

THE WORSE THE BETTER.

This is a paradox, the universal truth of which I would, of course, no means venture to affirm; but I think that, within rather wide limits it will be found correct. When we contemplate either the ills which are compelled individually to endure, or those by which society at large is afflicted, we feel that we need all the encouragement and consolation that can be derived from any and from every source; and I think that the maxim, "the worse the better," is capable of affording us some relief under a variety of annoying, troublesome, and painful circumstances.

Few of us, I suppose, are very partial to a severe winter. Such a season is, to multitudes, a source of great distress; thousands of workmen are thrown out of employment; the price of coals rises; poor people are half-starved; the number of applicants for parochial relief is augmented; old persons are cut off; weakly and consumptive persons cannot stand before the cold; sheep are buried in the snow; the ties of rain-carriage-wheels snap; and not a few bones are broken by falls upon icy streets. It would be very easy to show that a good many evils attend a severe winter. But, on the other hand, an old proverb reminds us of "a green Yule makes a fat kirk-yard." This may not be quite correct; possibly a severe winter is more fatal than a mild one; still many do feel greatly invigorated by a sharp, cold season; where there remains robust health, such a winter seems to be of great service. And, whatever be the effects of a severe winter upon the human constitution, it is generally believed that, unless it be very severe indeed, it has a good effect upon the land—

"If the grass grow in Janiver,
It grows the worse for't all the year."

If, however, the physician can prove that a severe winter is detrimental to the public health, and the agriculturist can show that it is injurious to his operations, I will nevertheless draw this consolation from such a season, viz., that it makes the spring all the more welcome. It strikes me that the inhabitants of tropical countries have not much in their climate whereof to glory over us. If they know nothing of the severity of winter it is impossible for them to experience the exquisite enjoyment which it affords our hearts when we can say—"Lo, the winter is past; the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come." And so the paradox, "the worse the better," may help to cheer us in the cold weather.

Sometimes this paradox is true of great public calamities. The great fire of London, in the year 1666, burned down five-sixths of the city, covered with ruins a space more than a mile long and half a mile broad, and destroyed property worth from ten to twelve millions sterling. To the individuals that catastrophe was commercial destruction; but it is tolerably clear that no piece of good fortune that ever gladdened the hearts of the citizens was of so great and valuable service as that great fire. The city was soon re-built, not exactly in the best style possible, but in a style that was a great improvement upon the previous state of things; the streets were not made wide enough, but they were wider than they had been before; and instead of the mean and wretched