

are not the treasures of Boston alone: that city is only the guardian of the national jewels. And all these, except the church, were threatened by the fire. There were other interesting sites, but the buildings that made them so were long since gone. There were the birth-place of Franklin and the church of Channing, the old Roman Catholic Cathedral and the Federal Street Theatre—the ground upon which they stood was swept by the fire. And when it was plain that nothing but counter-destruction would stay the desolation, General Benham came up from the fort in the harbor with troops and powder; building after building was blown up, and at the end of twenty hours the fury of the flames was checked. But the fire had wasted an area computed at seventy acres, with a loss of property estimated at one hundred millions of dollars.

But neither the extent and suddenness of the calamity, nor the appalling spectacle itself, dismayed the steady heart of Boston. While the fire was still burning a meeting of energetic citizens was held, and a committee of men in whom the city confided was appointed to provide for pressing necessities of every kind. At a distance there was a feeling of satisfaction that the fire had been mainly confined to great stores and warehouses, and had not, as in Chicago, destroyed vast areas of dwelling-houses, throwing the poor into the streets; and some papers were glad that the loss fell chiefly upon rich men, who could easily endure and repair it. But in this view there was a great deal of illusion. Such losses, like heavy taxes, ultimately fall upon the poor. Thus the fire began in a hoop-skirt factory, which employed one or two hundred persons. The next day they may have had a shelter, but they were without work or wages. In the same way the great business which was done in those noble ranges of stores gave employment to thousands of clerks of every kind, porters, draymen, char-women, and all of these also on Monday morning were without employment. They would much more willingly have seen their lodging destroyed than their occupation swept away. The destruction of such great houses of trade is the going down of the ship, and seamen as well as officers, the fore-castle and the quarter-deck, are whelmed in a common ruin.

The only alleviation of this kind was that products and not producing powers were destroyed. But even these were paralyzed, for it is capital which keeps so much of that power active, and the products represented capital. But it is a question of another kind in which we are all interested. How can such calamities be avoided? The theories of "fate" and of visitation of Providence do not suffice. Providence will always visit those who disobey its plain laws. If we build solid granite houses six stories high, and cover them virtually with wood, and open sluices for draughts from the cellar to the roof, and provide fire-engines that can not throw water above the third or fourth stories, and depend upon horses to draw the engines, Providence has provided that when a careless boy scrapes a match in one of the buildings, or a live coal drops upon the floor, or sparks fly from a cigar, or lighted tobacco falls from a pipe—seventy acres of those buildings shall be destroyed, and the loss shall be reckoned to be one hundred millions of dollars.

Here is a cruel calamity. It is awful to con-

template. There is not a heart that does not thrill with sympathy. But there is no mystery, no wonder. It was the harvest of the whirlwind from the wind that we had sown. And if New York is summoned to a similar harvest, it will be of her own sowing. One of the stateliest and most costly buildings in the city, in the very heart of its chief traffic, apparently elaborately finished in every point, and made to defy time, is covered with a Mansard-roof with wooden beams. No fire-engine can throw a stream of water upon it, and should the building be exposed to fire, it would shrivel like pasteboard. When a fire like that in Chicago or in Boston is fully kindled, nothing, of course, can withstand it. The only effort must be to deprive it of fresh material. Two suggestions are therefore obvious. One is that, by reasonable care in building, the swift and unmanageable spreading of the fire be made impossible; and the other is that business streets be made wider, and broken with frequent squares. Beauty, health, and economy would be the result of reasonable care. It is not only our heroism to which such calamities appeal. We have borne them, and shall bear again. But they appeal also to our science, to our skill, and to our common-sense. Is it really impossible for us to make buildings practically fire-proof, either by construction or by a simple interior system of water-works, or by both combined? As voracious sea-monsters of old extorted from helpless cities upon the coast the annual tribute of some Andromeda, some lovely victim, do we mean to suffer the demon of fire periodically to eat out the heart of our great cities, and only wring our hands and bewail a terrible calamity?

THE Sassafras Club, after a long vacation, held a very special meeting the other day, but no longer under the old tree, which has been cut down. The meeting was called upon occasion of the honor done to the club by the dedication to one of its members of one of the most delightful of recent books, Mr. Wilson Flagg's "Woods and By-Ways of New England." It was for some reasons unfortunate that neither the author of the book nor the member in question was present. But for some reasons, also, it was fortunate, since it is not easy for modest people to praise others in their presence, nor is it agreeable for modest persons to be praised: and upon this occasion there was only praise. A copy of the new book, which is most tasteful in its appearance, was laid upon the table; and the journal of the club for that meeting shows that the chief business was the reading of copious extracts from the book, with expressions of sympathy and admiration, mingled with those of satisfaction that it should be dedicated to so pious a devotee of New England woods and by-ways as the associate member of the Sassafras.

The chairman remarked that in his opinion it was very timely to read what the author had to say of the Indian summer; "and for the reason," he said, "that the 'patron' of the book, as he would have been called a hundred years ago in England, who is one of our most faithful [cheers] and honorable [loud applause] and best-beloved [tremendous enthusiasm] members—I was saying," continued the chairman, evidently confused by the acclamations, and totally forgetting what

he was saying—"I mean that I was observing," and he beamed vacantly at the club—"oh yes, I was saying that our beloved patron—that is to say, member to whom the work is inscribed—has the best theory of the name Indian summer, as applied to this season, that I have ever heard." He was interrupted by loud cries of "What is it?" "What is it?" to which the chairman replied by waving his hand, and saying that as the theory was inscribed at length upon the journal he would refrain from repeating it. He added that he called attention to Mr. Flagg's theory, which he declared to be sad if true.

A member asked that, before considering the new theory, the club should hear the description of the Indian summer from Longfellow's "Evangeline," which he proceeded to read:

"Such was the advent of autumn. Then followed that beautiful season
Called by the pious Acadian peasants the summer
of All-Saints!
Filled was the air with a dreamy and magical light;
and the landscape
Lay as if new created in all the freshness of childhood.
Peace seemed to reign upon earth, and the restless
heart of the ocean
Was for a moment consoled. All sounds were in
harmony blended.
Voices of children at play, the crowing of cocks in
the farm-yards,
Whir of wings in the drowsy air, and the cooing
of pigeons—
All were subdued and low as the murmurs of love;
and the great sun
Looked with the eye of love through the golden
vapors around him;
While arrayed in its robes of russet and scarlet and
yellow,
Bright with the sheen of the dew, each glittering
tree of the forest
Flashed like the plane-tree the Persian adorned
with mantles and jewels."

The reading of the long, rolling lines laid a spell upon the club. In the eyes of the members the dreamy and magical light of the season seemed to shine, until the chairman read from Mr. Flagg's book: "It may, after all, be only a myth, like the halcyon days of the ancients, the offspring of a tradition that originated with certain customs of the Indians, and which occasional days of fine weather in the autumn have served to perpetuate. It is certain that we have now in the Eastern States no regular coming of this delightful term of mildness and serenity, this smiling interruption of the melancholy days of autumn." His theory is that the exquisite season described by the poets and by the earlier observers in the country has fled before civilization, and departed with the forest primeval which skirted the bay of Minas and Acadia, home of the happy.

It was a phenomenon, he says, produced by unexplained circumstances attending the universally wooded state of the country. It did not appear until November, nor until there had been sharp frosts. What philosophic explanation of it can we give? A great wood exhales through its foliage the moisture it draws from the earth, cooling it in proportion to the mass of foliage, while at the same time it shades the ground from the sun. Whatever checks this perspiration preserves the heat of the atmosphere by diminishing the radiation of heat, which is slower in dry than in moist air. This is just what happens when the first severe frosts of November lay bare in a few days the forest for thousands

of miles. There is a sudden diminution of the moisture that had been emitted from the dense masses of foliage, for the evaporation from fallen leaves and herbage is very slight, and ceases after a few hours of sunshine. The atmosphere, therefore, is dry, the radiation of heat proportionally small, there is a sudden and universal accumulation of heat, and summer seems to have returned. This revived season is what we call the Indian summer, and in France the summer of St. Martin, and in the happy land of Acadia the summer of All-Saints. The reason of the last is evident, for the 1st of November is All-saints Day, and the 11th of November is Martinmas, the feast of St. Martin of Tours—a saint of mild and even temper. But why is the soft season called Indian summer?

Dr. Freeman says that it was a season which was believed by the Indians to be the gift of their most revered deity, the god of the Southwest. And Dr. Lyman Foot is quoted by Mr. Flagg from the third volume of *Silliman's Journal* as saying that "if you ask an Indian in the fall when he is going to his hunting-ground, he will tell you when the fall summer comes, or when the Great Spirit sends our fall summer, meaning the time in November which we call the Indian summer. And the Indians actually believe that the Great Spirit sends this mild season in November for their special benefit."

All this accords with the theory to which allusion has been made as that of the member of the club to whom Mr. Flagg dedicates his book, and which appears in the "Sassafras Transactions," *fol. MCCCVI, lib. 7026*, and which, although the chairman overruled the reading, may be here stated to import that in late October, when the early colonists thought the winter had fairly set in, the Indians said, "No, no; there will be summer yet." And when the mild days came, Carver and Standish and the others said, remembering, "Lo! the Indian summer!"

In support of his theory of the disappearance of the season Mr. Flagg quotes *Silliman's Journal* of forty years ago, which says that the existence and duration of the Indian summer are connected with the great forests and uncultivated lands of America, and summons the "oldest of our inhabitants"—that invaluable and immortal witness—to testify that its former duration was three or four weeks, while it had shrunk at the time of writing to a fitful term of ten or fifteen days.

The only question that appeared relevant after a full hearing of the evidence by the club was whether any member was inclined to stake the constancy and accuracy of his observation against those of the authorities that had been presented, and deny that the season is disappearing. No one seeming prepared for such a step, it was unanimously resolved that the Sassafras Club present to Mr. Flagg the thanks of all lovers and students of the woods and by-ways for his delightful treatise, with an expression of its profound satisfaction that the character of its associate member has been so publicly and properly recognized.

WE spoke last month of the arrival of Mr. Froude and Professor Tyndall, and of the renewed interest which their coming gives to the lecture platform. Both gentlemen began simul-