

When the Weather Man Plays Tricks



Drawing by Ray Walters.

"Did you ever see such peculiar weather! And for this time of the year!"

Thus we exclaim when the weather man plays us tricks in dishing out to us the only brand of weather he has on hand. If he showers us with too much rain, we call it abnormal. If he shuts off the rain and the earth begins to dry up, we call that abnormal. If he gives us too much heat or too much cold, these again are abnormal. What, he demands of us, do we call normal?

Average weather, like the average man, is a useful conception for statistical purposes—nothing more, according to Charles Fitzhugh Talman of the United States weather bureau.

It is rarely met with as a reality. Indeed, he says, periods in which the temperature, rainfall, humidity, cloudiness, etc., conform very closely to the average of a long record for the corresponding time of year are so unusual that when they occur they deserve a place in the news of the day. Lately we have been having unusual weather—as usual, Mr. Talman observes in the New York Times. The elements have been conducting themselves with normal abnormality, he continues, and the customary comments and explanations have been vouchsafed on the subject. But, we may take this weather man's word for it, this situation reveals nothing out of the ordinary.

The paradox that exceptional weather in our latitudes is the rule rather than the exception is easily explained. Changeableness, he says, is the most pronounced characteristic of the atmospheric conditions in the misnamed temperate zone, and the fluctuations that occur have a wide range on either side of the so-called climatic "normals," which are the averages computed from observations over a long period of time.

Mr. Talman admits, however, that, in addition to normal weather, which is uncommon, and moderately abnormal weather, which prevails most of the time, there is a third type of weather which departs so far from the average that even after the lapse of years its vagaries are remembered as something extraordinary.

Writing of the year 1290 in England, Matthew of Westminster says: "In the summer of this year great and enormous prodigies were seen in the air, so that some said that the last judgment was close at hand. There was now an intolerable famine, and such excessive and uninterrupted thunderstorms that scarcely any one dared to go out of his house, and many people were killed, and the lightning destroyed houses and fields of corn and woods, and inflicted unheard of dangers on the country. Also there were such hailstorms that the stones

were not only like peas but of the thickness of three fingers, and in some places as thick as fifteen fingers."

The fourteenth century appears to have been a period of extreme climatic conditions in Europe. During the cold winters of that century, according to O. Petterson, the Rhine, Danube, Po and other great rivers were frozen for weeks and months together, and in fifty-five of the succeeding summers serious floods occurred. In 1342 and 1374 the Rhine was so high at Cologne that boats passed over the city walls. In some summers, however, severe droughts prevailed. The "hot summer of 1357" was talked of for centuries after.

One of the most memorable examples of queer weather in all history was the "dry fog" that prevailed in both Europe and America during the summer of 1783. A well-known description of it is that given by Gilbert White in his "Natural History of Selborne." He writes:

"The summer of 1783 was an amazing and portentous one, and full of horrible phenomena; for, besides the alarming meteors and tremendous thunderstorms that affrighted and distressed the different counties of this kingdom, the peculiar haze, or smoky fog, that prevailed for many weeks in this island, and in every part of Europe, and even beyond its limits, was a most extraordinary appearance, unlike anything known within the memory of man. . . . The sun, at noon, looked as blank as a clouded moon, and shed a rust-colored feruginous light on the ground and floors of rooms, but was particularly lurid and blood-colored at rising and setting.

One of Benjamin Franklin's scientific disquisitions relates to this event. He says:

"During several of the summer months of the year 1783, when the effects of the sun's rays to heat the earth in these northern regions should have been the greatest, there existed a constant fog over all Europe and a great part of North America. This fog was of a permanent nature; it was dry, and the rays of the sun seemed to have little effect toward dissipating it, as they easily do a moist fog arising from water. They were indeed rendered so faint in passing through it that, when collected in the focus of a burning glass, they would scarcely kindle brown paper."

Some specimens of weather are anomalous merely on account of their extreme character, while in other cases the remarkable feature is the place or time of occurrence. Probably the majority of atmospheric events that are popularly classified as "freak" weather are those that occur out of season, or in a region where they are rarely experienced. For example, the memorable cold wave that

prevailed in the United States in February, 1869, was of unprecedented severity, but the fact about it that seemed most extraordinary was that it spread so far south as to give the Gulf coast a taste of zero weather.

The terrific hot waves that occur in our Middle West in summer, often accompanied by intense drought, are economic events of much importance, but they are appropriate to a continental climate and are too common to attract more than transient notice.

Inversions of the seasons in the shape of warm spells in winter and cold spells in summer always arouse general interest and bring to the fore those two favorite standbys in the explanation of weather irregularities—sunspots and the Gulf stream—just as, in a former age, similar untimely occurrences inspired pious tracts and sermons concerning manifestations of the Divine will. The most familiar example is the abnormal weather of 1816—the so-called "year without a summer."

For generations magazine and newspaper writers have repeated a few hackneyed statements about this famous year, and public interest has lately been revived in the subject, owing to the much-advertised opinion of a certain unofficial prophet that 1927 is to give us a repetition of its wintry conditions. The facts about the year are, however, still somewhat obscure. Regular weather records were kept at that period at not more than ten places in the entire country, and nobody has, strange to say, ever undertaken a thorough search of other contemporary sources of information, such as newspapers and diaries. The following description of the cold summer, as experienced by the writer, Chauncey Jerome (of clock-making renown), at Plymouth, Conn., is typical of those commonly quoted, and, like most of the others, it was written many years after the event:

"The next summer was the cold one of 1816, which none of the old people will ever forget and which many of the young have heard a great deal about. There was ice and snow in every month of the year. I well remember the 7th of June, while on my way to work, about a mile from home, dressed throughout with thick woolen clothes and an overcoat on, my hands got so cold that I was obliged to lay down my tools and put on a pair of mittens which I had in my pocket. It snowed about an hour that day. On the 10th of June my wife brought in some clothes that had been spread on the ground the night before, which were frozen stiff as in winter. On the 4th of July I saw several men pitching quoits in the middle of the day with thick overcoats on, and the sun shining bright at the time. . . . Not half enough corn ripened that year to furnish seed for the next."

slaves, and in many instances were not freed. Slavery prevailed all over Africa at that time, and it was when the abuse became flagrant that France stepped forcibly into the country and restored civilized order.

Gem of Colombia
Colombia yields more than 90 per cent of the world's production of emeralds. One of the largest of the mines is at Muzo, which is operated by the government, and a Paris concern has the contract for marketing the output.

the air, reducing the transpiration from the plants. Spraying the leaves with water every clear day also increases the moisture content and acts as a general tonic to the plant. Watering the plants two or three times a day is not good practice.

Sailors Once Made Slaves
In Algiers, before the French took upon themselves the burden of regulating that country properly, sailors touching on the coast of French-Spanish Algiers were sometimes taken as

Air and Your Plants

In winter, wilting of plants is avoided by increasing the amount of moisture in the air. It is not necessary to keep the plant roots in water or to soak the soil continuously. To keep the air damp, nothing has been found which equals a pan of water set on or near the stove, register, or radiator, says Nature Magazine of Washington. The water in the pan is evaporated and distributed through

Community Building

Children Enlisted in Fire-Prevention Work

Many cities have taken part in the fire-prevention movement. It has been found that good results come from instructing the school children concerning fire prevention. They take a pride in knowing about fire hazards and doing away with them whenever possible. The Baltimore Evening Sun has organized what is called the Baltimore Junior fire department. Each boy who becomes a member pledges himself to help the fire-prevention bureau "by collecting all waste paper, trash, greasy rags, loose matches and other inflammable material in my home. By placing such stuff in the proper receptacles, where it will be collected by the street-cleaning department. By using care in handling oils and other dangerous materials, cigars and cigarettes that I see. By urging my friends and neighbors to do all these things. And by keeping my home free from unnecessary inflammables in the future." The boy signs this pledge with the approval of his parent and the parent's signature also is appended. After the pledge is taken he delivers it to the office of the newspaper, where he is presented with a badge as a fireman, and a card showing that he is a member of the Junior department. Most people have heard fire warnings so often that safety talk seems to make little impression on them. With the children, the work of preventing fires comes as something new. They are especially interested in making good records for their schools and their homes. Too much credit hardly can be given the children for what they are doing in this way.—Indianapolis News.

Fence Adds to Beauty of Home Surroundings

In winter or summer, fall or spring, an attractive fence, like a sundial or a blue roof, will contribute beauty to a landscape. And, more often than not, the well-designed enclosure will promote even neighborly admiration and approval, rather than an offended, shut-out feeling. Primarily, fences were used solely to prevent trespasses, but as people advanced in art and culture fences assumed a double purpose, that of decorating or enhancing the grounds they guarded. Consequently, fences of really exquisite design are appearing with increasing frequency.

A fence which will add and not detract beauty from the grounds it guards need not be so elaborate as to be prohibitive in price to the average home owner or even to those of slender purses. For comparatively few dollars can be erected an enclosure which will not only courteously perform the police duty of a "keep-off" sign, but which will add a final touch of nicety to a yard or garden. And furthermore, the task of building such a fence is far from difficult. The home carpenter can easily do the work in a short time.

City's Best Advertisement

No city needs press agents. It needs only an honest and fearless press, which faithfully and accurately reports the activities of the municipality and intelligently interprets them. Beyond that, a city's own good works are its best advertisement. If its public and private affairs are able and honestly conducted for the benefit of its citizens, the world will know of it and honor and prosperity will be its portion. If its government becomes corrupt, or weak or dishonest, public servants permit the lawless element to gain the upper hand in its affairs, the world will hear of that, too, and no amount of hallelujahing by hired or self-appointed press agents will prevent it.—Detroit News.

Avoiding Damage to Sewer

The location of trees—those already planted or those intended for the yard—should be taken into consideration in placing sewers, cisterns, or drains. "Tree roots can press against tile and cistern walls with strength enough to break them," he points out, "and the damage is often difficult and expensive to undo. Some trees have a tendency to twine roots into any interstice they can find. Poplars have a bad reputation in this respect."

Away With Rubbish Heaps

Cleanliness and good order are the best safeguards against fire. If there is no trash to ignite, the carelessly thrown match or cigarette will find no fuel. It may be impossible to train every person to be scrupulously careful about matches or smokes, but the first rule of safety should be learned by all who are responsible for business and domestic premises, to keep them free from fire-making materials exposed to chance ignition.

Need for Co-Operation

It is necessary for the betterment and prosperity of any town for the citizens to co-operate and work together as a well-trained team in their effort to push the town upward and upward in the business world.—Crenshaw Court (Ala.) News.

Current Wit and Humor



RIGHTEOUS REASONING

"Have you any reasons for suspecting that your antagonist purchased votes?"

"Every reason," answered Senator Sorghum. "My close advisers have been telling me for some time that they knew of votes that could be bought cheap and in large quantities. Of course, we didn't get 'em. So any that were sold must have gone to the other fellows."—Washington Star.

Neglected Opportunity

"What did you discover in that ancient tomb?"

"Gems and precious metals," replied the explorer.

"Yet the royal inmate was forgotten."

"He didn't have sense enough to start a jewelry store."—Washington Star.

WORKS BOTH WAYS



"Junior, I get so tired of saying 'don't' to you all day long."

"Well, mother, think how hard that is on me."

The Hornet
A humble insect is the hornet. But for this, though, do not scorn it. For perseverance it's sublime. Its point it carries every time.

The Morning After
Mrs. Peck—You want me to suffer in silence, I suppose!
Mr. Peck—Oh no, I don't, my dear! I only ask you to let me do that.

Impossible
"Don't you really think Dorothy would make a great opera singer?"
"Indeed not; she's too complaisant."

It's All Right
She—I'm surprised at you, making love to those two Smith girls at once.
He—Oh, but they're only half sisters, you know.—Pathfinder.

GOOD SMOKING TOBACCO

Kentucky Farmer—Wow! My tobacco barn's on fire! It's full of cured leaf!

Neighbor (critically)—Looks like good smoking tobacco, too, Sir.

Dangerous Tryouts

Inventions new are daily met. They leave the public thrilled. The more inventions that we get The more of us are killed.

Maybe So
"Doctor, can you cure St. Vitus dance?"
"No, but you'll see it popular in the ballroom yet."

The True Spirit
Guest—Then your son Robert did not graduate after all?
Hostess—No; the dear boy has so much college spirit. There are so many graduating every year that it cripples college athletics.

Seems Impossible
"It's hard for me to get up early," said the young fellow.
"Why don't you go to bed early, then?" asked the innocent uncle.
"That would be even harder."

Friendly Notice
"If I were you I'd go home immediately."
"Whaffor?"
"Your wife and the maid are beating rugs."
"What do I care?"
"They have your fishing rod and your tennis racket."

Sidewalk Conversation
"I'm the man who owns Broadway."
"Here's a nickel for you. I have rel about?"

What Is a Diuretic?

People Are Learning the Value of Occasional Use.

EVERYONE knows that a laxative stimulates the bowels. A diuretic performs a similar function to the kidneys. Under the strain of our modern life, our organs are apt to become sluggish and require assistance. More and more people are learning to use Doan's Pills, occasionally, to insure good elimination which is so essential to good health. More than 50,000 grateful users have given Doan's signed recommendations. Scarcely a community but has its representation. Ask your neighbor!

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Something Wrong
Teacher—If your name is John Smith you must have your father's name.
Small Pupil—No, papa's got his name yet. I guess mine's counterfeited.
—Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph.

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Warning! Unless you see the name "Bayer" on package or on tablets you are not getting the genuine Bayer Aspirin proved safe by millions and prescribed by physicians for 26 years. Say "Bayer" when you buy Aspirin. Imitations may prove dangerous.—Adv.

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