

is at hand ; and, as to the lord of the poultry-yard, we have the old saying, that—

“If the cock crows going to bed,
He'll surely rise with a watery head.”

Robin Redbreast singing in the midst of a rain on the top twig of a tree is an infallible index of a beneficial change to fair for a few days at least ; and the screech of the owl under similar circumstances is said to have the same meaning, though the peacock's screech at all times denotes ungenial weather. Frogs also furnish their signs, becoming brown on the approach of rain, but remaining yellow so long as it is absent. There is a curious weather-glass made in Germany, the materials entering into the composition of which are two frogs, two small ladders, and a cylindrical vessel of water.

Frogs and ladders being duly put into the water, if the froggies climb their ladders and look over the vessel's side, foul days are at hand ; if they remain below, the sky will continue fine. Leeches in water furnish similar indications ; but spiders and snails are the most remarkable of all the weather prophets ; when the former make their webs at night, the morning is sure to be fine ; if they make them in the morning, the coming day may be relied on for a drive or a walk. Hence the saying :

“When you see the gossamer flying,
Be sure the air is drying.”

An instance is on record of a French officer, confined in a prison in Utrecht during the wars of the French Revolution, having so closely and accurately observed the habits of some spiders that were his sole companions, that he was able, by their movements, to foretell a frost fourteen days before it came, and thereby turn the certain defeat of the French army into a glorious victory. But snails are remarkable weather indicators. Like frogs, their colors change on the approach of rain, and some species indicate rain so much as ten days before by tubercles, which appear on their bodies, and seem intended for the purpose of imbibing the approaching moisture. As a general rule, these creatures, according to their habits, two or three days before rain, may be seen climbing the trunks of trees, or seeking shelter under leaves, or making their way to open places.

We thus see that, by a careful assortment of spiders, snails, frogs and leeches, and a few domestic animal, combined with a good barometer, and accurate observation of the language of the clouds, and the song and cries of birds, any person may easily become a weather prophet of no mean practical wisdom. But how shall we account for the more distant foresight of weather which some animals have ? What teaches the bees to kill their drones early if a wet summer is coming or the waterowl to forsake their marshes if it is to be dry ?

By what vision does the swallow know the approach of a fine summer, and consequently set forth early on his migration to northern regions ? By what foreknowledge is the worm led to burrow deep in the earth if the winter is to be cold ? In all these cases there is distant foresight, for action is taken a month at least before the anticipated foul or fair can come. Reason cannot fathom the mystery ; it has to confess itself baffled and excelled by the light enjoyed by insect and bird and brute.