

THE ROCKWOOD REVIEW

LETTERS.

HATCHLEY.

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The variability of seasons when one year is compared with another, or with a series, is a subject of interest to many, as questions of profit and loss are thereby involved. Questions of the amount of atmospheric heat, or of rainfall, determine whether the farm granary and hay mow shall be well replenished or otherwise.

And a peculiarity in the meteorological condition of the first ten days of May of the present year, swept away nearly all prospect of fruit yield in a vast district of western Ontario.

From the 1st to the 11th of May there was unprecedented heat and sunshine, and the reactionary temperature caused a week of chilliness and frosts, blighted and minimized hopes of harvest.

The great dryness of the whole growing season of 1895 left its mark in the economical status of tillers of the soil in those districts which will require years of propitious harvests to compensate.

The effect of excessive drought is also disastrous to the growth and multiplication of the wild flowers of the forests and field margins. Many individual species disappeared for the time, but it is to be hoped are not extinct, and may be resuscitated by more favoring conditions of coming years.

Yet the dryness of the summer seasons seems to be not unfavorable to the breeding of birds and wild animals, to the immature young of which the chills and damps and drizzles of early summer are often very destructive; and such as nest on the ground and in burrows seem always to increase the most in droughty years. The creeks and

rivulets in this district have been almost destitute of water for many months, yet the local trappers have reported their captures of muskrats and minks as being as numerous as the average seasons, and the remark is frequently heard that foxes have so abounded around here of late as to threaten to become a very serious annoyance to poultry breeders.

One individual that we know lately asserted that incredible numbers of young turkeys had this year been carried off by foxes that prowled about the thickets, and even chased their prey through corn and stubble fields to the very vicinity of the barnyards. Though the underground retreats are easily found, they are so cunningly chosen among dense growths of small oak and maple trees, that the labor of unearthing and evicting Reynard is quite tedious and formidable.

I heard of the attempts of a number of our local sports who went in for a day's hunting when the first considerable snowfall happened at the beginning of the present month. The hunt alluded to was unsuccessful, very numerous fox tracks were observed, but the bushes and tree branches parted with their burdens of snow on the slightest vibration, and obliterated the footprints of men, dogs or foxes, though several of the latter were seen and chased for short distances. It was said too that the snow was not in sufficient depth, (about eight inches), and was also in too dry and powdery a condition to tire or impede roynard much in his agile movements; and a number coigns d'avantage were observed, where the fugitives had reclined, and leisurely estimated the dangers and possibilities of the battue. Another party of sports who spent the day "tally-hoing" in a semi-wooded region, six or seven miles distant from the region where