

FIERY JUNE.

A MONTH NOTORIOUS FOR CONFLAGRATIONS.

The month of June is proverbially the month of disastrous and terrible conflagrations.

On the 21st of June, 1877, the terrible fire of St John, N.B., took place, which swept away fully half the city, and nearly every place of business, rendering 15,000 people homeless, destitute and starving. The loss of property was estimated at \$15,000,000, while the insurance companies lost in the vicinity of \$6,000,000. On the 22nd of June, 1878, a large fire broke out on Queen St. in this city, destroying the Messrs. Ives & Co's hardware manufacturing establishment and the coffee and spice mills of Messrs. Ewing & Co. The loss was estimated in the vicinity of \$200,000.

What is commonly known as the Quenneville tragedy occurred on the second of June, 1879, consisting of the destruction by fire of Morey's livery stable and the foul murder of the night watchman, Alphonse Quenneville, by parties unknown.

The burning to the water's edge of the Sound steamer "Seawanhaka," opposite Randall's Island, East River, took place June 29th, 1880, and resulted in the loss of forty lives under the most distressing circumstances.

On the 9th of June, 1881, the terrible conflagration at Quebec destroyed St. John's Ward entirely sweeping away over one thousand houses and leaving nearly two thousand families homeless, and entirely unprovided for. The total loss was estimated at \$12,000,000.

A Large Fire in Montreal.

MONTREAL, June 13.—A terrible fire occurred to-night in Clendenning's block, Victoria Square. Miller's Son's bookbinding and stationery store, Greenshield's dry goods, and Clendenning's stove store were gutted. Loss, \$1,450,000; three-fourths insured. The fire is still raging fiercely. The water power at the beginning was not sufficient to cover the upper stories. The fire is now on the Craig street side. From all appearances the whole block, except McIntyre & French's, will be burned, but the flames will not extend further. Origin of fire unknown. A block of buildings at Dowagiac was burned to-day. Loss unknown.

BRIEFS AND RECORDS.

A DISASTROUS FLOOD.

VICTORIA, B. C., June 13.—Frazer river is still rising. Everything is under water at Chilliwack and Sumas. Sumas prairie resembles a gulf, and the heavy drift of timber is carrying everything before it. The bridges are all carried away and the farmers are sending their families away for safety. At Yale the suspension bridge is in danger. Considerable damage has been done to the railway works.

HEAVY STORMS IN THE WEST.

CHICAGO, June 11.—Specials from south-eastern Iowa, western Missouri and central Illinois, report heavy rain storms, in places, assuming the form of water spouts and doing much damage to property and washing away bridges, and railroad tracks.

Keep a cup of powdered borax on your wash stand, it will do wonders in the way of softening the skin. If you have been working in the garden, or doing things about the house which have tended to make your hands rough, when you wash them dip your fingers in the borax, and rub your hands well with it.

Prof. Whitney does not lay any weight on the removal of the forests as a cause of the dryness and desolation of former fertile and populous regions of the earth. He admits that the greater proportion of land to water in late geological eras may have a little to do with the decreased rain fall; but he attributes the diminished precipitation mainly to a lowering of the intensity of solar radiation during geological time.

TRUTHS.

That an occasional meal away from one's own house and at another's table relishes better than any at home.

That some men can get more fun and comfort out of a \$5,000 income per annum than others can out of a \$10,000 one.

That when men cease to believe in the Divine, or think they do, they begin to bow down before something human—or inhuman.

That a man will travel miles agonizing at every step from a bit of gravel or an obtrusive peg in his shoe before he'll stop and take it out.

That a man never knows what a weak, fickle and uncertain master he has in himself until he is at liberty to govern his own life and do as he pleases.

That when a poet or a philosopher dies a dozen men and women try to kitetail themselves to his name and write themselves into fame by telling all they know of him.

That so many people forget the weather they experienced last year and declare they "never saw such a spring as this before." No, never. What, never? No, never.

That histories written fifty years ago assert how the people of that time were living "at the apex of knowledge and enlightenment," which remark is sometimes repeated to-day.

That when a philosopher or scientist puts forth some new idea, all the wool gathering, the guesses, and his maunderings afterwards written by him about, around and concerning that idea or truth, or semi truth, as the case may be, are often by his admirers regarded as most important and sacred words.—*Argus*.

The Moon Theory.

—Since the establishment of meteorological stations all over the earth, it has been proved by millions of observations that there is no simultaneousness whatever between the supposed cause and the supposed effect. The whole story is a fancy and a superstition, which has been handed down to us uncontrolled, and which we have accepted as true because our forefathers believed it. The moon exercises no more influence on weather than herrings do on the Government of the United States.

—The notion that the moon exerts an influence on weather is so deeply rooted that, notwithstanding all the attacks which have been made against it since meteorology has been seriously studied, it continues to retain its hold upon the majority of us, and yet there never was a popular superstition more utterly without a basis than this one. If the moon did really possess any power over weather, that power could only be exercised in one of these ways. By the reflection of the sun's rays, by attraction or by emanation. No other form of action is conceivable. Now, as the brightest light of a full moon is never equal in intensity or quantity to that which is reflected towards us by a white cloud, in a summer day, it can scarcely be pretended that weather is affected by such a cause.

—That the moon does exert attraction on us is manifest. We see its working in the tides, but though it can move water, it is most unlikely that it can do the same to air, for the specific gravity of the atmosphere is so small that there is nothing to be attracted.

—Laplace calculated that the joint attraction of the sun and moon together could not stir the atmosphere at a quicker rate than five miles a day.

—As for lunar emanations, not a sign of them has ever been discovered.

Decay of the Spruce.

(To the Editor of the Witness.)

SIR,—In your issue of May 17th, I read a communication from Fairman Hall on the subject of "The Decay of Spruce Timber." I am pleased to read in your valuable paper a few lines from an experienced person on such an important subject. I was not aware until I read Mr. Hall's letter that the spruce timber in Quebec was dying. I was in hopes the trouble was confined to our own Province alone. It must be a universal decay all over the Dominion. I am a man of considerable experience in the spruce timber woods of this part of the country, being engaged for the last sixteen years each winter cutting and hewing spruce roots and other timber for ship building purposes. In the winter of 1872 and '73 I first noticed the spruce timber dying. My attention was drawn to it by observing woodpeckers at work on green, healthy-looking trees. On examining those trees I found the bark in the first stage of decay. On cutting such trees I closely watched for signs of rot about the roots, but found none, and as I had to remove the boughs and hew the timber up to nearly the extreme top, I had a good opportunity of observing all that was to be then seen; but, strange to say, the bark for nearly the whole length of the tree and the lower branches was all that showed any infection, the timber itself appeared to be perfectly sound. From that time up to the present I have each winter taken notice of the gradual decay of our spruce trees. The first year they will show a decaying of the bark; the second year those trees will be quite dead to the extreme top, but the timber inside seems to be perfectly sound, and will make lumber for house building purposes but totally unfit for ship-building use; the third year those trees are useless for any purpose, and others alongside seem to be in the first stage, and so each year the decay goes on. When I first observed it in 1872 I conceived the idea that it was occasioned by a succession of heavy gales we had in August, September and October of 1871, which shook the forests and disturbed the roots, and consequently broke off the small fibrous roots which gave life to the tree, and the decay began in the bark and boughs, although the great secret was the disturbing of the roots by heavy winds, and our forests being rapidly cut away and thinned out, exposed the remainder to other gales, but since that time I have observed the timber in small valleys, where it was completely sheltered from all winds, to be affected, in some cases nearly every tree, some in the first stage, and others in an advanced stage of decay, so that my theory of it being caused by gales of wind would seem to be wrong. I am now at a loss to account for it. It certainly looks like a blight or distemper, and I would like to hear from others on the subject.

RODERICK ROSR.

Cherrie, Hant's County, Nova Scotia.

In all anticipations of the character of the weather (for short periods) it is advisable to draw our conclusions from a variety of the means of prognostication. Thus, not only the present and immediately previous conditions of the barometer should be taken into account, but also the direction and force of the wind, and the appearances of the clouds and sky. The propriety of this recommendation is evident from considering that the different means of prognostication give sometimes the same, and sometimes opposite, indications. If, for instance, the barometer is high, and has been gradually rising for several days previous, while the wind is from a rainy direction, such as from the east or south, the probability of such a wind bringing rain is much less than if the barometer was low, and had been gradually sinking for several days previous. In like manner a cloudless, or nearly cloudless sky, is a less certain indication of dry weather continuing, when a wind of considerable velocity blows from a rainy, southerly direction, than when there is very little wind, and its direction is from the north or due east.

The first and worst of all frauds is to cheat one's self.—Bailey.