



The Month.



ARCH, with his lungs full of wind, blows the trumpet of the year as the herald of spring. He is a blustering month, who, though he may sometimes commence his career in disguise, is sure to reveal his true character before we have done with him. Hence the proverb, that if March comes in like a lamb it will go out like a lion. The sprightly writer whom we quoted in our last article on "The Month," as representing January and February in the character of a venerable couple with snow-white hair, speaks of March as "some shrew of a maid, following up the old people with a tremendous clatter of brooms and great clouds of dust."

The rigour of winter sensibly abates during this month, as experience testifies and the meteorological tables demonstrate. We append the mean temperature of March at the points enumerated in our last, with regard to January and February.

Stratford .....	25°51
Hamilton .....	29°14
Barrie .....	33°02
Toronto .....	27°60
Belleville.....	28°35
Montreal.....	26°16
Quebec .....	21°00
St. John, N.B.....	26°31
Halifax.....	29°00

Dr. Holmes tells us that the good people living in that extreme "down East" point, the State of Maine, are wont to talk about having six weeks' sleighing in

March, but he says: "we in Massachusetts do not expect more than a month's sleighing in March,—in fact, not so much as that." The Maine style of comment on the month indicates continued plenty of snow, along with a milder temperature and greater length of day. Maine has undoubtedly a less hospitable climate than Western Canada, for we do not have any more sleighing in March here than they do in Massachusetts, judging by the above quotation. Our Yankee neighbours are hard to persuade that Canada is as good a country as New England. They generally look upon it as a very arctic region, a wilderness of ice and snow far inferior to the Eastern States. But we presume that our Province of Quebec is, on the average, quite equal to Maine, while Ontario in its easterly section is the counterpart of New England in general, and in its westerly section very like New York.

It would be very interesting in itself, and would help to form a basis of comparison, if parties with a taste for natural science would observe the indications in the vegetable and animal creation of winter changing into spring in our climate. Some observations of this kind have been made by New England naturalists, and there can be little doubt that careful investigation would show considerable similarity, if not identity in some respects, between the two countries. Miss Cooper says: "Towards the close of February or the beginning of March, the skunk cabbage (*symplocarpus*) makes a good guess at the time of the year, and comes up in marshy spots, on the banks of ponds and streams." She considers that this is the first plant to feel the influence of the changing season. The little chickweed has flowered at Rochester on the 21st of March. "Near the end of this month, the alders throw out their tassels of purple and gold, which are soon followed by the crimson corymbs of the soft maple, the small brown flowers of the elms, and the yellow plumes of the willows." President Hill, of Harvard College, says: "The earliest wild flower that I remember is the witch-hazel, blooming at any time from October to March, when the weather is mild; at least I have seen it near Newton Centre, blooming as late as February, sending through me a strange thrill of pleasure, and yet making me doubt whether to consider the mild February day a part of a late autumn, or of an early spring." Dr. Holmes tells us that "as early as the first of March ground squirrels peep out of their holes, and bluebirds have sometimes shown themselves. Robins make their appearance all the way from the first week in March to the first week in April. Some of them linger with us on winter half-pay through the cold season." Thus remarkably does vegetable and animal life feel and manifest the effect of coming spring, even while winter lingers with little short of its full severity.

Go to these humble monitors, farmer; consider their ways, and be wise. Prepare in earnest for the

short but precious term of spring, whose approaching footfalls make echoes that waken plant, animal and bird, and ought thoroughly to arouse thee. Put the tools in perfect order, see that the waggens and other vehicles are well greased, and let the ploughs be ready to start so soon as the frost will let them. Secure everything likely to suffer from high winds. Care well for working oxen and horses as the trying time of hard work comes on. If possible, use them regularly, and toughen them for the approaching ordeal. House breeding ewes that are to drop lambs early, and take especial care of cows that are soon to calve, supplying them with a liberal portion of roots in addition to other hearty food; clean out cellars in good time to prevent decay of vegetation and foul smells. Roll winter grain if the ground be dry enough. Sow clover seed on a light snow some still morning, if the season opens early. Repair fences and sagging gates. Have seed grain in readiness. Clean up grass seed for spring sowing. If you are fortunate enough to own a maple grove, by all means make some sugar, but do it on the most approved modern method, so as to produce a choice article, that you can use with some pleasure, and show to your friends with some pride. Toward the end of this month, those who would have good gardens must begin to think about making hot-beds. Review and finally settle the plans for the season, so as to lose no time in hesitation and suspense when the bustle and rush of spring work shall be upon you.

Turning from the practical to the poetical aspects of the month, we cannot more appropriately close our remarks than by appending the following beautiful lines by William Cullen Bryant:—

The stormy March is come at last,  
With wind and cloud and changing skies;  
I hear the rustling of the blast  
That thrum through the valley flies.

Ah, passing few are they who speak  
Wild stormy month, in praise of thee!  
Yet, though thy winds are loud and bleak,  
Thou art a welcome month to me.

For thou to northern lands again  
The glad and glorious sun dost bring,  
And thou hast join'd the gentler train,  
And wear'st the gentle name of Spring.

And in thy reign of blast and storm  
Smiles many a long bright sunny day,  
When the changed winds are soft and warm,  
And heaven puts on the blue of May

Then sing aloud the gushing rills,  
And the full springs from frost set free,  
That, brightly leaping down the hills,  
Are first sent out to meet the sea.

The year's departing beauty hides  
Of wintry storms the sullen threat;  
And in thy sternest power abides  
A look of kindly promise yet.

Thou bring'st the hope of those calm skies,  
And that soft time of sunny showers,  
When the wide bloom on earth that lies  
Reveals of a brighter world than ours.