

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON ALMANACK FOR 1857.

ANNUAL CUSTOMS, SIGHTS, AND SHOWS, IN LONDON.*

Jan. 1—The British Museum closes.
 Jan. 6—*Twelfth-Day*, formerly kept as a great festivity at Court, in city, and in the country. On *Twelfth-Day*, 1731, George II. and the Princes of Wales made, at the Chapel Royal, St. James's, "offerings at the altar of gold, frankincense, and myrrh," according to custom; and on this day, an extra service, with music, is still performed here. The keeping of *Twelfth-Night* with "cakes and characters" is now but rare. Baddeley, the comedian (originally cook to Foote), left by will money to provide cakes and wine for the performers, in the Green-room, at Drury-lane Theatre, every *Twelfth-Night*; but the bequest is not regularly observed.
Plough-Monday (the Monday next *Twelfth-Day*), the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, and Aldermen proceed in state to Guildhall, to receive presentments of ward-mote inquests, &c.
 Jan. 8—British Museum re-opens.
 Jan. 11—*Hilary Term commences*; when the Judges, having breakfasted with the Lord Chancellor, at about one o'clock, proceed in their carriages with his Lordship to Westminster Hall, and there walk in procession to their respective Courts.
 Jan. 30—*Martyrdom of King Charles I*—The House of Lords attend Divine service in Westminster Abbey; the House of Commons, in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster.
The Opening of Parliament usually takes place about this time, by the Sovereign, in state. The out-door line of procession is from Buckingham Palace, through St. James's-park and the Horse Guards, to the House of Lords. Admission to witness the ceremony by tickets. By a similar privilege, the departure of the Sovereign may be witnessed at the Palace. The vaults beneath the Houses of Parliament are searched on the day previous—customary since the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot.
Shrove Tuesday.—The "Pancake" custom little observed. At Westminster a curious custom is retained: the upper and lower schools are divided by a bar, over which, on Shrove Tuesday, at eleven o'clock, the college-cook, attended by a verger, having made his obsequious to the Masters, proceeds to toss a pancake into the upper school—once a warning to proceed to dinner in the hall.
Ash Wednesday—Theatres closed.
Picture Exhibitions—Between the middle of February and the first Monday in May, the Exhibitions open for the season in the following order:—1. British Institution, Pall mall. 2. National Institution, Regent-street. 3. Society of British Artists, Suffolk-street. 4. New Society of Painters in Water-colours, Pall-mall. 5. Society of Painters in Water-colours, Pall-mall East. 6. Royal Academy, Trafalgar square.
 Feb. 14—*Hunterian Oration* delivered at the College of Surgeons, Lincoln's Inn Fields.
Royal Academy Lectures commence about this time: admission free, by Academicians' and Associates' tickets.
 March 1—*St. David's Day*—Annual Festival of the Society of Ancient Britons: they clothe and educate 200 boys and girls, who, on March 1. walk in procession from their school-house in Gray's inn-lane to St. George's Church, Hanover-square, each of the children wearing an artificial leek, and the officers of the charity a triple plume and a leek. In the evening the Society dine together, when the music is characteristically Welsh. On this day Welshmen (but chiefly members of clubs) wear leeks.
Christ's Hospital—Public Suppers take place on the eight successive Sundays terminating with Easter-day; when the public are admitted, by tickets signed by a Governor, to view the 800 boys sup in the Great Hall.
Society of Arts Annual Exhibition, John-street, Adelphi, opens about this date.
 March 17—*St. Patrick's Day*—Annual Festival of the Benevolent Society of St. Patrick. The Irish wear the Shamrock of their patron saint.
 March 25—*Fair in the Thames Tunnel* held to-day, the anniversary of the Opening of the Tunnel in 1843.
Levees, Her Majesty's, at St. James's Palace, usually commence in this month.
 April 1—*York Column Staircase* re-opens. Dulwich Gallery re-opens.
Palm Sunday is little observed in London: though the weavers of Spitalfields leaving their murky workshops, ramble into the fields and lowlands of Essex on this day, to gather "palm" and inhale a purer atmosphere.
Passion Week—All theatres licensed by the Lord Chamberlain are closed. On Monday and Tuesday her Majesty's bounties are distributed to the aged and meritorious poor at the Almshouse, in Whitehall; the Gate Alms are unlimited.
Maundy Thursday, the day preceding Good Friday, is the day on which the Royal bounty is distributed by the Queen's Almoners, in the Chapel at Whitehall, to poor men and women, two for every year her Majesty has attained. Admission to the Chapel only by tickets, obtainable at the Almshouse Office. The alms-money, consisting of sovereigns and silver pieces, of 4d., 3d., 2d., and 1d. value, or "Maundy Money," in purses, and red and white leathern bags, is carried in alms-dishes by Yeomen of the Guard, preceded by the Almoners, and at the conclusion of the first lesson is given to the pensioners; the purses to the women; and the leathern bags, with stockings, shoes, and broad-cloth, to the men.
Good Friday—"Hot Cross Buns" are rarely cried in the streets, as formerly.
Easter Eve—Midnight Mass at the large Catholic Chapels—a magnificent scene.
Easter Monday and Tuesday—The Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, and Aldermen, proceed in state to hear the Spital Sermons preached at Christ Church, Newgate-street. On Monday the Lord Mayor gives a banquet at the Mansion-house; on Tuesday the boys of Christ's Hospital walk in procession to the Mansion-house, where each is regaled with two buns and a glass of wine; and the Lord Mayor presents to each of the Grecians one guinea, half-a-crown to each monitor, and one shilling to each remaining boy. Greenwich fair is held on these days; and nearly every Theatre and Exhibition in the metropolis are open.
First Sunday of Easter Term—The Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, and Judges, go in state to hear Divine service at St. Paul's Cathedral.
Whitebait Season at Greenwich and Blackwall from April to August.
Drawingrooms—Her Majesty's, commence in April. At the first, forty of the "Mathematical Boys" of Christ's Hospital are conveyed in coaches to St. James's Palace, and there presented to the Queen, who inspects their charts; and the boys receive eight guineas. Tickets to see the Drawingroom company arrive are obtainable.
 May 1—*May Day*—The bedizened Sweeps' Jack-in-the-Green is now rarely seen; and the Mayings are little more than a few omnibus ribbons and flowers. On this day, and on December 27th, the young women educated in Raine's Charity Schools, Wapping, draw lots for a marriage portion of £100, the bridegroom being of St. John's, Wapping, or St. Paul's, Shadwell.
 May 1—British Museum closes.
May Meetings, or Anniversaries of Religious and Benevolent Societies, held this month, mostly in Exeter-hall, Strand. (See the printed lists.)

The Exhibition of the Royal Academy opens on the first Monday in May.
 May 2—Annual Distribution of Prizes, &c., at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.
 May 8—British Museum re-opens.
Royal Botanic Society's Three Exhibitions, Inner Circle, Regent's-park, in May, June, and July.
St. Paul's School Apposition in the fourth week after Easter.
Anniversary Festival of the Sons of the Clergy—Service and Sermon in St. Paul's Cathedral, towards the middle of May.
Horticultural Society's Three Exhibitions of Flowers and Fruits, at their Gardens, at Chiswick, in May, June, and July. Admission, by tickets only, at 5s. each, to be had at 21, Regent-street, by personal or written order of Fellows of the Society, the day before the Exhibition; tickets on the day, 7s. 6d. each.
Holy Thursday—Parochial bounds beaten; and Inns of Court closed, to prevent the claim of right of way.
Whit-Monday—Greenwich Fair and Steam-boat and Railway Excursions.
Trinity Monday—The Trinity Company assemble at their house on Tower-hill, and embark at noon, in official costume, in their splendid barges at Tower-stairs, for the Trinity Ground, at Deptford, to inspect the almshouses, and attend Divine Service at St. Nicholas Church; and then return to the Trinity-house, where a splendid banquet is served in the evening.
 May 21—*Her Majesty's Birth-day*—Drawingroom, official State dinners, and illumination of club-houses, Royal tradesmen's houses, &c. Park and Tower Guns fired at one p.m.—(The day of keeping varies.) *Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends*, Devonshire-house, Houndsditch.
 May 29—*Restoration of Charles II*—The Chaplain of the House of Commons preaches in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, before "the House," usually represented by the Speaker, the Serjeant-at-Arms, the clerks, and other officers, and some half-dozen Members. This is a day of Court dinners and Loving Cups at several City Companies halls.
 June 18—*Waterloo Day*—Grand inspection of troops in one of the parks, the Foot Guards wearing laurel, in memory of the great victory; Park and Tower guns fired at one p.m. The late Duke of Wellington on this day gave a banquet at Apsley House, to the surviving heroes.
 June—*Anniversary of the Charity Schools* held early in the month, beneath the vast dome of St. Paul's Cathedral: service, sermon, and sacred music; 8000 children generally present.
 June 20—*Accession of her Majesty*—Park and Tower guns fired one p.m.
 June 24—*Election of Sheriffs* in Guildhall.
Harrow School—Public Speech Days first Monday in June and July.
 June 25—*The Harveian Oration* delivered at the College of Physicians, Pall-mall East.
 June 28—*Coronation of her Majesty*—Park and Tower guns fired 1 p.m.
City of London School Prize-Distribution towards the close of July.
Swan-upting Excursions, in July and August, on the Thames, by the Lord Mayor and Dyers' and Vintners' Companies, in their state barges.
 Aug. 1—*Dogget's Coat and Badge* (silver), the oldest war rowed for on the Thames, from the "Swan" at London-bridge to the "Swan" at Chelsea.
 Sept. 1—British Museum closes
 Sept. 2—*Anniversary of the Great Fire of London, 1666*: Holiday at the Bank, Customs and Excise.
 Sept. 3—*Bartholomew Fair* formerly commenced, but now extinct.
 Sept. 8—British Museum re-opens.
 Sept. 17—*National Gallery* closes.
 Sept. 21—*St. Matthew's Day*. The Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, and Aldermen visit Christ's Hospital in state; and in the Great Hall, orations in Greek and Latin are delivered by the senior boys who are qualified for college. To each Grecian the Lord Mayor gives one Guinea, the Sheriffs half a guinea each. Visitors admitted by Governors' tickets.
 Sept. 24—The York column staircase closes.
 Sept. 28—The Sheriffs publicly sworn into office at Guildhall.
 Sept. 29—*Michaelmas Day*. The Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, and City Officers go in state from the Mansion-house to Guildhall, whence they walk to St. Lawrence's Church, King-street, to hear service; they then return to Guildhall, where a Common Hall is held for electing the Lord Mayor for the ensuing year.
 Sept. 30—*Procession of the New Sheriffs* from Guildhall to Blackfriars, and thence by water to Westminster, where the Sheriffs are presented in the Court of Exchequer; the senior Alderman below the chair, by chopping two bundles of sticks, does suit and service for a manor in Shropshire, and counts six horse-shoes and sixty-one hobnails for premises once in St. Clement Dances.
 Oct. 1—Winter Medical Session commences at the various Hospitals.
 Oct. 23—*National Gallery* re-opens.
 Nov. 1—*Dulwich Gallery* closes.
 Nov. 2—*First Day of Michaelmas Term*—Opening of the Law Courts at Westminster, as on January 11. The Gresham Lectures commence at the College, in Basinzhall-street.
 Nov. 8—*Inauguration of the Lord Mayor Elect*, when the ex-Lord Mayor resigns his insignia of office at a Court of Husting in Guildhall.
 Nov. 9—*Lord Mayor's Day*—State Procession by land and water from Guildhall to Westminster and back. Presentation of the Lord Mayor in the Exchequer Court. Grand Banquet at Guildhall, and dinners at various City Companies' Halls. Birthday of the Prince of Wales.
 Nov. 26—*Great Storm of 1703*—Annual Sermon in commemoration of, preached on the nearest Sunday in Little-Wild-street Chapel.
 Nov. 30—*St. Andrew's Day*—Holiday at the Bank, Customs, and Excise.
 Dec. 10—*Royal Academy Annual Distribution of Prizes*.
Smithfield Club Cattle Show, at the Bazaar, King-street, Portman-square, held the second week of December.
 Dec. 12—*Celebration of the Founders' Day at the Charter-House*—Sermon, Latin Oration in the Great Hall, and dinner of old Carthusians.
Westminster Play—Latin Plays (of Terence) represented by the Scholars at St. Peter's College, clad in Greek costume, upon the second Thursday in December, and the Monday before and after that day; the scenery designed by Garrick. Admission by tickets only.
 Dec. 21—*St. Thomas's Day*—Election of Common Councilmen in the City of London.
 Dec. 22—*The Great Meal and Poultry Markets* are now worth a special visit.
 Dec. 24—Christmas cheer distributed in her Majesty's prisons, and in the City prisons, union workhouses, &c.—Bow bells commence ringing at nine, p.m.—Grand Midnight Mass at the Roman Catholic Chapel, Finsbury; and musical service in other chapels.
 Dec. 25—Distribution of food to the destitute poor of the metropolis.
 Dec. 26—Nearly every Theatre and Public Exhibition open.
 Dec. 31—*Watching Out the Old Year* at the principal Wesleyan Chapel's.

* From "Curiosities of London: exhibiting the most Rare and Remarkable Objects of Interest in the Metropolis." By John Timbs, F.S.A.