

as the circle of changes of the seasons is designated by the word *year*. The lunar changes are, indeed, more obvious to the sense, and strike a more careless person, than the annual; the moon, when the sun is absent, is almost the sole natural object which attracts our notice; and we look at her with a far more tranquil and agreeable attention than we bestow on any other celestial object. Her changes of form and place are definite and striking to all eyes; they are uninterrupted, and the duration of their cycle is so short as to require no effort of memory to embrace it. Hence it appears to be more easy, and in earlier stages of civilization more common, to count time by *moons* than by years.

The words by which this period of time is designated in various languages, seem to refer us to the early history of language. Our word *month* is connected with the word *moon*, and a similar connection is noticeable in the other branches of the Teutonic. The Greek word *μήν* in like manner is related to *μήνη*, which though not the common word for the moon, is found in Homer with that signification. The Latin word *mensis* is probably connected with the same group.¹⁷

The month is not any exact number of days, being more than 29, and less than 30. The latter number was first tried, for men more readily select numbers possessing some distinction of regularity. It existed for a long period in many countries. A very few months of 30 days, however, would suffice to derange the agreement between the days of the months and the moon's appearance. A little further trial would show that months of 29 and 30 days alternately, would preserve, for a considerable period, this agreement.

The Greeks adopted this calendar, and, in consequence, considered the days of their month as representing the changes of the moon: the last day of the month was called *ἔνη καὶ νέα*, "the old and new," as belonging to both the waning and the reappearing moon:¹⁸ and their

¹⁷ Cicero derives this word from the verb *to measure*: "quia mensa spatia conficiunt, menses nominantur;" and other etymologists, with similar views, connect the above-mentioned words with the Hebrew *manah*, to measure (with which the Arabic word *almanach* is connected). Such a derivation would have some analogy with that of *annus*, &c., noticed above: but if we are to attempt to ascend to the earliest condition of language, we must conceive it probable that men would have a name for a most conspicuous visible object, *the moon*, before they would have a verb denoting the very abstract and general notion, *to measure*.

¹⁸ Aratus says of the moon, in a passage quoted by Geminus, p. 88:

Ἄπει δ' ἄλλοθεν ἄλλα παρακλίνουσα μετώπῳ

Ἐίρη, δ' ποστὰιη μῆνος περιτέλλεται ἠδὲ.

As still her shifting visage changing turns,

By her we count the monthly round of morns.