

INFLUENCE OF THE MOON.

The believers in the Moon's influence are quite numerous in Canada, and no doubt some of our readers hold the same faith. We have known farmers put themselves to considerable inconvenience in order to avail themselves of this supposed influence. It may be worth their while to read the following, which we find in that excellent journal, the *Maine Farmer*:—

TIME FOR FELLING TIMBER.—An opinion is generally entertained in New England, and especially in Maine, that timber should be felled only on the decline of the moon, for if it be cut down during the increase it will not be of good quality. This idea prevails in many countries. It is believed in England, and made the ground of legislation in France—the laws of the latter country prohibiting the cutting of timber on the increase of the moon. The people of South America adopt the same creed, and the Germans have the most implicit confidence in its truth.

According to some explainers of the supposition, the sap ascends much more swiftly during the decrease of the moon, and they infer, therefore, that timber which is felled in the first or second quarter of the moon, when the pores are more filled with sap, will be spongy and more liable to attack by worms; that it will warp and split by exposure to very slight variations of temperature; but, on the contrary, timber felled in the third or fourth quarters, when the sap ascends with diminished force, will be more dense and durable, and fitter for the purposes of structure.

I think it would be hard to imagine, in the whole range of nature, a physical relation more extraordinary, unaccountable, and reasonable than this supposed correspondence between the movement of the sap and the phases of the moon. Most assuredly, theory affords not the slightest countenance to such supposition, and on the face of it, it is inconsistent with itself; but let us enquire as to the fact, whether it be really the case that the quality of timber depends up on the state of the moon at the time it is felled.

The celebrated French agriculturist, Monceau, made direct experiments for the purpose of testing this question, and clearly, fairly, and conclusively showed that the qualities of timber felled in different parts of the lunar month are the same. He experimented with a great many trees of the same age, and never found any difference in the quality of the timber, when he compared those which were in the decline of the moon with those which were felled during its increase; both afforded timber of the same quality. Other distinguished men have experimented with the same results.

SUPPOSED LUNAR INFLUENCES ON VEGETABLES.—It is a maxim, everywhere, among gardeners, that cabbages and lettuce which are desired to shoot forth early, flowers which are to be double, and trees which it is desired should produce early ripe fruit, should severally be sown, planted, and pruned during the decrease of the moon; and that, on the contrary, trees which are expected to grow with vigor should be sown, planted, grafted, and pruned during the increase of the moon. These opinions are totally erroneous. The increase or decrease of the moon has no appreciable influence upon vegetation, for the experiments and observations of celebrated agriculturists have proved this beyond a doubt.

Saunders has attempted to assign the reason for this

imaginary effect. During the day, he says, the sun's heat augments the quantity of sap which circulates in plants, by increasing the magnitude of the tubes through which the sap moves; while the cold of the night produces the opposite effect, by contracting those tubes. Now, at the moment of sunset, if the moon be increasing, it will be above the horizon, and the warmth of its light would prolong the circulation of the sap; but, during its decline, it will not rise for a considerable time after sunset, and the plants will be suddenly exposed to the unmitigated cold of the night, by which a sudden contraction of leaves and tubes will be produced, and the circulation of the sap suddenly obstructed.

If we admit the moon's rays to possess any sensible heating power, this reasoning might be allowed, but it will have very little force when it is considered that the extreme change of temperature which can be produced by the lunar light does not amount to the thousandth part of a degree. An old author, who believes all these absurd sayings, prescribes that beans be planted on the full moon and peas on the new, and it is easy to find sensible people who are eager to believe, without proof, that the moon, at the distance of 240,000 miles, acts advantageously upon the vegetation of beans, in one position, and in the opposite position, and at the same distance, she acts propitiously on peas. What a robust faith such people must have!

SUPPOSED INFLUENCE ON PUTREFACTION. Some classic authors have transmitted to us a maxim that the light of the moon facilitates the putrefaction of animal substances, and covers them with moisture. The same opinion prevails everywhere. An impression is prevalent, also, that certain kinds of fish, exposed to moonlight, lose their flavor, and become soft and flabby; and that if a wounded horse be exposed to the light of the moon, during the night, the wound will become irritated and incurable.

Such effects, if real, may be explained upon the same principles as those by which we have already explained the effects attributed to the "red moon." Animal substances exposed to a clear sky, at night, are liable to receive a quantity of dew, which moisture has a tendency to forward putrefaction. But the same effect will be produced, if the sky be clear, whether the moon be above or below the horizon. The moon is only a witness of the fact, not the cause, and should be acquitted of the evil deeds charged against her.

SUPPOSED INFLUENCES ON SHELL FISH.—The ancients supposed that oysters, clams, and other shell fish, became larger during its decrease. The poets Lucilius and Gallius believed it to be a fact. This matter has been carefully examined into by Rohault, who compared shell fish taken at all periods of the moon's decrease and increase, and during a period of twenty years, and found that they always exhibited the same quality.

SUPPOSED INFLUENCES IN SLAUGHTERING CATTLE AND SWINE.—One can hardly find a person but thinks the moon responsible for the quality, good or bad, of beef and pork. We are told that, if the animal is killed on the moon's decrease, the meat will shrink very much in cooking, but if killed on the increase, the meat will "swell in the pot." They do not pretend to explain this wonderful phenomenon, but simply say "it is so." This piece of folly was proved to be ridiculous more than a hundred years ago. We are told, also, that animals butchered on the increase are much longer dying than when butchered on the decrease. The writer has seen this notion