

of a train which you don't generally hear—rain.

When flowers smell unusually sweet, because the air being moist carries their odour more effectively.—When swallows fly low, because the insects they hunt fly low to escape the moisture of the upper regions of the air.—When ducks and geese go to the pond or river and dash the water over their backs, because by wetting the outer coat of feathers they prevent the drops of rain from penetrating to their bodies through the dry and open feathers.—When horses and cattle (not bulls or rams) stretch out their necks, and snuff up the air laden with the fragrant perfume which increasing moisture diffuses through it.—And when all domestic animals are restless and excited: rain, rain, rain.

Spiders are, as you have doubtless remarked, crafty, as well as blood-thirsty, beasts. When they spin away merrily at their webs, fine weather; for they know flies will take their walks, or rather flights, abroad. But rain, when they hide in their holes.

Gnats, Mosquitoes, Midges, all know when it is safe for them to show themselves. You will hear the owl shouting away jollily before fine weather in his (supposed) melancholy hole—out of opposition I presume to the Robin, whom he eats sometimes, and who, as we heard just now, sings before foul weather. By the bye, there is a superstition still extant in Devonshire (one of the last hiding-places of witchcraft), of old women turning to hares. Many years ago, being caught by a heavy shower in the West of England, I turned into a gamekeeper's cottage for shelter. Here, I was very much struck by a glass case, containing a stuffed hare many degrees darker than hares generally are.—"What is that?" said I to the keeper; "Oh! Sir," replied he, very sedately; "that is old Mrs. Wilson. I shot her one morning last summer about  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 3 o'clock, as I was coming home from my rounds; at 10 o'clock, the neighbours, seeing that her window-shutters were still closed, went to find out the reason; and the old woman was there lying dead in her bed, with the marks of the shot, saving your presence, all over her back—she'll bewitch no more poor men's cattle though, anyhow!"

And the man believed that he had done the world good service in ridding it of an enemy and a bond-slave of Satan.

But to return to our owls: the creed is, that their hooting portends a death: they scream, sure enough, when a change of weather is at hand, and sick people on their death-bed may be hurried towards the last gasp by the atmospheric alteration, because the flickering lamp of life has not strength enough to adapt itself to the change.

Watch well your bees—you all, of course, have apiaries; they cost little, except care, and 50 or 60 hives are worth looking after. Watch, I say, your bees—when they wander far from home it is because they instinctively feel there is no danger of their being overtaken by rain. What says Virgil?

"Sunt, quibus ad portas cecidit custodia  
Inque vicem speculantur aquas et nubila caeli.  
Nec vero a stabulis pluvia impendit  
Longius, aut credunt cœlo adventantibus [sorti,  
[coeli.  
[precedunt  
[Boris."

"Some have the guardianship of the doors allotted to them, and, by turns, examine the signs of the weather. They never wander far from the hives if a shower is imminent, and stay at

home when the wind threatens to be boisterous."

Those unpleasant excrescences on feet, again; and I fancy, since those very fascinating high-heeled boots came into fashion with the sex, they at least need no barometers: corns, as they are called, from *cornu*, a horn—nothing to do with wheat or maize; though any one who has walked with a grain of either in his shoe may doubt it—corns are highly suggestive of a change of weather; at least so I am told, for I don't carry any of them in my boots. Frank Smedley, in one of his novels, mentions an aunt of the heroine as being "proprietrix of a highly meteorological corn." Well, it is no superstition: the dampness or the atmosphere affects the pressure of the body, and causes a temporary disturbance of the whole system. If any parts of the body are in a morbid, or unhealthy, condition—a tooth, a corn, or a rheumatic bone—they will feel the change at once.

So sensitive are some flowers, that on the approach of rain, they will close their petals to protect the stamens.

You have often, I doubt not, observed Sea-gulls flying about, many a mile inland. They are the almost certain fore-runners of foul weather: they can't catch fish at sea; eat they must—a happy thought strikes them—plenty of earth-worms will be coming to the surface as soon as rain falls: let us go and eat them, as we cannot get fish. This looks like reasoning, does it not? If not reasoning, it is the exercise of memory transmitted from generation to generation.

The joyful little birds, too, cease their melodious warbling at each change for the worse. They feel a depression of spirits as we do. Charles Kingsley laughs at the idea of a man's feelings being affected by a N. E. wind; it may be that the strenuous Vicar of Eversley never yielded to such weakness; but if his liver was ever out of order, and it must have been, sometimes, one would think, it ought to have taught him charity towards his less "muscular fellow-Christians."

I never wish to see a crow before the 18th of March. An earlier arrival invariably foretells a return of winter. In fact, the unusually early advent of all migratory birds is a bad sign.

I remember well the spring of 1874.—I find in my Journal of that year, that the first Robin (Thrush) was seen at Compton, on March 30th. Poor darling! how severely he must have felt his error in leaving his Southern abode, when he saw, the next morning, —12° F. on the thermometer! Swallows made their appearance on the 12th of April—on the 30th of that month 18 inches of snow fell, winter returned, and there was no pleasant weather until May 12th!

Now, birds leave the South because unpleasant weather has set in there—unfortunately, it follows them Northwards, and they are *dished*, as the late Lord Derby said of the Whigs when he passed the Reform act of 1868.

The weather in *Spring* may be taken as the key note of the whole season. Kirwan, a patient observer, says, that "in the course of 41 years there were 6 wet springs, 22 dry, and 13 variable." On these data, he made out that a dry spring was followed by a dry summer 11 times, by a wet one 8 times, and by a variable one 3 times: a wet spring was followed by a dry summer not once, by a wet one 5 times, and by a variable one, once: a variable spring was followed by a dry summer 5 times, by a wet one 7 times, and by a variable one, once: so, in the beginning of any year, the probability of a dry

spring is as 22 to 41; of a wet spring, as 6 to 41; of a variable one, as 13 to 41. A February in which much snow or rain falls is indicative of a fine spring:

"February ill dyke, be it black (rain) or be [it white (snow):  
But if it be white 'tis the better to like."

We won't say much about the rhyme, but the proverb is true enough.

"The hind would as soon see his wife on [her bier,  
As that Candlemas day should be bright [and clear  
If Candlemas day be bright and clear,  
Half the winter's to come and mair;  
But if Candlemas day be dull and foul,  
Half of the winter was past at Yule."

I need not tell you that Candlemas day is the 2nd February, and Yule is Christmas; but we must remember, what is usually forgotten, that these proverbs were invented when dates were reckoned by the *old style*—so in fitting them to our computation, we must regard them as speaking of the present 6th of January, and the 14th of February—St. Valentine's day; just as the Green Drake, one of the Ephemeræ, so dear to the trout-fisher, is, in England, still called the Mayfly, though it never makes its appearance till about the 14th of June. Another saying goes:

"March hock ham, comes in like a lion, goes out like a lamb:" i. e. a good appetites, this month; wind at the beginning, fine at the end: true enough still; but the end meant is April 12th; and with this change, the proverb is as true in the central parts of Canada—London, Ontario, for instance—as it is in England.

In summer, when falling stars are numerous, thunder-storms may be looked for. If, after a long spell of fine weather and the barometer high, the mercury begins to fall, it will generally decline gradually for two or three days before there is much sign of rain. A great fall of the thermometer occurs just before a hail-storm. *Chickweed* contracts its flowers, as do the *trefoil* and the *convolvulus*, before rain.

"If woolly fleeces (cirro-cumuli) strew the [heavenly way,  
Be sure no rain disturbs the summer day."  
And again:

"If clouds appear like rocks and towers,  
The earth's refreshed by frequent showers."

The proverbs are:

"A swarm of bees in May  
Is worth a load of hay"

Not at \$15 a ton though!

"A swarm of bees in June  
Is worth a silver spoon."

"A swarm of bees in July  
Is never worth a fly."

A very true saying is the following, speaking of course of *fall* wheat:

"Look at your wheat in May  
And you'll come weeping away.  
Look again in June  
And you'll come home in another tune."

The *Rain-bow*, interesting as its study is, must not detain us long.

"A Rain-bow at night  
Is the shepherd's delight;  
But one in the morning  
Is the shepherd's warning."

A rainbow at night shows that the rain is falling in the East, and, as that is a dry quarter, it will soon be over. A rainbow in the morning, shows that the rain is falling in the West, the wet quarter, and is therefore likely to last. The appearance of two or three rainbows at once indicates

fair weather for the present, but foul weather with much rain two or three days afterwards.

*Twilight* signs are as follows: a blue sky, and the West, after sunset, covered with a purplish tinge, particularly if the atmosphere be smoky or hazy—certain fine weather.

When dense orange-coloured vapour covers the horizon, wind. If crimson or vermilion, wind with heavy rain. If green, a nasty green such as Homer calls (we have alas! no Greek characters) *chloron deos*, rain next day—whitish-yellow the same. When the sun sets in brilliant white light, showers. Aurora Borealis is due to magnetic disturbance, and indicates a change of weather.

This year, if you remember, we had a brilliant Aurora on the 7th of November, which may have been the cause of our being done out of our *Indian summer*.

And now, one word at parting: distrust every prediction of the weather that is based upon a pretended secret. The prophet is either an enthusiastic fool, or a charlatan, a knave.

In 1836, an impostor, Murphy, had the good luck to predict in his almanack that January 6th would be the coldest day of the winter,—right, for once, he was, and made, I believe £10,000 by the sale of his book; but the next year he was just as far wrong; and retired for ever from the public sight involved in a cloud of ignominy and contempt. May his fate be a warning to quacks of all sorts.

But place perfect confidence in the bulletins sent out from the observatory at Toronto. I have followed them by my own observations, and they are thoroughly to be depended upon. And why?—they are founded upon pure science.

I hope next year will see all over the Province a copy of these valuable prognostications sent by telegraph to every Post-Office, and placed under a glass case outside the building, so that every passer-by may see it. If it is put up in the public room of the hotel, it will not be half as useful.

The whole of your hay and harvest crop depends upon the weather; and I entreat you to believe that, owing to the paths followed by the winds and storms being constantly telegraphed to the Toronto observers, they are as capable of judging of the time when a change of weather will take place at Frelighsburg, as if their post was set up in the midst of your village—their honesty no one will dispute.

And it is no trifle, this weather, in hay-time and harvest: it is not only the furnishing of your own pockets, or the payment of your own debts that is concerned: it is the food of the nation to which you owe your birth, and, in part, the sustenance of that nation from which your ancestors sprang, which depend upon it. Every toward rain-storm, every unseasonable frost which occurs here, affects a population of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  millions of Canadians, and a population of 35 millions in the British Isles. It is your duty then as farmers, it is your duty as men with a fellow feeling for your brothers, to lose no chance of acquainting yourselves thoroughly with all the signs of the weather, that you may never be taken unawares. You have worked hard all the winter, spring, and summer, and now, when

"The wind, the rain, the sun,  
Their genial task have done,  
Wouldst thou be fed?  
Man, to thy labour bow,  
Thrust in thy sickle now,  
Reap where thou once didst plough,  
God sends thee bread."