



Michaelmas (Sept. 29th).—The Curfew bell, called "8 o'clock bell," used to be rung in the parish church of Chipping during the winter months, commencing at Michaelmas, and continuing to Shrove Tuesday. The large bell was rung for ten minutes, and afterwards the day of the month was struck on a smaller bell. The sexton, who rang the bell at Chipping, was remunerated by a voluntary contribution of corn and meal from the farmers of the neighbourhood. Every one having plenty of meal, a small quantity was readily given when applied for, and a considerable amount was thus collected. Afterwards, as the cultivation of corn gradually ceased, the contributions became less, and at last discontinued altogether. The custom of ringing the bell survived many years after the remuneration had ceased. An effort was made to get up a small subscription, as a compensation to the ringer, but after two years it fell through owing to the apathy of the people, and the ringing of the curfew from Michaelmas to Shrovetide was discontinued about 1871. After the appointment of a new sexton, after the death of Parkinson (Dec. 1879), who for some time had done little through infirmity, another attempt was made to re-establish the curfew; but after two years' continuance it was given up and is not likely to be resumed.

All Hallow E'en: the Teen-lay.—On the night of 31 Oct., the eve of All Saints', it was customary for Catholic families in the district to assemble at midnight outside their different farmsteads, one of the party holding up aloft at the end of a fork a large bunch of ignited straw. The rest knelt in a circle and prayed for the souls of their friends who might be in purgatory. William Bamber, aged 83, says that the priest at the Laund (as the hall was then called), the Rev. F. Lawrenson, used himself to hold the fork with the blazing straw, and was particular about making them pray as long as a spark remained. The ceremony usually took place on a hill or rising ground, the highest in the immediate neighbourhood of the farmer's dwelling. The popular idea was that the souls were temporarily released from the pains of purgatory whilst the flames continued: many considered that they were released altogether, and hence they shouted: "Go away, go away," until the last spark was extinguished.

At Leagram Mill, Townley Farm, Birchen Lea, and every Catholic house in the district, the custom was once universally observed, but became gradually discontinued through the difficulty of getting straw after corn-growing had been given up in the district.

Robert Dewhurst, of the Dairy Barn farm, Leagram, who used to send to Preston for straw for this occasion, kindled the Teen-lay fire in 1871, on the rising ground in the Barn field, and the custom was continued for some time by other Catholic farmers in Leagram and neighbourhood, when the night in question was not too wet or rough to turn out in. William Bamber remembers, when he was a young man and living in Whittingham, seeing fires on the eve of the 1st of November blazing in every direction, and forming a circle all round the horizon.

A field in Alston, near the Catholic chapel between Chipping and Preston, is still called Purgatory field. Other plots of land in the Fylde and elsewhere in the county are known by the same name. In these localities great numbers of persons met at this time and kindled fires in the manner above related.



ALSTON LANE CHAPEL. 1765



PRESTON 1829.

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Illustrations from various sources have been added.