

“WILL IT RAIN TO-MORROW?”



“I RECKON we'll have to stop haycarting to-morrow,” said a labourer to me, one splendid cloudless July day.

“Why?”

“‘Cause I heerd one o' them old woodpeckers hallerin' fit to bust hisself while I was a gettin' my dinner.”

Next morning the daily paper spoke of settled fine weather, but the rustic was right—it rained

heavily. Here was a man utterly uneducated, who, without reference to any scientific instrument, could forecast the morrow's weather with accuracy, when the Meteorological Office, with all its appliances, was at fault. “Hinery” was only a specimen of hundreds of his fellows who can predict to-morrow's (and often longer) weather with unerring accuracy, merely from noticing common details of natural phenomena open to every one. The newspaper forecasts are generally correct as applying to large areas, several hundred miles square; but, as a rule, at fault with respect to localities. Take, for instance, to-day's newspaper forecast, “N.W. winds, moderate or fresh.” “Fair as a whole.” The direction of the wind is correct, but it is now, and has been since midnight, raining heavily and continuously. Any observant countryman could have foretold by three o'clock yesterday there was not the faintest prospect of “fair” weather. To ninety-nine in every hundred the barometer is of but little value. Its proper use requires long and careful training—merely noting the fall and rise being comparatively valueless. But, with a little practice, any one living inland can, from the following signs, correctly prognosticate for his own neighbourhood.

The man who is out of doors at sunrise can form a pretty accurate opinion of what the day will be. If just before sunrise the sky—especially in the west—is suffused with red, rain generally follows in the course of the day. In winter, often snow. If, however, it be frosty weather, the downfall is sometimes delayed. On the other hand, if the sky be a dull grey, and the sun rises clear, gradually dispersing the vapours, it will be fine. If he retires behind the clouds, and there are reddish streaks about, it will rain. Should the sun, later in the day, shine through a grey watery haze, it will probably be a rainy night.

The sunset is very unreliable. Often a beautiful sunset will be followed by a bad day. After a rainy day, suddenly at sunset, in the far west, will appear a magnificent streak of crimson (not copper-colour)—this generally foretells a fine day. A tinted halo round the sun at setting occurs in long-continued rainy weather. A halo round the moon, especially if some distance from it, is a sure indication of downfall at hand.

Rainbows are unreliable, except they occur in the morning, when rain may be expected. Sun-dogs, and fragments of prismatic colours during the day, show continued unsettled weather. A dazzling metallic lustre on foliage, during a cloudless day in summer, precedes a change.

Huge piled-up masses of white cloud in a blue sky, during winter, indicate snow or hail. If small, dark clouds float below the upper ones, moving faster than they, rain will follow, as it will if, in the morning, low-hanging, pale brown, smoke-like clouds are floating about. Red-tinged clouds, high up, at evening, are followed by wind, occasionally by rain.

Mists at evening over low-lying ground, or near a river, precede fine and warm days. If a mist in the morning clears off as the sun gets higher, it will be fine; but if it settles down again after lifting a little, rain is at hand. No dew in the morning is mostly followed by rain; and a heavy dew in the evening by a fine day. Rain follows two or three consecutive hoar frosts. A shower of hail in the daytime is usually followed by frost at night. If, after rain, drops of water still hang on the branches and twigs, and to window-frames, the rain will return; but if they fall, and the woodwork dries, fine weather is at hand.

Stones turn damp before wet; at the same time it must be observed that the fact of their doing so does not invariably indicate rain, for they will do so occasionally before heat.

Smoke descending heavily to the ground is a sign of very doubtful weather.

Objects at great distances, which are generally indistinctly seen, or even not seen at all, sometimes loom out clear and distinct. When this happens, bad weather or change of wind ensues. A well-known instance of this is the Isle of Wight, as seen from Southsea. If the opposite shore is clearly seen, there is rain about. If, at night, after being blown out and exposed to the outer air, the wick of a candle continues to smoulder a long time, the next day will be fine. Green-coloured sky betokens unsettled bad weather, often long continued.

If, on a fine day, the dust suddenly rises in a revolving, spiral column, rain is near.

The howling of the wind indicates, in most houses, but not invariably, that downfall is near. In some houses, owing to their construction, the wind always moans. Wherever the wind is at the time of the vernal equinox (March 21, and thereabouts), that will be the *prevailing* wind throughout the next three months.

If the stars appear unusually numerous, and the "milky way" very clearly defined, with the surrounding sky dark, or if there be a misty appearance over the stars, rain is coming; while if there be but few stars, and those very bright and sparkling, in a pale steely sky, it will be fine.

Swine, before rain, are unusually noisy and restless. Swallows in fine weather will fly high, and at the approach of rain, close to the ground; but the latter does not apply if the day is cold, in which case they hawk very low.

Common sparrows washing vigorously in a puddle on the road, or at the edge of running water, is a sure sign of rain. A baker, who kept a parrot in the dry atmosphere of the bake-offices, noticed that a few hours before rain the bird took an imaginary bath, fluttering, as if splashing water, and preening her feathers.

The woodpecker before rain becomes uneasy, uttering its cry, "Yoo, yoo—yoo, yoo, yoo," although at other times the most silent of birds. Rain generally follows within the twenty-four hours, often very soon. This may be accepted as an infallible sign. On no occasion, except in the dry summer of 1884, did I ever hear the woodpecker call without downfall following. Then one called on two separate occasions, and no rain followed, although in a few hours threatening clouds rose from the west, but dispersed without rain; still in that year heavy rains fell in one parish, while the adjoining one was left dry, so that after all there may have been rain within a very short distance. If domestic fowls keep out feeding in rain, it will con-

tinue; but if they run under shelter directly it comes on, there will probably be only a shower. Rooks, before stormy weather or gales, tumble and pitch in the air, and if they croak as they fly, "Kerk, ke-rack, kerk," instead of their usually long-drawn "Karr-r," stormy weather is coming.

If flocks of fieldfare and redwing suddenly appear on the ploughed land, sharp, hard weather follows. Robins singing at night on the topmost branches of trees, or on the tops of tall buildings, is a pretty sure sign of a fine day on the morrow. If they keep low, the contrary may be expected.

Before rain or thunder, flies are unusually troublesome in stinging. Sometimes on a summer day, without warning, all the cock-pheasants in a wood will start crowing—very often because *they* hear thunder too far distant to be perceptible to the bystander.

Should moles, after dry weather, commence throwing up their mounds and working briskly, rain will follow. In a frost, this foretells a thaw.

Gnats flying in columns in the setting sun portends a fine morrow; but sometimes the winter gnat will do so if the rain only ceases for an hour or two.

The opening of the pimpernel has been given as a sign of a fine day, and its keeping closed the reverse. No reliance can be placed on it. Sunshine causes it to open, while in cloudy weather it keeps closed, even if it be dry.

Besides the foregoing, there are numerous weather signs; but among those mentioned will always be found one or more by which a coming change can be predicted.



HOW KID GLOVES ARE MADE.

AT what period of the world's history people began to clothe their hands in gloves, is a question difficult to answer; but probably the earliest mention of such articles of attire is that in Genesis, where the mother of Jacob covered the boy's hands with the hairy skin of the goat in order that he might deceive his father.

At a later date Homer sings about them, and mention of them often occurs in Shakespeare. Gloves have been made, and indeed are now made, of many materials to suit the caprices of fashion; but kid gloves have for many years been most in favour, and—at least for some time to come—are not likely to be superseded.

The manufactories of these articles are to be found chiefly in France, being located at Paris, Grenoble, and Chaumont. Kid gloves are made, to a smaller extent, in England and Germany, but those of best

quality are usually manufactured in France. How manifold are the operations which are necessary to produce the kid covering of the hand, few people have any idea. In all there are 219 separate processes before the raw skin is converted into the kid glove.

The first thing to do is, of course, to remove the hair from the raw skins, and for this purpose lime is used, they being immersed from a fortnight to three weeks in pits containing water and lime. The skins are constantly turned and shifted about by workmen armed with long iron tongs, and when taken out it is found that the lime has loosened the cuticle of the skin, thus rendering the removal of the hair a more easy matter. From the lime-pits the skins are taken to the unhairing room, where they are stretched on a sort of wooden block, and are scraped with a blunt two-handled knife. This removes the hair. They are now taken in hand by