

## CHAPTER I

### January--The Month of Janus

The first month was called Januarius by the Romans, after Janus, the god of doors and gates. We see the same word in janua, the Latin for a gate or opening. From the idea that a door is a way in, an entrance, it became a custom among the Romans to pray to Janus whenever they undertook a new work. He was also the god of the beginning of the day, and it was only natural that when a new month was added at the beginning of the year it should be named after him. During this month offerings to the god were made of meal, frankincense, and wine, each of which had to be quite new.

Since a gate opens both ways, Janus was thought to be able to see back into the past, and forward into the future, and he was usually represented in pictures as having a double head that looked both ways. On the earliest Roman coins he is drawn with two bearded faces, with a staff in one hand, and a key in the other. He was also the protector of trade and shipping, and on some coins his head is shown with the prow of a ship. When people wished to picture him as the god of the year, they drew him holding the number 300 in one hand, and 65 in the other.

Janus was worshiped on the Janiculum (Hill of Janus), one of the seven hills on which Rome was built. Since he was the God of Gates, all the gates of Rome were under his care, especially the archway through which the army marched to war, and by which it returned. This archway was afterwards replaced by a temple which was called Janus Quadrifrons--that is, four-sided--because it was

square. On each side of the building there were three windows and one door, making twelve windows and four doors, which represented the twelve months and the four seasons. In times of war the temple gates were kept wide open since people were continually making offerings to the god, but whenever there came a time of peace, the gates were at once closed. As we know the Romans were continually fighting, it does not surprise us to find that the gates of the temple were closed only three times in seven hundred years.

Janus was said to be the son of Apollo, the God of the Sun, whose daily task it was to drive across the sky in his chariot of fire. Each morning when Aurora, the Goddess of the Dawn, had opened the gates of the East, Apollo set forth, and when, his task accomplished, he reached the Western Ocean, he returned to his palace in the East.

"And the gilded car of day  
His glowing axle doth allay  
In the steep Atlantic stream:  
And the slope sun his upward beam  
Shoots against the dusky pole,  
Pacing toward the other goal  
Of his chamber in the East."

MILTON--Comus.

Apollo had another son, named Phaeton, who one day persuaded his father to allow him to drive the sun chariot. All went well for a time, and then Phaeton, being a reckless boy, began to drive too fast. He soon lost control of the horses, which plunged madly along and bore the chariot far from its track. It went so close to the earth that the fields were scorched, the rivers were dried up, and even the

people were turned black--and they are black to this day! The cries of the terrified people attracted the attention of Jupiter, the king of the gods, who became enraged when he caught sight of the daring boy in the chariot of the sun. Taking up one of his thunderbolts, he hurled it at Phaeton, who, scorched by its fire, fell headlong to the earth.

Another sad story told of Apollo is that of his friendship with a youth named Hyacinthus, to talk with whom Apollo used often to come down to the earth. Zephyrus, the God of the South Wind, was very fond of Hyacinthus too, and one day as Apollo and Hyacinthus were playing a game of quoits, Zephyrus came by. Filled with jealousy at the sight of Apollo and his friend, he blew Apollo's quoit aside so that it struck Hyacinthus and killed him. Apollo was greatly distressed at his friend's death, and in order that he might never be forgotten, changed the fallen blood-drops into clusters of flowers, which we still call Hyacinths.

"For so Apollo, with unweeing hand,  
Whilom did slay his dearly loved mate,  
Young Hyacinth born on Enrotas' strand,  
Young Hyacinth the pride of Spartanland,  
But then transformed him to a purple flower."

MILTON.

Another flower which should always remind us of Apollo is the sunflower. A story says that there once lived a girl named Clytie, and that each day, with eyes full of love for the fair sun god, she watched him journey across the sky: but Apollo, knowing nothing of her love, took no heed of her as he passed. Clytie watched for him day after day on a river bank, and her heart sank as each evening she saw his chariot dip down into the West. She would not leave the

river bank, but stayed all through the cold night, anxiously waiting for the first flash of the sun's rays from the glowing East. At last the gods took pity on her, and changed her into a sunflower. Her green dress became green leaves, and her golden hair became yellow petals. Now was she happy indeed, for she knew that she could always see Apollo, and you will find that to this day the sunflower turns its head towards the sun as it moves across the sky.

Aurora, the Goddess of the Dawn, whom we have mentioned as opening the gates of the East for the sun god Apollo, married a mortal, Tithonus, a prince of Troy. In order that their happiness might know no end, Aurora begged Jupiter to grant Tithonus immortality. The wish was granted, but in her anxiety that Tithonus should never be taken from her by death, Aurora forgot to ask also for the gift of eternal youth. As the years went on Tithonus grew old and weak and became only a burden to her. At length, tired of his shrill voice and constant complaints, she turned him into a grasshopper, whose shrill complaining note is known to all.

The name for this month among the Angles and Saxons was Wulfmonath (Wolf month), since it was the time of year when the wolves were unable to find food, and their hunger made them bold enough to come into the villages.

## CHAPTER II

### February--The Month of Purification

This month did not always hold its present position, but was originally the last month in the year. The name is taken from a Latin word, februare, meaning "to make pure".

In the Palatine Hill, another of the seven hills of Rome, was a cave dug in the rock, and in it stood an image of the god Lupercus covered with a goat's skin. Lupercus was the God of Fertility or springing into life, and on the 15th of February a great festival was held in his honour. Sacrifices of goats and dogs were made; then the priests cut up the skins of the goats, twisted the pieces into thongs, and ran through the city striking all who came in their way. As in the very earliest times it was the shepherds who held this festival, it is thought that this running about with thongs meant the purifying of the land. The idea of the whole festival seems to have been one of purifying, of a new life, so the name chosen for the month in which it was held was one formed from a word meaning "to make pure".

There are some who think that Lupercus was the same as Pan, the God of the Shepherds. Pan was said to have been a son of Mercury, but he was not like the other gods; his body was covered with goat's hair, and his feet and ears were also like those of a goat. He was very fond of music and dancing, and spent most of his time in the forests playing with the wood nymphs--beautiful girls who lived among the trees. One day he saw a wood nymph, named Syrinx, with whom he fell in love, but she was frightened and ran away from him, and when Pan pursued her she prayed to the gods for help. She was at once changed into a

clump of reeds, and Pan, in his disappointment, broke off seven pieces of the reed, bound them together, and so made an instrument of music, which was called the Syrinx after the beautiful wood nymph.

The invention of the Syrinx by Pan has been wonderfully described by Elizabeth Barrett Browning in a poem which begins:

"What was he doing, the great god Pan,  
Down in the reeds by the river?  
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,  
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat  
And breaking the golden lilies afloat  
With the dragon-fly on the river."

This story of Pan and Syrinx reminds us that the Greeks and the Romans imagined the mountains, the valleys, the woods, and the rivers to be peopled with lesser gods and goddesses, whose task of caring for the trees, the flowers, and the grass was appointed them by Jupiter. The woodland gods were known as Satyrs, and like their leader, Pan, were half man and half goat. Another famous satyr was Silenus, who was put in charge of Bacchus, one of Jupiter's sons, and the God of Wine. Silenus taught Bacchus, and accompanied him on his travels on the earth. The God of Wine rode in a chariot drawn by wild beasts, Silenus following him on an ass, and with them a merry company of nymphs and satyrs crowned with ivy leaves, who danced and sang and made music in praise of Bacchus.

"And as I sat, over the light blue hills  
There came a noise of revellers; the rills  
Into the wide stream came of purple hue--  
'T was Bacchus and his crew!

The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills  
From kissing cymbals made a merry din--  
'T was Bacchus and his kin!  
Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood  
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,  
With sidelong laughing."

KEATS--Endymion.

Many stories are told of the wood nymphs, as the Goddesses of the Woods were called. One of the most famous is that of the nymph Echo, who fell deeply in love with the beautiful Narcissus, whom she met hunting in the forest. Narcissus, however, took but little notice of her, and Echo's love soon turned to hatred and anger. She prayed to Venus, the Goddess of Love, that Narcissus might be punished for his hard-heartedness, and then sorrowfully hiding herself among the mountains, pined away until only her voice remained, and in lonely places the voice of Echo still answers those who call.

Meanwhile Venus sought an opportunity for punishing Narcissus by making him suffer in the same way as Echo had done. One day Narcissus, hot and thirsty with hunting, came to a shaded pool, and, as he stooped to drink, saw in the clear water the face, as he thought, of a water nymph. So beautiful was she that Narcissus was filled with love for her, and eagerly stretched out his arms; but no sooner did his hands touch the water than she vanished. He drew back in surprise and waited anxiously till the ruffled water became smooth, when again he saw the beautiful nymph. He spoke to her, and her lips answered him, though he heard no sound; he slowly put out his hands towards her, and her hands came to meet his. Sure now of her love, he tried a second time to clasp her in his arms, but, as before,