conciliatory—"Ye ken, Tammas, this is the first of Aprile; but ye've gotten a braw day an' a fine view o' the country!" Meanwhile the grocer's apprentice, though it is "shutting-up" time, suddenly finds something to do at the farthest end of the village.

The connection of the gowk with the first of April is commonly, I believe, misunderstood. "Gowk" in Scotland has long been synonymous with "fool." "You may think me rather foolishly employed," wrote young Michael Bruce to a correspondent (in a letter, by the way, of considerable literary significance), "for I am writing a sang about a gowk." The reference is believed to be to the famous "Ode to the Cuckoo," attributed by some to the Kinneswood poet's younger companion, John Logan. In England also, for at least three centuries, a stupid person has

now and again been called "cuckoo." "O' horse-back, ye cuckow!" says Falstaff, correcting a mis-apprehension of Prince Hal's. But naturalists tell us the gowk is rather rogue than fool. It makes its home in another bird's nest; it practises on the simplicity of its neighbours. Leaving its parental cares to others, it

> "makes on joyful wing,
> Its annual visit round the globe,
> Companion of the spring."

To go the gowk's errand may mean to go, like it, wandering from land to land without coming to any settlement. More probably to go the gowk's errand is to go for the bird—to find and fetch it. This is no easy matter, for the bird is both shy and rare; its ubiquity is only apparent. Its note is loud, unique, and ventriloquial; it is "at once far off and near." It was an invisible mystery to Wordsworth, who had keen eyes and long acquaintance with country objects. Its cry made him "look a thousand ways in bush, and tree, and sky." Not many have seen a live cuckoo. Its "curious shout" may attract the attention of every individual in a district, but it is probably the shout of one bird after all. There may have been a transfer-ence of the bird's name to the person sent to find and fetch the bird, *i.e.*, dispatched on a vain and idle errand.